LIBRARY
Te Tumu Herenga
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

RESEARCHSPACE@AUCKLAND

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand). This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.
http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form

AROHA'S GRANDDAUGHTERS

REPRESENTATIONS OF MAAORI WOMEN

IN

MAAORI DRAMA AND THEATRE

1980-2000

by

Mei-Lin Te-Puea Hansen

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, University of Auckland, 2005.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores representations of Maaori women characters in plays written by Maaori between 1980 and 2000, arguing that, as the level of self-determination in Maaori theatre has increased, these representations have become less stereotyped and more reflective of a range of Maaori women's realities. The thesis suggests that waahine dramatists in particular represent contemporary Maaori cultural identity as flexible, diverse and changing.

The Introduction gives reasons for the thesis' focus on Maaori women and outlines three major influences which have determined the approach to close-readings and analyses of waahine characters in the body of the thesis: an early Paakehaa representation of Maaori women, an increase of Maaori dramatists and the emergence of Maaori women's feminism.

The thesis comprises a further six chapters.

Chapter One contextualises the play analyses which appear in Chapters Four, Five and Six by describing a Maaori theatre and drama whakapapa that stakes a significant and influential place for waahine theatre practitioners. Chapters Two and Three explore tino rangatiratanga/self-determination and marae-concept theatre (respectively), arguing that between 1980 and 2000 these aspects of content and form have created theatrical conditions which facilitate Maaori women's representation. Chapters Four, Five and Six show that, as Maaori women such as Renee, Rena Owen, Riwia Brown, Roma Potiki and Briar Grace-Smith have become more active in the Maaori theatre whakapapa, contemporary representations of Maaori women have become more complex and diverse.

A set of bibliographic appendices provides detailed lists of first productions of plays mentioned in the thesis.

Throughout, the thesis maps the increased visibility and presence of Maaori women on the New Zealand stage, showing how in the years 1980-2000 the theatre has become a potent site for expression and exploration of Maaori cultural identity.

[. . .] when and where do we, as Maaori women from [. . .] different spheres of our communities, meet to enjoy each other's company and to share our works – to celebrate mana waahine?

Wherever and whenever we can...we meet, touch, laugh, talk, sing, sometimes screech!

Telling about what life is like for us, in our diversity, makes our stories visible.

(Kathie Irwin, *Toi Waahine: The Worlds of Maaori Women*)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people and institutions that have helped with the completion of this thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the University of Auckland Scholarships Committee who provided me with financial support from 1998-2001. I would also like to thank the University's Research Grants Committee who paid for a research trip to Wellington in 2000; the Maaori Education Trust Discretionary Scholarship (Post-Graduate) for their financial support in 2002; and the Auckland City Council for their award of a Commemoration Scholarship for Maaori students in the same year.

To Professor Witi Ihimaera and Dr Stuart Young, thank you so much for your perseverance and support. (If only we'd known it was going to take this long!) Thanks too for your careful, sensitive comments about the shape and direction of the text. Your encouragement and your mentoring style are reminders of all that is human, fun and favourable about academia. Ki a korua, kei te mihi aroha mo too korua awhi, too koorua whakaaro pai, too koorua tautoko me too korua manaaki. I would also like to say "Kia ora koutou" to the English Department staff (past and present), especially Walter, Loata, Eve, Jocelyn, Albert, Reina, Jackie, Dene and Lisa.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who gave their time, interest and commitment to interviews for this thesis: Rore Hapipi, Paki Cherrington, Brian Potiki, Brian Kirby, Alan Palmer and Maria Saterfield, Keri Kaa, Roma Potiki, Sunny Amey, Jan Bolwell, Apirana Taylor, Briar Grace-Smith, Witi Ihimaera, Rima Te Wiata and Tanea Heke. Tenaa koutou, tenaa koutou tenaa koutou katoa.

Alister McDonald at the Fortune Theatre, Alison Quigan at Centrepoint and Pauline Van Beek at BATS theatres have generously supplied archival material. I am also indebted to Paul Diamond at Radio NZ for his very generous support of my early research, and for providing me with access to his thorough and interesting radio series 'Riding the Back of the Whale'. I am very grateful to Rona Bailey who, I am told, compiled and organized the Taki Rua archives held at the National Library. Thanks to Taki Rua staff for allowing me access to those archives, and to the various administrative staff at Playmarket who have photocopied and sent scripts to me over the last few years.

Thanks too to all my PhD colleagues and friends. So many of you made the writing experience so much more bearable by providing valuable guidance, sharing your own experiences and resources and helping me to laugh. Cheers to Fran, Rachel S, Rachel L, Claire, Rebecca, Glenis, John, Amy, Isabel, Helen, Selina, Teresa, Charise, Paul V, Paul M, Ricci, Neil, Murray, Joanna, Jacob and Esther.

Susan, Lyn, Kate, Jo and Kathryn, cheers to you too for reading many, many drafts of many, many versions and for encouraging me to finish.

Finally, and very importantly I'd like to thank Brodie and my whaanau for their love and attention to all the other parts of my life. Thanks to Jeremy for waging a war against tentativeness, for lending me your laptop and for being a wonderful cousin. Thanks to Nan too for checking up on my progress, to Nan and Goong-Goong for all their love and to all my aunts, uncles and other cuzzies for distracting me. Choice.

CONTENTS

Whakaaro

Where are Our Maaoris? 1

Chapter One

A Whakapapa of Maaori Theatre and Drama 24

Chapter Two

Maaori Theatre, Drama and Tino Rangatiratanga 54

Chapter Three

Marae Theatre and Reo Maaori 71

Chapter Four

Kuia and Kootiro 90

Chapter Five

First Wave Waahine Playwrights 120

Chapter Six

Waahine Characters in the plays of Briar Grace-Smith 145

Whakamutunga

The Many Faces of Aroha's Granddaughters 179

Works cited 192

Appendices

Appendix A: *Play productions cited in thesis 1980-2000* 203

Appendix B: *Key productions of plays cited in thesis pre-1980* 236

Appendix C: *Select list of other play productions* 239

NOTES ABOUT REO MAAORI

Rather than macrons, double vowels have been used to indicate the long vowels in Maaori words. I have chosen to mark the long vowels to assist with meaning and pronunciation. Quotations taken from texts which include Maaori words have only been adjusted for the double vowel if the long vowel is marked in the original. In other words, if the author has not used a macron or double vowel system to refer to long vowels, I have not used it either and the word in the quotation appears in the same form in my text. Similarly, if macrons or double vowels have been used in play titles, they are replicated as a double vowel in my text.

Wahine/waahine and tane/taane

I use the kupu 'wahine' (singular) and 'waahine' (plural) to refer exclusively to Maaori women and the kupu 'tane' (singular) and 'taane' (plural) to refer exclusively to Maaori men.

Maaori words that are judged to be part of the common vernacular such as whaanau, marae and Paakehaa are not translated while other words are translated upon their first appearance. Proper names are not translated.

Definitions of Maaori words are based on three main sources:

Ngata, H.M. *English-Maori Dictionary*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media Ltd, 1993.

The Reed Essential Maaori Dictionary: Maaori English/English Maaori. Rev. ed. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed, 2001.

Wakareo (aa-ipurangi (on-line) Maaori-English-Maaori lexicon by Whakairo Kupu (Wordstream)). <www.reotupu.co.nz.>

NOTES ABOUT DATES

Plays that appear in the text are referenced according to production date. If a play has been published it will be followed by the production date and then the publication date (where available). If plays have not yet been performed I refer to the date they were written.

...us Maori fullas put on
this show for you Paakehaa fullas all the time.
I'm sure you would've seen it before.
Let me do a bit of a dance for you.

(Amiria, Act One *Waiora*)

WHAKAARO

"WHERE ARE OUR MAORIS?"

In Act One, Scene Two of Bruce Mason's landmark New Zealand play, *The Pohutukawa Tree* (1957), two young Paakehaa, Sylvia Atkinson and George Rawlins, celebrate their recent nuptials at a reception held in their honour. Guests, anxious to express their joy and keen to add to the celebratory tone, sing "fortissimo and prestissimo [. . .] For they are jolly good fellows" (67). An impatient female guest, "springs forward [. . .] like a choir-mistress" (68) and does her darnedest to lead the company in a fervent rendition of 'God Defend New Zealand'. Braver guests make a few garbled attempts to take up the tune. Sadly however, they falter and retreat into a hopeless silence, unable to remember the words. Feeling the weight of collective embarrassment, Mrs Atkinson, the mother of the bride, makes a quick bid to keep the party running smoothly. In an excited moment, she calls expectantly, "Where are our Maoris? We want our lovely Maoris" (69).

It is then, at the scene's climax, that Aroha Mataira, a kuia/elderly Maaori woman and head of the Mataira whaanau who live and work on the Atkinsons' orchard, steps forward, taking centre-stage. She performs a rescue for the gathering in the form of a waiata-aroha/love song, the cadences of which move "through the most delicate intervals, archaic, splendid" (70). Aroha's confident and flawless articulation of emotion woos the wedding guests into an awe-struck silence. The Paakehaa characters' awkward social fumbling and stuttering is offset by Aroha's dignified and self-assured performance. It is as if, without Aroha's performance, Mrs Atkinson and the assembled guests are unable to obtain the sense of spirituality and emotionality they seem to crave.

According to Mason, the moment when Aroha Mataira sings at the Atkinson-Rawlins' wedding is one of "the best moments [he] achieved in [his] Maaori theatre" (qtd. in Dowling 263).[1] Aroha's innate sense of "ritual occasion" (ibid), her humble and powerful ability to use her voice in answer to Mrs Atkinson's desperate, needy plea, is a theatrical articulation of Mason's belief that "it is only the Maori people who give our country tang and savour; without them we [the Paakehaa] would simply be the most boring and unleavened lump of consumerdom in the world" (ibid 268).[2] Although seemingly positive, this romantic, idealised drive to represent Maaori as the "bolster for an unsettled New Zealand identity" (Calder 172) effectively restricts Aroha Mataira's representation.[3] She is almost entirely limited to performing a role that signifies the "ambience" and "grace [. . .] the grandeur of the Maaori people" (qtd. in Dowling 268), and that symbolises the passing of traditional forms of Maaori life. While there are elements to Aroha's character that prevent an entirely simplistic or glib representation of a kuia (Aroha has a complicated and contradictory personality), her portrayal is ultimately determined by Mason's view that Maaori culture as he knew it was doomed.

This is most obvious at the play's conclusion. Several months after the wedding, a tired and embattled Aroha lies on her death bed. She faces the hopeless predicament of rejoining the members of her tribe and becoming a "laughing clown" like the rest of them, or going "proud down to [her] death." Already certain of her future, Aroha pronounces

> Live. Live! How shall I live! You want me to go to Tamatea; grow fat and swing pois. You want to see my race a lot of laughing clowns and I an old clown with them. I will not. I will not! [. . .] I will go proud down to my death, for that is all I have left (Act Three 107).

Rather than live in a world that demands she forget her people's "greatness [and . . .] history" (ibid 96), in the face of 'inevitable' Paakehaa dominance and destruction, Aroha wills herself to death.

Aroha Mataira is an important reference point for this examination of representations of Maaori women in Maaori theatre and drama between 1980 and 2000: she is the first Maaori woman character to have a central role in a serious New Zealand drama and, because *The Pohutukawa Tree* has been produced more than 180 times and continues to feature in New Zealand high school

---

[1] See David Dowling, *Every Kind of Weather* (Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Methuen, 1986) 262-263. Mason says this in a letter to Michael King 29 November 1977. More detail on Mason's Maaori-themed plays is provided in Chapter Four.
[2] See Dowling, 263-268. This is part of a paper Mason presented to the Forty-Second International P.E.N. Congress, Sydney, in December 1977.
[3] See Alex Calder, "Unsettling Settlement: Poetry and Nationalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand," *Literature and the Nation*, ed. Brook Thomas (Tubingen: Gunter narr Verlag, 1998) 172. Calder says that "Maori identity [. . .] grants an emergent Pakeha identity the handsome promise of a lack fulfilled, but only on condition that Maori are lost from history as an "unprotesting memory", and that the processes of settlement are misremembered as a "shallow occupation".

and university syllabi, she enjoys an almost iconic status.[4] Moreover, Aroha is a sort of theatrical grandmother, a wahine ancestor from whom many and varied theatrical mokopuna/descendants have sprung.

However, this latter role is not unproblematic. After all, her creator was a Paakehaa male who believed (rather patronisingly) that, when it came to representing Maaori in drama, it was for "Pakeha [to] prepare situations or scenes that simply would not be locked in a Maaori imagination" (Mason, qtd. in Dowling 263), and as I have already discussed, she is somewhat constricted by her function as a symbol.[5] Nevertheless, she represents an obvious starting point for tracing the differences in representations of Maaori women in plays.

Almost 40 years after *The Pohutukawa Tree*, the central wahine character in Briar Grace-Smith's 1995 play *Ngaa Pou Waahine*, has a decidedly confident future. An "MWA [. . .] Maaori with Attitude" (Scene 2 18), Te Atakura is free from the representational burdens of her theatrical tipuna/ancestor, Aroha. The prospects of growing fat and twirling poi or perhaps even worse, of willing death, do not register for Te Atakura.

> Well, get that girl, not shy, not a problem for her to have three plates of bacon bones and puha [. . .] Yeah, Te Atakura's well and truly on her way and once that girl starts moving, everybody better stay clear 'cos she's gonna be scary. True. (Tia, Scene 8 40)

The change evident between Aroha and her theatrical mokopuna, Te Atakura, parallels a broader shift that has occurred for waahine playwrights, directors and actors in the decades between 1957 and the turn of the century. For example, while in the past Mason could comfortably claim that it is for Paakehaa to "prepare situations or scenes" which "show in dramatic action that the broken [Maaori] culture" given "the chance [. . .] will reveal [a] grandeur of spirit" (qtd. in Dowling 263), more recently, wahine playwright, director and actor Roma Potiki can make a determined claim for Maaori women's place in New Zealand theatre by confidently asserting that "Maaori drama means Maaori people telling their own stories, including the stories women have to tell" (Potiki, *Confirming Identity* 154).

This thesis examines a range of Maaori playwrights' and performers' creations and representations of waahine characters. Waahine characters are analysed often in the context of production of plays and with a concern for implications beyond as well as within the theatre, to show that, as the level of Maaori self-determination in Maaori theatre has increased, not only are representations of Maaori

---

[4] See "Bruce Mason: 1921-1982," Interview with Helen Paske. *Kaleidoscope*, TVNZ, New Zealand, Nov. 1982, screened 1983. It would not be until 1979/80 with *Maranga Mai* that a wahine would again feature in as prominent a role as Aroha Mataira.

[5] In Chapter Four, these issues are discussed further.

women less stereotyped, but that also, they are more complex and more reflective of a range of waahine (and Maaori) realities. It suggests that Maaori dramatists, in particular, represent modern Maaori cultural identity as flexible, diverse and changing. It highlights Maaori women's inclination to show waahine and Maaori identities as fluctuating and responsive "to a host of new realities, new circumstances and new perceptions of the world" (Matthews 117).

Mindful of the social effect of the increased visibility and presence of Maaori women on the New Zealand stage, I explore how certain socio-political events are given expression in Maaori drama through waahine characters. The thesis also highlights the influence "truly gifted and utterly individual" (Caro "Toi Whakaari Home page") waahine actors are having on the range and types of characters created by Maaori dramatists. In particular, I examine the impact waahine actors have had on plays by taane writers, especially on the sorts of waahine characters taane create. By querying the boundaries around cultural identity and perceptions of waahine identity, Maaori drama is gradually introducing alternative perspectives of Maaori life to the New Zealand stage. I describe the innovations Maaori women have made to drama and theatre in order to make plays reflect more truly their experiences.

From Maranga Mai to Woman Far Walking

My core focus is on representations of Maaori women in plays by Maaori written and/or performed in the years 1980 to 2000.

More profoundly than any preceding it, *Maranga Mai* (1979/80), a landmark, agit-prop play, was able to effectively expose, for Maaori audiences especially, the political power of Maaori theatrical expression.[6] *Maranga Mai*, traced the history of colonialism and Maaori protest in Aotearoa, indubitably connecting Maaori drama with its role as an expression of te ao Maaori/the Maaori world.[7] *Maranga Mai's* vociferous opposition to Crown injustices and its open use of counter-historical discourse, highlighted several philosophical and cultural rifts in New Zealand society. For Roma Potiki, an early member of the Maranga Mai troupe, the play had a social, cultural, political and educative function: "politicised urban Maaori and some cuzzies from the country" moved "around marae to let [. . .] our old people know what we felt and what we were doing and what

---

[6] *Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross* (1972, published 1974) and *Death of the Land* (1977, published 1991) preceded the first productions of *Maranga Mai*. Given that there was an early season of *Te Raukura* performed at the Mercury Theatre, Maaori audiences for the play were probably limited. *Death of the Land*, which included three waahine characters, reached many Maaori in the North Island but did not receive the same wide public attention as *Maranga Mai*.

[7] See Sebastian Black, "New Zealand," *Post-Colonial English Drama*, ed. Bruce King (Great Britain: Macmillian Press, 1992) 133-149. Black notes that 1980 is the year in which Greg McGee's *Foreskin's Lament* was also written. According to Black, this play, which is an "examination of the state of the nation" encouraged "aspiring writers, who might previously have thought of writing in verse or prose, [to turn] their thoughts to the stage" (143). It also led playwrights to "challenge myths about the country" (141).

actions had been taking place" (Potiki, Interview 7 Dec. 2002). The content of the play was simultaneously supported and criticized for its representation of Maaori society. Providing a powerful indication of Maaori theatre's representative power and its potential revolutionary and revelatory capacity, Mervyn Wellington, Minister of Education at the time, took the drastic measure of banning performances of the play.

Maranga Mai is a significant marker because it uses an elderly Maaori woman figure – a kuia – as its narrator and as a symbol of the longevity of the Maaori struggle against the Crown. Indeed *Maranga Mai* was the first play to acknowledge the potent role played by Maaori women in historical and contemporary struggles against the Crown.

Twenty years later, in 2000, the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts included a showcase section of commissioned works by New Zealand dramatists and theatre practitioners. Among the six acts which comprised Outstanding Aotearoa, the "centrepiece for the international arts event" (Dale, *Outstanding Aotearoa* 36) was Witi Ihimaera's *Woman Far Walking*.

Like *Maranga Mai*, Ihimaera's play positions a kuia at the heart of Maaori political and social struggle. Tiriti O Waitangi Mahana – a 160-year-old Maaori woman born on the same day as the Treaty of Waitangi was signed – is the play's narrator. Like the kuia in *Maranga Mai*, Tiriti retells the long history of Maaori/Paakehaa relations from a Maaori perspective. Whereas Maranga Mai's "raw [. . .] amateur" (Hapipi, Personal letter 29 May 2002) presentation of Maaori social and political concerns was staged at marae around New Zealand, Ihimaera's play first appeared at Soundings Theatre – a venue housed by Te Papa Tongarewa/Our Place, the Museum of New Zealand. Rather than facing the threat of a ban, the play was "warmly anticipated" (Dale, *Outstanding Aotearoa* 39). Its predominantly Paakehaa audiences "eagerly awaited" a play written by a Maaori novelist (with an "enormously high" status) and a production which included "highly acclaimed" professional Maaori performers (ibid).

This thesis takes *Maranga Mai* and *Woman Far Walking* as markers of several significant shifts that have occurred in the representation of Maaori women in Maaori theatre and drama. Those shifts include: the changing contexts of Maaori cultural expression, the development of a powerful theatricality by Maaori dramatists, new explorations of Maaori/Paakehaa relationship issues and the profound and powerful respect for the presence and participation of Maaori women in the communication and construction of Maaori cultural identity.

Why Maaori women?

The initial impetus to explore representations of Maaori women in Maaori plays came from an observation that, over the two decades between 1980 and 2000, there has been a clear shift towards the use of Maaori women as central characters in these plays. Notably, since the 1980s, it is through figuration of Maaori women that cultural identity issues (in particular, the tension that develops between traditional and modern concepts of identity) are being played out.

Maaori women's emergence from stereotyped and archetypal figuration to complex, multifarious representations in New Zealand drama is largely attributable to a synchronous shift from waahine being represented by Paakehaa and taane playwrights to waahine playwrights' own representations of Maaori women. In the 1980s, as more Maaori women began to write plays, more waahine appeared as pivotal characters in dramatic texts. Unlike theatre produced by indigenous groups in India, Africa, Australia and the Caribbean, where male playwrights such as Bidal Sircar, Wole Soyinka, Jack Davis and Derek Walcott (respectively) are well-known and "female playwrights are seriously underrepresented" (Crow and Banfield 166), Maaori theatre now claims a strong line of female dramatists. As well as writing however, Maaori women's involvement in theatrical craft has become commensurately more emphatic. Waahine are also strongly involved in the areas of acting, cultural advising and management. This increased participation of Maaori women in theatre praxis has had a significant effect on the range of waahine experience represented in plays.

Historically, the dramatic representation of a range of waahine experiences was limited because few plays that appeared on the New Zealand stage included waahine characters. Roma Potiki recalls that

> [. . .] for me when I was younger, doing a little bit of acting, there weren't roles for Maaori women. I would get offered to play the barmaid, the affair that someone's having, an Italian maid in a farce, [. . .] a bit of [. . .] exotic colour [. . .]" (Interview 7 Dec. 2002).

According to kapa haka expert, choreographer and educationalist Keri Kaa, a possible reason for the lack of waahine roles lay in a bias for male characters and points of view in most representations of Maaori life:

> Most of the stories were about men [. . .] Maaori men all feature, if you read all the myths and legends very few of the leading characters are female, they're all about blokes [. . .] and I suspect it's because some chumpy recorded the first myths and legends and probably wrote them from a male point of view. If you have a look at all the stuff that's ever been presented anywhere it's all about men. [. . .] But women have a place too. We've each got a role, I think women have a significant place because women are actually the storytellers

and the nurturers, women are the pataka, they're the storehouses of knowledge (Interview 18 June 2002).

Kaa's observation about male bias in storytelling spotlights a patriarchal, imperialistic framing of Maaori women that renders their bodies, stories, expressions and opinions almost invisible. As well, it points towards Maaori women's lack of representational control that stems not only from European males' figurations of waahine, but also from a privileging of taane as public representatives and spokespeople for iwi Maaori/Maaori people.

New Zealand theatre of the 1960s and early 1970s reflected this male bias by marginalizing or ignoring Maaori women's experiences. Apart from *The Pohutukawa Tree*, Mason's 'Maaori-themed' plays were written specifically for performance by the opera singer Inia Te Wiata. *Awatea* (produced for radio in 1965, for stage in 1968) tells of the final years of Werihe Paku, dealing in particular with Werihe's relationship with his son, while *The Hand on the Rail* (produced for stage in 1974) investigates Hingawaru Karani's bid to locate his son Rangi who has gone missing in the city. *Swan Song* (produced for radio in 1965) follows James Smithson, an ailing kaumaatua, who, on his death bed, transports himself back to his youth in Italy and the first true love of his life, and *Hongi Hika* (produced for radio in 1968) dramatises Hongi's meeting with Queen Victoria. Other plays perpetuated this male focus. At the centre of Douglas Stewart's *The Golden Lover* (1967, published 1962) is Whana, a man of the faery, capable of luring unsuspecting women away from their intended sweethearts. Harry Dansey's *Te Raukura* (1972, published 1974), the first play by a Maaori playwright to be published, retells the stories of taane prophetic leaders, Te Ua Haumene and Te Whiti-O-Rongomai. It is only since the 1980s that waahine have begun to appear as symbols, spokespeople and representatives of Maaori struggle, survival, spirituality and knowledge.[8]

Rather than being adjuncts to the action, or even worse, being ignored, in Maaori plays written from 1980 to 2000, waahine are often central figures. Not only have their appearances become more frequent, but characterisations have also become more complex, nuanced and diverse, in other words, more reflective of the experiences of Maaori women, and Maaori in general. Plays written from the late 1980s also represent the complications and joys of modern, post-colonial identity. Consequently, in plays such as *Te Awa I Tahuti* (1987, published 1991), *Roimata* (1988, published 1991), *Whatungarongaro* (1990, published 1999) and *Ngaa Pou Waahine* (1995, published 1997) Aroha's granddaughters are indeed asserting their presence on the stage.

[8] Some exceptions include James K Baxter's *The Wide Open Cage* (1959) which includes among its roles, Norah, a Maaori woman who is alienated from her Maaori home and sceptical about the aroha of the marae. And, Nyra Bentley's *Skin Deep* (1964) in which Mary King, a Maaori, contends with racist Dutch immigrants in her job as a District Nurse while also trying to curb the attentions of a Paakehaa boy, Andy McLaren.

Grace-Smith's *Waitapu* (1996) and *Purapurawhetuu* (1997, published 1999) pair male and female characters to examine the construction of traditional and contemporary identities. Her plays also engage with debates about the gender roles assigned to Maaori artistic practices such as carving and weaving. Hone Kouka's *Home Fires* (1998) depicts two sisters whose contrasting attitudes towards tradition, home and the city are the product of sibling rivalry and the death of a loved one. More recent plays which fall outside the immediate scope of this thesis maintain this focus on waahine. Albert Belz's *Awhi Tapu* (2003), Grace-Smith's *When Sun and Moon Collide* (2000) and *Potiki's Memory of Stone* (2003) and Kouka's *The Prophet* (2004) depict waahine characters grappling with difficult social issues in Maaori contexts. Importantly these newer plays are more representative of a range of Maaori experiences. Increasingly, such plays are speaking to Maaori (especially Maaori women) about their various realities, provoking a deeper "interest in, and [. . .] a respect for, the socio-political world" (Kershaw 246) and validating and reinforcing views which may not always conform to the "dominant socio-political order" (ibid).

Contextualising the research and identifying gaps

This research adds to existing literature on contemporary Maaori theatre and drama in three respects. It traces a Maaori drama and theatre whakapapa that claims a prominent place for Maaori women in the development of contemporary New Zealand drama and theatre; it has a concentrated focus on close-readings of Maaori women characters in Maaori plays; and it provides a collection of first and second production details (where available) of plays by Maaori playwrights (mentioned in this thesis).

Material by New Zealand theatre historian Howard McNaughton, Roma Potiki, and post-colonial drama theorists such as Helen Gilbert, Joanne Tompkins and Christopher Balme have provided the impetus for the current study.[9]

History, content and processes

Christopher Balme's (1989/90) "New Maaori theatre in New Zealand" provides a brief historical overview of Maaori theatre. Balme describes the "emergence over the past decade of an autochthonous Maori theatre" and suggests that it is "arguably the most significant development in New Zealand theatre since the establishment of the professional community theatres in the 1970s" (149). The overview assigns Maaori theatre a place among the "theatrical cultures of [. . .] post-colonial societies" (ibid) and scrutinises the marae performance elements of Hone Tuwhare's *In the*

[9] In Roma Potiki, "A Maori Point of View: The Journey from Anxiety to Confidence," *Australasian Drama Studies* 18 (1991): 59, Potiki highlights the need for "Maaori people [. . .] to do a thesis on the subject" of a "Maaori theatre whakapapa" or the development of Maaori theatre.

Wilderness Without a Hat (1977, performed 1985, published 1991) and Paul Maunder's *Te Tutakitanga a Te Puna* (1984) and *Ngati Pakeha* (1985). However, attention to these three plays restricts the scope of Balme's history. Although it is clear that he is exploring forms which make Maaori theatre distinct – namely its engagement with marae architecture, ritual and performance – in choosing to focus on Tuwhare's and Maunder's work, Balme denies the important role of Maaori women in the development of a Maaori theatrical voice.

In the 'Drama' section of *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, Howard McNaughton places Maaori drama in the broader context of New Zealand writing for the stage. He provides a thorough survey of scripted and published plays, with brief analyses of selected texts, in the context of an account of the shifting trends and themes in New Zealand drama.[10] Referring to Maaori theatre post 1990, McNaughton suggests that the development of Taki Rua was "the most significant evolution of a venue" (*Oxford History (Rev)* 380).[11] McNaughton claims a central place for waahine playwrights Renee, Rena Owen and Riwia Brown identifying their works, especially the plays they wrote for Taki Rua, as crucial in the emergence of a Maaori theatrical voice. He states that "the input of women playwrights at Taki Rua, was clearly influential" in the expansion of themes explored in Maaori plays (ibid 387): the foci on "cultural loss, urbanization, and family fragmentation" common to plays by these waahine were so dominant that they "were being overworked almost to the point of cliché" (ibid).[12]

The history provided in this thesis explores McNaughton's propositions more fully. With a concern to provide deeper and broader discussion of Maaori identity crises, whaanau disintegration and the impact of urbanization in contemporary Maaori plays, Chapter Five includes detailed analyses of work by Renee, Owen, Brown and Roma Potiki and assesses the extent to which these playwrights have influenced the current focus on identity construction and cultural boundaries in plays by writers such as Kouka and Grace-Smith.

A range of commentary on the practices of Maaori theatre – the peculiarities of its production and performance – is scattered through various scholarly journals and the introductions or forewords to published play scripts. The current study has benefited from this material. Reviews by academics

---

[10] See Murray Edmond, "Old Comrades of the Future: A History of Experimental Theatre in New Zealand 1962-1982," PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 1996, 12. In his thesis, Edmond notes that McNaughton's history "neglects" the "whole area" of "experimental theatre work".

[11] Taki Rua is a theatre production company discussed more fully in Chapter One.

[12] There is congruence between McNaughton's thought and an earlier observation by post-colonial critic and cultural historian Adam Shoemaker in "Paper Tracks: Indigenous Literatures in Canada, Australia and New Zealand," *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction,* ed. Bruce King (Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1996) 251 that in theatre institutions which tended to foster the work of men "female indigenous playwrights in New Zealand have [. . .] redressed the balance".

such as Sebastian Black, David Carnegie, Judith Dale, Mark Houlahan and Joanne Tompkins, provide short but clear analyses of several plays. In addition, John Huria's introduction to *Purapurawhetuu* is a detailed and insightful reading of Grace-Smith's play. As well as evidencing the value in paying detailed critical attention to the form of Maaori drama, Huria emphasizes the need to scrutinize content too.

The most insightful material is written by the Maaori theatre practitioner, Roma Potiki. For example, Potiki's introduction to *He Reo Hou* – the first collection of Maaori plays – is among the earliest pieces of writing by a Maaori which, as well as providing the beginnings of a history of Maaori theatre (by naming some of the major theatre troupes, playwrights and directors), identifies some of the key thematic concerns of 'Maaori drama'. A later piece, "Confirming Identity and Telling the Stories", which appears in *Feminist Voices: Women's Studies texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand*, is most useful for its provision of first hand experience of the creation of *Whatungarongaro*. In this and other writings, such as "A Maori point of view" in *Australasian Drama Studies*, Potiki identifies the types of subject matter that define Maaori plays. Her concern is to distinguish Maaori theatre from non-Maaori theatre and to establish a firm approach or methodology for Maaori theatrical representation. She argues that "Maori theatre must deal honestly with what has happened and is happening to Maori people" (*A Maori Point of View* 63) and that "all work must have political self-awareness and be able to speak to our deepest emotions" (*Confirming Identity* 157).

Potiki's and McNaughton's observations that cultural identity issues are prevalent in Maaori plays prompted me to a closer exploration of these issues, just as Potiki's insistence that Maaori plays provide honest reflections of different Maaori realities and that they do so with "integrity" (ibid) encouraged me to examine the variety of representations of Maaori lives in the plays.

In "Confirming Identity" Potiki develops a feminist perspective which exposes and politicises women's and girls' status in whaanau structures. She suggests that in Maaori plays there should be "more roles that include strong sexuality for older women" and that present "younger women [. . .] as more than just lovers, or obedient things" (160). This thesis addresses these sorts of waahine concerns and explores the way waahine whaanau roles are depicted in Maaori plays. In its analysis of the changes in representations of Maaori women, it also assesses the extent to which Potiki's call for more considered representations of older and younger Maaori women has been addressed.

The indigene, post-colonialism and syncretic theatre

In his 1986 article in *Australasian Drama Studies,* "Indigenous Stages: The Indigene in Canadian, New Zealand and Australian Drama", Terry Goldie examines onstage appearances of "indigene characters" and addresses the vexed issue of "non-Other portraying Other" (white actors portraying brown/black characters) (Indigenous Stages 5). Goldie's analysis of plays from New Zealand is relatively scant. However, his reference to *The Pohutukawa Tree* as one of several plays "about indigenes" (Indigenous Stages 10) which use realism as a dramatic form is illuminating. Particularly interesting is his observation that twentieth-century Canadian and Australian drama about indigenes (and New Zealand's *The Pohutukawa Tree*) has a fairly predictable format:

> The most common scene is a small set which represents a living room or kitchen, or perhaps a confined outdoor space close to the same type of humble rural dwelling. The tendency is to confine the cast to a group similarly small, usually a family. Miscegenation and assimilation are recurring themes, with either a white family, of which one member has a relationship or potential relationship with an indigene, or an indigene family, in which the generation gap is heightened by a daughter attracted to a white culture [. . .] (ibid).

As well as assessing the form of twentieth-century plays about indigenes, Goldie identifies the character types that appear in such plays. Goldie refers to the "treacherous redskin" and the "Indian maiden" as examples of indigene characters who embody "violence and sex [. . .] and also [. . .] the emotional signs of fear and temptation, of the white repulsion from and attraction to the land" (ibid 6). While these character types receive some attention in Goldie's article, they receive more attention in his 1989 book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures*, which proved useful in my conceptualisation of waahine characters in Maaori plays. Goldie identifies the "Indian squaw" and "Indian maiden" (*Fear and Temptation* 72) as recurrent types in Canadian plays and I was interested to apply modifications of these Indian types to similar 'Maaori types' – namely, kuia and kootiro/young woman. I also wanted to test the possibility that *The Pohutukawa Tree*, given its primacy, its obvious use as a reference point for some Maaori playwrights, and its figuration of kuia and kootiro, had a not insignificant influence on some of the waahine characters that appeared in plays that followed.

Helen Gilbert's and Joanne Tompkins's 1996 *Post-Colonial Drama* and Christopher Balme's *Decolonizing the Stage*, published in 1999, both discuss Maaori drama within an international context and incorporate examples from Maaori plays to reinforce their respective arguments about the thematic content and form of post-colonial drama. Because Gilbert and Tompkins compare several post-colonial nations, the extent to which they can provide extensive critical attention to plays by Maaori is limited. The close-readings of plays in this thesis elaborate on Maaori playwrights' engagement with some of the post-colonial themes Gilbert and Tompkins identify in

their study. For example, the appearance of traditional enactments, non-English languages and counter-historical narratives in scripts and productions are given special focus, as is Gilbert's and Tompkins's suggestion that post-colonial theatre allows for the sounding of polyphonic voices. Modern Maaori drama illustrates Gilbert's and Tompkin's argument that theatre understands the "agency of the colonised as well as the coloniser" (83) and that colonised subjects can employ post-colonial elements as tactics for maintaining cultural difference and rendering their own ideas about identity.

Like Gilbert and Tompkins, Balme also admits that post-colonial drama highlights a current global condition of "cultural multivocalism" (*Decolonizing the Stage* 11) and that it shows the difficulty of claiming "clear lines of demarcation between cultures" (ibid 10). Balme's suggestion that contemporary post-colonial theatre (he terms it "syncretic theatre") questions "the very idea of firm, homogenous cultural identities" (ibid) encouraged me to look for the differences between Maaori women's experiences in plays.[13]

Unlike Gilbert and Tompkins however, Balme is less concerned with the themes of post-colonial drama and more interested in the form in which post-colonial drama is presented. Although Balme's conceptualisation of Maaori theatre as a type of syncretic theatre raises issues about the limits and potentialities of marae-theatre, and explores the productive use of ritual (especially hui) in marae-theatre space, his examination overlooks the tapu around gender that limits the speaking rights of women on the marae and that therefore could still apply in the theatre setting. For example, in his analysis of *In the Wilderness Without a Hat* and *Te Hokinga Mai* (1988, published 1990) Balme does not consider the way women's roles are circumscribed or reinvented by the use of marae-theatre. I have attempted to address this omission in Chapters Three and Four.

Two other post-colonial critiques which have also guided my research include Adam Shoemaker's 1996 "Paper Tracks: Indigenous Literatures in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand" and Chadwick Allen's 2002 *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maaori Literary and Activist texts*. Shoemaker's "Paper Tracks" links the "creative expressions" of indigenous writing from Canada, Australia and New Zealand with each nation's initiation of "agendas for change [. . .] founded upon cultural pride and distinctiveness" (245). Shoemaker makes the pertinent observation that the "visual, performing and literary arts are vital to the identity of native minority

[13] See Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-colonial Drama* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1999) 2. Balme defines syncretic theatre as the utilisation of "the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements, without slavish adherence to one tradition or the other". He contends that "an internationalized world of mass communication and information exchange" means that people are producing "less definitive interpretations of themselves and others and that this has contributed to a more fluid and changing conceptualisation of cultural identity".

groups" (ibid) and then provides some commentary on the theatre movements in New Zealand in the early 1970s. However, in drawing a conclusion that anthologies of indigenous writing are "politically useful, culturally representative and symbolic of communal, co-operative work" (262), he neglects to mention the collection of Maaori plays *He Reo Hou*.

Allen's *Blood Narrative* also explores connections between socio-political movements such as the Maaori renaissance (paying special attention to allegories of the Treaty) and Maaori literature.[14] Allen's emphasis is on short stories and novels by Maaori (post-WWII), although he does mention one play, *Te Raukura*. Allen approaches the texts with the scholarly, literary attention they deserve and provokes further thought about the "parameters in the battle over the representation of contemporary Maaori identity" (Allen, *Thesis* 143).

New Writing

Since I began research for this thesis (in 1998) two new texts, specifically focused on Maaori theatre and drama, have been published: Janinka Greenwood's monograph *History of a Bicultural Theatre: Mapping the Terrain* (2002) and Marc Maufort's *Transgressive Itineraries* (2003) an examination of "hybridisations" (*Transgressive Itineraries* 12) of dramatic realism in plays by Canadian, Australian and New Zealand playwrights.

Greenwood's monograph contains a history of the emergence of (what she calls) bicultural theatre in Aotearoa.[15] She aims to develop the term bicultural as a more fitting descriptor for drama produced by Maaori and Paakehaa or Maaori and non-Maaori. The monograph maps the progressive development of a theatrical aesthetic that embraces both European and Maaori traditions and is particularly useful because it produces "a sense of the aesthetic that derives from the bicultural space" (9), and claims an important role for theatre as a site for the negotiation of cultural differences. Greenwood highlights the need for work which "seeks, in a systematic way, to align what occurs in theatre with what takes place on the broader socio-political front" (63-64) and in some respects she begins to do this. More so than preceding works, the history aligns particular plays, theatre troupes and theatrical events with their socio-political contexts.

The most substantive part of Greenwood's work are her interviews with five male theatre practitioners (four Maaori and one Paakehaa), who were selected for "their extended involvement

[14] Maaori renaissance refers to a period (from the late 1960s to the early 1990s) of sustained social, political and cultural awareness of things Maaori in New Zealand society. See Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* (Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books, 1990) 209. Walker describes the "dynamic of the Maori cultural renaissance" as one where "a culture [. . .] is freed from alienation".

[15] Definitions of bicultural and Maaori theatre and drama are provided further into Whakaaro.

in the bicultural interface of theatre" and because their experiences reflected "a range of generational perspectives [. . .] and a range of activity in the field" (11-12). Greenwood gives very clear reasons for interviewing these men, but doesn't consider the representative issues such a gender dynamic may suggest or present.

Most of the monograph's focus is given to theatrical structures and processes (à la Christopher Balme), considerations of the blend of Maaori and Western principles and views in New Zealand theatre and the relationship between theatre and education. Greenwood admits that in much of what she calls bicultural theatre, Maaori "have taken the initiative in making meaning in the place where the two cultures overlap" (12). Such a phenomenon (if indicative of a trend) presents the possibility of a more secure and assured place for Maaori in theatre, to some extent (though not entirely) diminishing the claim for a bicultural label.

Transgressive Itineraries is rare among work which examines Maaori plays and playwrights because, unlike post-colonial critiques that precede it, studied attention is given to play texts with detailed close-readings "comparable to those required by a dramaturgical approach preceding production" (18). As I have already mentioned, close analyses of Maaori scripts are rare, so Maufort's decision to devote considerable space to the study of these plays asserts their importance as literature and credits the work of the dramatists separately from the production cast and crew. Of especial interest to me are examinations of plays by Hone Kouka – *Mauri Tu* (1991, published 1992), *Nga Tangata Toa* (1994, published 1994) and *Waiora* (1996, published 1997) – and Briar Grace-Smith – *Ngaa Pou Waahine* and *Purapurawhetuu*. Maufort focuses on both playwrights' employment of magic-real elements and also notes their peculiar use of "extended poetic realism" (*Transgressive Itineraries* 22). His readings are sensitive to Maaori philosophical concepts and cognisant of local nuances.

However, such an intent focus on scripts is at the expense of any discussion of specific performances or productions. Maufort's readings do not include the inflections and impact of live production which, in the case of plays such as *Waiora* and *Purapurawhetuu* (because of the ways in which waiata and other traditional forms are employed), reduces somewhat the scope of some of his interpretations. Moreover, Maufort refers only to published plays. This inevitably compromises the range of his study: in a theatrical infrastructure such as New Zealand's, a majority of plays that are produced are not published.

Like comparative analyses that have preceded his, Maufort also falls victim to the limits necessary when the work of three nations' dramatists is presented under one banner. While the differences

and similarities between the nations are taken into account, there is little space remaining for examination of the relationships between writers from the same nation. Nor does Maufort acknowledge the way gender dynamics may have affected the types of plays produced.

Finally, I consider Maufort's labelling of native playwrights as "Europe's Other(s)" (ibid 17) somewhat problematic. Most Maaori practitioners claim to be creating plays for their people, and since the early 1970s, they have discovered a voice less concerned with a position as 'Other's' in relation to a European centre. Maufort's claim that "the self in crisis and [. . .] lack of belonging are re-interpreted in post-colonial drama from the perspective of Europe's Other(s)" (ibid) is Euro-centric in its disregard for Maaori self-determination and the assertion of an identity on their own terms.

Research methodologies

Post-colonialism

In a review of *Woman Far Walking*, Judith Dale examines the play's relevance to Maaori/Paakehaa relations and the Treaty of Waitangi. Although she does not use the term post-colonial to describe it, most of her comments are geared towards a reading which posits Witi Ihimaera's play as a post-colonial text, that is as a text that engages with, resists and dismantles the effects of colonialism on the expression of indigenous (Maaori) identity, practices and beliefs. She describes *Woman Far Walking's* depiction of the historical relationship between Maaori and early European settlers and the "still-imponderable issues of treaty-making" (*Outstanding Aotearoa* 40). Also, she notes its foregrounding of "the European invasion of Aotearoa New Zealand and the consequent settlement of (what became) dominant Pakeha culture" (ibid), arguing that, in the play, "Pakeha culture is a guilty secret that has, in its perpetration, been borne until now as a burden or shame on the spirit and mana of Maori." (ibid). As well as identifying some of the post-colonial tropes in *Woman Far Walking*, Dale also analyses Ihimaera's representation of the Treaty as a wahine. She queries his decision to "use [. . .] a female protagonist as the vehicle for colonial history," noting that "there is something disturbing" in the fact that a Maaori woman – the victim of rape by Paakehaa – bears the guilt and shame of colonial history and of the loss of Maaori "spirit and mana" because she refuses to commit infanticide after being raped by colonial Paakehaa (ibid). Dale's reading of the play's post-colonial expressions and its implementation of gender analysis is a useful starting point for an account of my own methodology.

Post-colonial feminisms

With its focus on the possible effects of colonialism on expressions of contemporary indigenous identity, post-colonial literary criticism seems an obvious tool to employ in an examination of Maaori

women in Maaori plays. Like Dale, Gilbert and Tompkins, Goldie, Maufort and other commentators have identified elements in Maaori plays that are common to other contemporary post-colonial literatures produced by self-proclaimed/iconic post-colonial writers from a range of former colonies.[16] As with the works of more well-known post-colonial writers, Maaori plays address issues of land, the indigenous body, cultural and gender identity and history in relation to the ongoing effects of imperialism, and my analysis and discussion takes account of the way responses to colonialism, cross-cultural relationships (between Maaori and Paakehaa) and claims for self-determination have shaped (and continue to shape) expressions of contemporary Maaori identity (especially waahine identity). However, I do not label or categorise plays as post-colonial; instead, I use elements of post-colonial theory as motivation for my textual analysis. Indeed, an area of specific focus in the readings emerges from the post-colonial impulse to recognise and value the different and diverse experiences and realities of post-colonial subjects. Put more plainly, the play readings examine moments when Maaori playwrights show Maaori women as they attempt to carve out their specific and different identities in post-colonial Aotearoa.

Since the mid 1980s, due largely to the instrumental work of feminists such as Chandra Mohanty, women's issues – particularly those relating to self-representation and the assumed universality of 'Third World' women's experiences – have been encompassed in post-colonialism's theoretical address.[17] Mohanty developed her theory against "the lack of address to gender issues in mainstream post-colonial theory and also against the universalising tendencies of Western feminist thought" (Mills 98). Along with other post-colonial feminist thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak and Cheyla Sandoval, Mohanty calls for a "'worlding' of mainstream feminist theory" (ibid) to accentuate the differences in experiences between women of varying nationalities, cultures, races, classes and sexualities.

The play readings in this thesis take advantage of a particular 'worlding' of feminist theory: mana waahine Maaori. Mana waahine Maaori analyses address Maaori women's national and cultural contexts in an attempt to more clearly identify the peculiar social, political and cultural forces operating on their representation/production. By referencing mana waahine practices and thought, I point to the particularity and diversity of Maaori women's experiences, as distinct from the experiences of other female post-colonial subjects, and I question, in a similar vein to Mohanty, the "production of [. . .] women as a homogenous category" (ibid 106).

---

[16] Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Albert Wendt and Salman Rushdie are identifiable as post-colonial writers.
[17] See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Boundary* 2.3 (1985): 333-358.

Mana waahine Maaori

Mana waahine is a broad term embracing "a wide range of women's activities and perspectives" (Smith, Getting Out 61). Mana waahine politics evolved out of the activities of the Maaori Women's Welfare League, which was established in 1951. According to one of its former presidents, Dame Mira Szaszy, "The League established the 'mana' of [Maaori] women on a national basis" (290), giving "Maaori women decision-making powers on the issues which affected them very closely – as mothers, and their children and their homes" (ibid). The League raised awareness about Maaori women's needs and specifically worked to gain recognition for "their inherent dignity, or mana tuku iho" (288). In the mid 1980s, as the Maaori cultural cause for self-determination solidified its purpose and gained more recognition from the majority populace, waahine were freer to develop theories informed by their peculiar needs and experiences as Maaori women.

According to Leonie Pihama, "mana waahine theoretical frameworks" are still emergent and "analysis continues to be grown and nurtured by Maaori women" (*Thesis* 258). There is "ongoing discussion and searching being undertaken by many Maaori women" who are attempting to identify the "essential elements of such a framework" (ibid). Expressions of mana waahine are profoundly affected by differences in tribal affiliation; adaptation or resistance to colonial control; one's level of traditional knowledge; social status and relationships with Maaori men (within iwi and hapuu/sub-tribe). While these differences affect the way mana waahine is expressed, there are some common notions underlying it which impact on Maaori theatrical expression.[18]

Firstly, mana waahine aims to make Maaori women's contributions to Maaori society more visible. Within mana waahine there is an urgent call for recognition of Maaori women's voices and concerns. Pihama states simply that "There is a need for Maaori women to speak to and for ourselves. To focus our work on engaging the issues that are important to us" (*Thesis* 38). The sentiment Pihama expresses derives from the politics of self-determination, but it is a self-determination which recognises the distinct experiences of Maaori women. Kaa concurs with such an approach. To her, mana waahine means "everything" (Interview 18 June 2002). She asserts that it is elemental to a sense of Maaori cultural identity and that it guides self-determination:

> You know how it is always the men who call out 'Tihei Mauriora!' on the marae? It actually means 'I have life.' I got up once and said it, to the combined gasps of everybody present:

[18] For some valuable discussions of mana waahine and other issues pertinent to feminism, New Zealand society and post-coloniality see Margie Hohepa, "Hokianga Waiata a nga Tupuna Wahine: Journeys Through Mana Wahine – Mana Tane," *Te Pua* 2.1&2 (1992): 24-26; Kathie Irwin, "Towards Theories of Maaori Feminisms," *Feminist Voices: Women's Studies Texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand*, eds. R. Du Plessis and P. Bunkle (Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press, 1991) 1-21; Linda Smith, "Maaori Women: Discourses, Projects and Mana Waahine," *Women and Education in Aotearoa 2*, eds. S. Middleton and A. Jones (Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 1994) 33-51.

> 'Women don't say that!' But women have every right to say it, since it was a woman, Hine-ahu-one, who gave the first sneeze (McLeod *Concussion* 45).

Secondly, Maaori feminism considers the role and status of Maaori women in Maaori communities and wider society. Mana waahine engages with social and political structures, nationally and internationally, noting their impact on Maaori women. In certain cases, structures which undermine or oppress Maaori women are resisted and challenged. The expression of resistance, integral to tino rangatiratanga politics, is a common facet of mana waahine thought. Within mana waahine, according to feminist filmmaker Merata Mita, resistance may be exercised as "anti-colonialism" (Mita 37). Denying the validity of a 'post' colonial existence for Maaori, Mita demands, instead, alertness to the on-going, unequal power relationship between coloniser and colonised in Aotearoa and so advocates an 'anti' colonial approach to artistic and documentary representations of Maaori. Such an approach queries and challenges the dominant economic, cultural, political and social forces which continue to impinge on Maaori lives. For her, anti-colonial resistance militates against complacency and enables greater representational control of images for Maaori women.

Thirdly, mana waahine politics assert that Maaori identity is shaped by whaanau, hapuu and iwi and that these domains are not apolitical. Mana waahine thought demands that these social structures, especially the whaanau, are recognised as politically important sites because they have great influence on Maaori women's experiences. Mana waahine thought has generated an 'inward gaze' in the themes of Maaori plays. Since the early 1990s attention to the impact of national politics on the social relations between Maaori and the Crown has been superseded by a focus on the internal and domestic politics operating in Maaori whaanau. Increasingly, Maaori women's experiences are being used to illustrate the diverse nature and range of Maaori cultural identification. Maaori playwrights are still concerned with broad political action but they project Maaori self-determination by investigating individual experiences and whaanau relationships. The plays illustrate how resistance to, or challenging of the power structures internal to Maaori society, can contribute to anti-colonial resistance and struggle at national and global levels.

Fourthly, for many Maaori women, mana waahine is about waahine autonomy and women's ability to make informed decisions in their own interests. According to Pihama, the articulation of women's experience is crucial to their expression of active agency. Maaori women's increased participation in their own dramatic representation is an important by-product of these larger trends to be more participatory in social, cultural and political realms. By becoming "active subjects who think, speak and create their own universe" (Savano 25) waahine are able to redress their invisibilisation and suppression by calling for a re-evaluation of their place and voice in society.

Pihama asserts that mana waahine is integral not only to women's expressions but also to men's. She argues that taane need to be cognisant of the racial, cultural and indigenous issues embedded in mana waahine thought because such understandings can benefit the whole of Maaori society:

> [W]e cannot allow Maaori men to get off the hook. Challenging racist, sexist, homophobic, patriarchal, capitalist structures benefits all Maaori people not solely Maaori women. Maaori men have a role to play in these challenges (*Thesis* 253).

In Maaori theatre, taane playwrights have been enlivened by the representational possibilities mana waahine offers to the expression of Maaori cultural identity on stage. In particular, aspects of self-determination that are affixed to mana waahine thought have been represented in their plays.

In large part, waahine self-representation in art has been radically altered by the emergence of a modern conceptualisation of principles derived from mana waahine. Mana waahine has been a central influence in recent artistic representations of and by Maaori women leading to the recovery and recognition of Maaori women's stories. In the 1980s and early 1990s for example, mana waahine inspired a flourishing of biographies, autobiographies, novels and historical narratives by and about Maaori women. Texts such as *The Bone People, Wahine Toa, Haeata Herstory, Nga Morehu, Potiki* and *Mana wahine Maori*, influenced particularly by the literature of Black American feminists, inspired acknowledgment of the rich experiences and contributions of Aotearoa's indigenous female population.[19]

It was part of this blooming of waahine stories which introduced playwrights such as Owen, Brown and Potiki to wider influences. Maaori feminist thought is evident in some of their plays, which address and offer solutions for social inequalities experienced by Maaori women and also provide spaces for waahine to play out and resolve identity crises. Reading the plays with these mana waahine perspectives in mind reveals drama as a site in which assumptions about the uniformity of Maaori women's identity is being questioned and arguments about universal experiences are being tested.

With an awareness that there has been little extensive, substantive work produced on Maaori plays (and a greater amount of work on attempts to define and categorise them), I use aspects of post-colonialism, post-colonial feminism and mana waahine to conduct close-readings of individual plays, groups of plays by particular playwrights, and specific performances. I point out some of the plays' social, cultural and political details and how these influence representations of Maaori women. In

[19] See Jon Battista, "Nga Ahorangi: A Bibliography of Maori Women's Creative Writing," *Hecate* 23.1 and 23.2 (1997) for an extensive and comprehensive listing of waahine writing.

so doing, I aim to identify the richness and variability – the competing possibilities – for the representation of Maaori women's lived experiences in Maaori plays.

Interviews with directors, playwrights and actors provide first-hand, experiential evidence to supplement my play readings. In particular, these interviews provide rich contributions to the discussion of the emergence and development of Maaori theatre and drama – their content and form – as well as acknowledging the range of Maaori voices and interests involved in the representation of Maaori women for the stage.

Definitions

Theatre and Drama

I have drawn on Kier Elam's definitions of theatre and drama:

> 'Theatre' is taken to refer [. . .] to the complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it. By 'drama' on the other hand, is meant that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions (2).

Most of my analyses of representations of waahine characters are based on drama written by Maaori for the stage (or stage equivalents such as halls, marae, or other venues that may function as performance spaces). Some of these textual analyses are supplemented by interpretations and observations of play performances I have attended. These have been considered in relation to "the complex of phenomena" that contribute to New Zealand theatre – its practitioners, its training institutes, its performance venues, aspects of its funding and its audiences.

Maaori theatre, Maaori drama and bicultural theatre

> Nobody really defines [bicultural theatre] clearly [. . .] we came to the conclusion from working together, put your skills into the basket, you know and that'll feed the theatre if you like (Amey, Interview 26 July 2002).

As Janinka Greenwood makes clear in her *History of Bicultural Theatre*, boundaries between the terms 'Maaori theatre' and 'bicultural theatre' are under constant negotiation. A useful distinction between these terms resides with the relative level of Maaori/Paakehaa participation. For the purposes of this thesis the term 'Maaori drama' refers to plays that are written by dramatists who acknowledge a Maaori whakapapa. 'Maaori theatre' refers to the production of those plays by a group who uses theatrical processes that are substantially determined by the Maaori involved. Crucial to any Paakehaa participation in a Maaori theatre project therefore would be the

understanding that they relinquish power and control in order to assimilate with Maaori practices. As such, it would be feasible to refer to a project as 'Maaori theatre' even though Paakehaa participants were involved.

The term 'bicultural theatre' on the other hand refers to projects which include Maaori and Paakehaa participants operating within more conventional theatrical protocols. Both terms take into account the 'skill sharing' involved in New Zealand theatre projects. In some instances, what may be considered by some to be bicultural theatre, I will refer to as Maaori theatre because the processes used and the level of involvement of Maaori at each step of the production has been significant. Given the smallness of the New Zealand theatre industry and its relatively short history, the infrastructure is so interdependent that bicultural cross-overs within Aotearoa's theatre scene are inevitable. Directorial, managerial, acting and technical expertise and skills are regularly shared.

For Maaori theatre practitioners more than their non-Maaori counterparts, the extent to which a play and its production becomes Maaori or bicultural, may depend on how intimately it engages issues of representation and how it handles the balance of Maaori as well as Paakehaa audiences. Often Maaori theatre practitioners face demands to represent Maaori accurately and sensitively – with a level of authenticity not expected of non-Maaori.

Set against other New Zealand plays, Maaori plays are distinguishable partly by recurring themes. Potiki has identified the following "themes or components" from "numerous Maaori plays from the 1970s through to the late 1990s":

> a strong sense of association with the past and tuupuna; loss; longing for what has gone or been taken; land as central to identity; the search for identity or a changing or shifting sense of identity or self; the discovery of family secrets – especially in relation to whakapapa or breaches of tapu; the arrival of a stranger as a portent of future happenings or things hidden in the past; the fight to survive intact as whanau and as a culture; conflict with authority – often in the form of government or Paakehaa control; whanau or hapu/iwi rivalries; contested leadership; spiritual forces as omnipresent, influencing all times; the special position of whaangai; inclusion of cultural forms such as haka, karanga and wero; tangi; hope for the unity of whanau or individuals (*Foreword* 9).

Potiki's list is not exhaustive or indicative of elements unique to Maaori theatre (some of the components are identifiable in non-Maaori plays too). Also, Maaori theatre and/or drama can exist without the appearance of any one of these tropes. However, the list is a useful descriptor, foregrounding the most common features apparent in a majority of Maaori plays.

Where are Aroha's granddaughters?

Together, the chapters provide a description of the increased visibility of Aroha's granddaughters on the New Zealand stage. As well, and more importantly, they lay a path which traces the development of dramatic representations that recognise Maaori women's multiple identities and experiences; expose the compound oppressions of race and gender stereotypes; and recuperate previously ignored or overlooked realities. The current prominence of waahine characters in Maaori plays is connected to the increased involvement of Maaori women practitioners (most predominantly, playwrights) in theatre praxis. The chapters chart the progress of waahine characters as they move from positions like those of their foremother, Aroha, to that of their younger kin, Te Atakura.

Chapter One, "A whakapapa of Maaori theatre and drama", provides a brief narrative history of the emergence of Maaori plays and the theatre institutions that have produced them. Focus is given to the development of a particularly influential and significant theatre production company, Taki Rua. Simultaneously, the chapter assesses the place of Maaori women in the development of Maaori drama, and begins to reclaim the special gains waahine have made as playwrights and actors.

The next two chapters argue that peculiar aspects of the content and form of Maaori theatre and drama – "Tino rangatiratanga" (Chapter Two) and "Marae theatre" (Chapter Three) – have complemented Maaori women's attempts to assert their identities through plays and performance. As modes of theatrical production, marae-concept theatre and Maaori reference theatre in particular, have assisted dramatists, directors and actors with the creation of plays that are more reflective of the lived experiences of Maaori women.

Chapter Four, "Kuia and Kootiro", focuses on the representation of waahine characters in plays by Maaori men, written and/or produced since 1980. It considers the significant effect Aroha and Queenie Mataira have had on the representations of Maaori women in plays by Maranga Mai, Hone Tuwhare, John Broughton, Apirana Taylor, Hone Kouka and Witi Ihimaera. The latter part of the chapter explores the effect of mana waahine on taane playwriting. Male playwrights are becoming more aware of the dramatic potential that derives from women's issues and concerns, and in the process, these playwrights are presenting waahine characters that begin to query and challenge the kuia and kootiro stereotypes. Chapter Five, "First Wave Waahine Playwrights", examines the work of Renee, Rena Owen, Riwia Brown and Roma Potiki. It argues that these waahine represent Maaori women's lives more realistically by breaking down kuia and kootiro stereotypes and reflecting the diversity of experiences that contribute to Maaori women's identity.

Chapter Six examines the work of contemporary playwright Briar Grace-Smith. It studies the waahine roles in five of her plays, investigating in particular the way in which a concern for the expression of a bicultural identity, along with the inclusion of tino rangatiratanga and mana waahine principles, produces waahine characters that destabilize the kuia and kootiro stereotypes established in earlier plays by taane writers. Not only do Grace-Smith's constructions of Maaori identity enable an increased focus on the realities faced by waahine; they also show Maaori women as agents in their identity formation, expressing a range of experiences and perspectives.

A set of appendices provides lists of plays by Maaori mentioned in this thesis. Appendix A provides the first (and sometimes second) production details for plays from 1980 to 2000, while Appendix B gives the first (and sometimes second) production details (where available) for plays cited in this thesis pre 1980. Appendix C is a selection of production details for plays not mentioned in the thesis but which may be of interest to the reader.[20]

Since their grandmother's appearance on New Zealand's stage, Aroha's granddaughters have made formidable gains in their theatrical representation. Informed by mana waahine principles, Maaori playwrights' dramaturgical representations of waahine emphasise Maaori women's struggles, their resistance to oppressive and silencing societal forces and their endurance and power in modern Aotearoa society. Maaori plays have muted Mrs Atkinson's patronizing call, "Where are our Maaoris?", in favour of waahine agency and demands for recognition and acknowledgement: "Ignore us at your peril!" (Kaa, Interview 18 June 2002).

[20] Maaori opera, dance, children's plays and plays written and performed in te reo Maaori are developing areas of Maaori drama and theatrical craft which are excluded from this thesis. These all require careful, detailed study. My elementary level of reo Maaori restricts any knowledgeable commentary on the content of reo Maaori plays. A history of plays written in Maaori, and research into the potential and actual benefits for audiences attending this drama would best be undertaken by a fluent Maaori speaker who could also publish in reo Maaori.