“Carving Up The Cross”: The Decolonisation of Colonial Christian Gender Hegemony in Māori Writing in English

Josephine Rosa Titapu Thomas

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature
The University of Auckland, 2021

Abstract

This thesis looks at how the texts of Māori writing in English reject, transform, and reinterpret hierarchical constructions of gender and sexuality that are present within Biblical literature through a Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori lens in order to create new understandings and interpretations of faith that disavow confining and controlling aspects of colonial and religious institutions.

The damage done by the implementation of a patriarchal, heteronormative binary gender system under colonial Christianity, as demonstrated within Witi Ihimaera's "Hine-Tītama—Ask the Posts of the House," Vaughan Rapatahana's "anglican prattle," and essa may ranapiri's "Holding Rights To," is being countered by the centring of Māori pūrākau and tikanga, as in Briar Wood's "Kilmarten Glen," and Hinemoana Baker's "Rangiātea."

These ideas of a rigid, fixed gender system that marginalises Māori men, women, and non-gender conforming individuals are worked against, through literature that draws on the stories and values of Te Ao Māori to reclaim ideas of rebirth, equality and emancipation at the heart of Biblical narrative, such as the emancipation of the self in J.C. Sturm's "Good Friday," and the disavowal of colonial Christian ideology in Apirana Taylor's "Carving up the Cross."

Narratives around faith change and adapt under different cultural contexts, and the adaptation of Christian narratives through a distinctly Māori worldview is at the centre of activist writing practices of the Māori authors under examination here. By applying a close reading methodology, this research examines how Māori authors are actively decolonising prescriptive gender roles set forth in religious ideology, contributing to the ongoing transformation of cultural and religious worldviews, such as those articulated by Reverend Māori Marsden and Upolu Lumā Vaai, and the development of a politic defined here as being of love, faith and emancipation. The primary aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the existence of decolonial, transformative reclamations of indigenous gender and faith that are being carried out through the works of Māori authors writing in English, and to examine what these reclamations look like in a decolonising context.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been one long haul of a journey. Naming all the individuals who have helped awhi me through this project feels like an impossible task. Firstly, I wish to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh, for her enduring patience, academic guidance and personal support over the duration of this project.

I have immense aroha and gratitude for my all those who have supported me: my incredible parents, Jane and Andrew, and beloved brothers Eliezer and Carwyn, for their loving awhi and ongoing encouragement; my partner Mani, for being a constant source of support and light; my niece Talialealofa, for being my staunchest defender, and her māmā Brooke, forever a source of inspiring and stimulating korero; my grandmother Pamela, whose wisdom and intellect never ceases to humble and uplift me; my wonderful flatmates, Avigail and Talia, for holding me up when I could not hold myself; Piripi and Lora, for doing the same at the beginning of this journey; my kaiako raranga Rose; my dear friend and academic peer Nils, and the Goth Cowboy discord crew; my Honours cohort; and the innumerable other friends and whānau members who have offered me both material and immaterial support in the form of books, kōrero and manaaki.

I must also acknowledge my communities, past and present, who have held me up through the decades and shaped my interests and skills. My thanks to my godmother Irene and the Mount Tabor Community, and to my godfather Brian, who passed before the genesis of this thesis but who remains with me in spirit (and whose books and whakaaro have very much contributed to my writing).

Finally, my utmost gratitude to the authors and thinkers whose works have inspired this thesis and my ongoing journey of lifelong learning.

This thesis is dedicated to those who have passed on, and those who are yet to come. I am with you.

Table of Contents

1. Laying the Foundations: An Introduction

> The grasp of a culture proceeds not from superficial intellectualism but from an approach best articulated in poetry. Poetic imagery reveals to the Māori a depth of understanding in men which is absent from the empirical approach of the social anthropologist.
> — Rev. Māori Marsden[1]

Nō Kōtirana, nō Weira, nō Ingarangi, nō Aerana ōku tūpuna.
I tae mai ōku tīpuna ki Aotearoa i te tau 1858.
I tipu ake au i Tāmaki Mākaurau i raro i te maru o te maunga o Maungawhau.
E noho ana au ki Tāmaki Mākaurau.
He tangata Tiriti au.
He Pākehā au.
Ko tēnei taku mihi ki ngā tāngata whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau nei.
Ka mihi hoki au ki ngā tohu o te rohe nei.
Nō reira, tēnā koutou katoa.

This thesis was conceptualised from the synthesis of a number of research areas that I have engaged with through my personal, professional, and academic life. My choice to focus on Māori authors has come from both a passion for Māori writing in English, and a firmly entrenched commitment to the amplification of Māori voices. The first of my family to arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand settled in Mahurangi in 1858, making me a fifth generation Pākehā. As tangata tiriti, I consider it both my responsibility and privilege to work to uphold the tenets of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. I have worked for Māori organisations on and off for my entire working life, and have had the absolute privilege of being raised in a multicultural community that allowed me some access to Te Ao Māori, the Māori world, from a range of different perspectives and spaces. I originally entered my BA as a Māori Studies major, and after the change to English Literature in my first year I found that my academic interests and

[1] Māori Marsden, "God, Man and Universe" 23.

the values of my personal and professional life did not often coalesce. After three years away from study, I was able to engage with Māori writing in English as part of the final paper of my Honours degree. Conducting this research gave me the opportunity to engage with the work of both new and familiar Māori writers, theorists and academics, and reinvigorated my interest in academic research: I finally found I was in the right place.

Since the event of colonisation, Māori authors and theorists have produced writing in English that seeks to deconstruct the colonial systems that have repressed Māori identity and Māori ways of being. Over the past century, this writing has included the works of Māori women, and more recently individuals outside the gender binary, who have further sought to break free of the repressive gender hegemony that is embedded in the colonial framework. This thesis will examine the works of Māori tāne (men), wāhine (women), and tāhine (transgender and non-binary individuals)[2] who have sought to reject, reform and transform the ideas of gender and sexuality that have been imposed by colonial Christianity in Aotearoa New Zealand. My approach to this subject is rooted in Māori and Indigenous studies scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's assertion that the validation and centring of indigenous histories and knowledges is key to decolonisation.[3] It is my belief that, in order to advocate for those who suffer the consequences of socio-economic disparities present in Aotearoa New Zealand, tangata tiriti must support the goal to decolonise Aotearoa New Zealand by actively working alongside tangata whenua to establish tino rangatiratanga. It is only through developing an understanding of mātauranga Māori, traditional Māori knowledge systems, and instituting tikanga Māori, customary Māori laws and practices, that we can effectively dismantle the Eurocentric, imperialist systems that continue to dispossess and disconnect communities.

I came into this research as someone who is both Pākehā and non-religious, and as such, my aim to amplify and promote the work of Māori writers and theorists on my chosen topic has been both challenging and discomfiting. The objective of contributing research on Māori writing in English that does not privilege a Western perspective is itself in some ways at odds with the very nature of the academic thesis.[4] Tuhiwai Smith identifies that, in addition

---

[2] "Transgender Health Services for the Northern Region," *Auckland District Health Board*. https://adhb.health.nz/our-services/a-z-services/transgender-health-services-for-the-northern-region/ "Tāhine, or Ira Tāhūrua-kore," *Gender Minorities*. https://genderminorities.com/glossary-transgender/#Tāhine
n.b. I use the term 'tāhine' here as an umbrella term for both transgender and non-binary individuals. Tāhine is a new word, combining tāne and wāhine, that has been defined separately as a term for transgender individuals, and as a term for mixed-gender or non-binary individuals.

[3] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 81.

[4] Tuhiwai Smith, 92-94.

to values and cultural orientation, Western research is codified through "competing theories of knowledge, highly specialized forms of language, and structures of power."[5] As a literary framework within the colonial institution of the university, the thesis does not often afford respect to the traditionally oral modes of knowledge sharing present in Te Ao Māori. Due to limitations on word count and time restrictions, there is an absence of qualitative research and oral history in this thesis, most notably kanohi ki te kanohi, face to face, engagement with the authors and thinkers whose works I have drawn on. My objective is further complicated by my inability to speak on Te Ao Māori with anything resembling authority. It is due to the teachings of Māori members of my whānau and community that I have been able to develop my own understanding of the indigenous epistemologies and cosmogonies of Aotearoa New Zealand. This understanding comes with an awareness of my outsider positioning. Rather than claiming or attempting to create a new framework for decolonisation, I have focused on close analysis of the texts and drawn primarily on indigenous and postcolonial theorists in my approach.

In being thus concerned with treating the subject matter with due care and consideration, I was taken by surprise by the mamae, the hurt, that rose up for me during the research process. As a queer and gender non-conforming person, investigating the impacts of colonial Christian gender hegemony in Aotearoa New Zealand has been a deeply personal, and at times painful, undertaking. I had not considered that investigating the repression of indigenous genders and sexualities from the self-reflexive position of an outsider would not allow for the space needed to process and confront how these systems have impacted and continue to impact my own day to day existence. Navigating my own position in relation to my research has been extensive off the page mahi, work, which has been integral to my analysis of the texts in this thesis. In doing this mahi, I have been brought sharply back to the crux of the theory that I am engaging with: eschewing binary categorisation and individual identity, and looking at the ways in which people and things are interrelated. Unlike the divisive and oppositional constructs present in much of Western individualist culture, Te Ao Māori conceives of people, land, and all things, as being intrinsically connected and bound together as part of an integrated whole.[6]

In engaging with the subject of relationality and community identity, I cannot overstate the privilege and gratitude I owe to being brought up in and alongside Mount Tabor

[5] Tuhiwai Smith, 92.
[6] Reid, Taylor-Moore, and Varona, "Towards A Social-Structural Model," 522.

Community Trust, a community of people with and without disabilities living together. This community, comprised of people from different cultures, faiths, sexualities and abilities, shaped who I am today. The influence of both my immediate whānau and my whāngai[7] Mount Tabor whānau is entrenched in my research interests at every level. While it would be remiss to not acknowledge that Mount Tabor is itself a Catholic community, it is also one that has been accepting of people of all faiths and creeds. My parents brought me up in an unambiguously secular household, with a wide variety of spiritual influences coming from the many communities of which they were a part. My interest in faith and the history of religion appeared at an early age, no doubt in part due to the differing beliefs of the people around me. The workings of colonial Christianity as an ideological state apparatus, and the importance of faith to both individuals and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, have been of particular interest to me as I have delved into academic research. The struggle to accept, understand and synthesise these two particular facets of the religion is one that I have found to be of personal importance for many of those working towards decolonisation. In mapping the different responses and approaches present in the texts of Māori writing in English, this thesis seeks to clarify and outline a variety of ways in which Māori authors draw on Māoritanga and mātauranga Māori in order to actively deconstruct and decolonise the imposed, repressive structures of colonial Christianity.

This first chapter of the thesis will provide an outline of the methodology I have used in approaching the texts, conceptualising the object of the tokotoko, the carved walking stick of the orator, as a framework through which my analysis has been conducted. Chapter 2: Presenting the Rākau is concerned with the treatment of hegemonic gender ideals in relation to colonial Christianity, examining how gender has been constructed within the confines of the Church as an ideological state apparatus. The texts engaged within this chapter are all critical of colonial Christianity, and have been chosen as exemplars of Māori authors writing from a space of opposition to the values, systems and ideas present in colonial Christian society. Moving on from this, Chapter 3: Carving the Cross will provide analyses of texts where Māori authors have drawn on mātauranga Māori to reclaim, reform and transform Christianity. This chapter looks at how Christianity has been adopted by Māori as an emancipatory faith, and has been synthesised with Te Ao Māori to develop a distinct, new

[7] While I have provided a gloss throughout this thesis of kupu Māori (See: 1.2 On Reading Māori Writing in English), the decision to do so has its limitations. The term ‘whāngai’, for example,has many meanings, including ‘nurture,’ ‘adoptive,’ ‘foster,’ or ‘nourish.’ None of these English terms alone can fully encapsulate the meaning of the term in this context.

form of spirituality that rejects repressive gender hierarchies. Where the second and third chapters deal with responses to hegemonic gender roles and hierarchies within colonial Christianity, Chapter 4: Passing the Tokotoko looks at binary gender and heteronormativity as colonial Christian impositions. Focusing predominantly on the texts of takatāpui, Māori individuals whose gender or sexuality diverges from imposed colonial gender roles, this chapter will examine how Māori authors have drawn on mātauranga Māori to deconstruct colonial Christian gender hegemony with the objective of reclaiming gender and sexual diversity as an integral part of their identities as Māori. Throughout the thesis, I will be examining and outlining how the values of Te Ao Māori held in common by the texts offer responses to colonial Christian gender hegemony, and different approaches to the decolonisation of this system.

1.1 Methodology: Investigating Māori Spiritualities and Colonial Christian Gender Hegemony

In looking at the myriad of responses to Christianity present in the texts of Māori writing in English for this thesis, it is clear from the outset that the relationship between Christianity and Māori spirituality is multilayered and complex. Murray Rae, in the introduction to *Mana Māori and Christianity*, observed that "a single definitive story is plainly impossible… [...] The stories of Māori engagement with Christianity deserve a more careful and nuanced telling."[8] While for some Christianity may be conceived of as a clear enemy, a tool of the oppressor, for many Māori it has become an entrenched part of their spirituality. However, Christianity as it occurs in Te Ao Māori is distinct from the Christianity that was brought with the colonial missionaries. The values, beliefs and traditions passed down through mātauranga Māori have been synthesised with those of Christianity, giving rise to distinct new belief systems. As authors Witi Ihimaera and Whiti Hereaka note, this can be evidenced in Māori rituals and forms of worship, such as tangihanga: "Our funeral services may begin within a Christian setting but, most often, they end with the farewelling of our dead back to Hawaiki."[9] While many aspects of tangihanga have changed over time and been adopted from Christianity, the pre-colonial principles that are steeped in Te Ao Māori remain the same.[10]

[8] Rae, "Introduction," in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, viii.
[9] Ihimaera and Hereaka, "Introduction," in *Pūrākau*, 13.
[10] Marsden, "God, Man and Universe," 10.

The question of what comprises traditional culture has been a central concern for many indigenous thinkers. Evan Poata Smith articulates the concern that ideas about pre-colonial Māori life are shaped by colonial influences, stating that "modern interpretations [of pre-colonial Māori culture and practices] often obscure the complexities of the system and the extreme regional variations that existed prior to the European contact."[11] In undertaking an analysis of texts that are written by authors of different genders, iwi, and backgrounds, I will be drawing on ideas from Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori that have been published by a range of Māori academics. These authors have different approaches to recording the values and belief systems of Te Ao Māori. Ani Mikaere, for example, has focused on the common themes, ideas and narratives within different iwi's pūrākau, mythological stories, in order to gain a generalised understanding of pre-colonial Māori culture.[12] Mikaere's approach is highly critical of Christianity, and draws on ideas from Te Ao Māori to critique colonial Christian gender hegemony as it occurs in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. Conversely, Reverend Māori Marsden, who was both an ordained Anglican minister and tohunga, a spiritual expert in mātauranga Māori, explicitly identifies his writings on Te Ao Māori as subjective, rooted in his own individual experience growing up in the culture.[13] In addition to drawing on ideas articulated by Mikaere and Marsden, my research takes both the pan-iwi approach of the former and the explicitly subjective approach of the latter.

The decision to conduct this research through a pan-iwi, and pan-Pacific, lens has allowed me to undertake analysis and draw conclusions that reflect the diversity of responses to colonial Christian gender hegemony. This decision has also allowed me the space to explicitly acknowledge my subjective experience and research with an awareness of the limitations of these. However, it is also a decision that comes with its own set of limitations, as it does not offer the insights that focusing on the specific values of a smaller group may have. In drawing on Pacific theorists alongside Māori theorists, I am working from Epeli Hau'ofa's conception of the Pacific as the vast and expansive home to a series of interconnected cultures.[14] The unique relationship between Māori and other Pacific peoples is explicitly explored in Alice Te Punga Somerville's *Once Were Pacific,* where she analyses how the geographical and genealogical links between Māori and the Pacific are explored by Māori and other Pacific creators.[15] The overarching classification of Pacific Islanders as a

[11]Poata-Smith, "The Political Economy Of Maori Protest Politics," 71.
[12] Mikaere, *Colonising Myths—Māori Realities,* 308-309.
[13] Marsden, "God, Man and Universe," 2.
[14] Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," 152-155.
[15] Somerville, *Once Were Pacific,* 3-10.

distinct group from Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand reinforces a divide between the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa and their extended whānau across the Pacific. While Hau'ofa, amongst others, seeks to conceive of Pacific nations as part of a larger oceanic nation, in colonial New Zealand, at least, there has been a distinct divide that is at odds with the focus in Te Ao Māori on tracing whakapapa, genealogical descent, back to Hawaiiki. In taking a cross-cultural approach to the analysis of my primary texts, I seek to acknowledge the many connections between Māori and other Pacific cultures. In doing so, I also acknowledge that there are limitations in this approach, in part due to the cultural division and disconnect that has been perpetuated by European colonialism.

There is also an element of necessity to cross-cultural analysis when looking specifically at pre-colonial sexuality and gender roles, as the imposition of colonial Christianity has resulted in the erosion of traditional knowledge across the Pacific.[16] In looking specifically at this impact in Aotearoa New Zealand, Elizabeth Kerekere states that "colonisation pathologised the gender and sexual fluidity our tūpuna [ancestors] enjoyed."[17] Through analysis of similarities of experience in colonial repression, alongside written and oral evidence, it can be assumed that there likely was similar gender diversity in pre-colonial Māori society to that which is found across the Pacific. This is demonstrated through the terms whaka-tāne and whaka-wahine, recently adopted by the Māori transgender community, which have cognates in Pacific languages such as the fa'atane and fa'afafine of Samoa. Hirini Moko Mead claims that whaka-tāne and whaka-wahine were traditionally "recognised and incorporated into the community,"[18] prior to colonisation all but erasing their existence. While these terms have a recent history of reclamation in Aotearoa New Zealand, the cognates across the Pacific and traditional pūrākau, such as that behind the place name Whakatāne, provide further evidence that pre-colonial Māori society included a broader spectrum of gender identities.[19] The process of discovering, knowing, and claiming the pre-colonial past has been "part of the critical pedagogy of decolonisation" for indigenous thinkers.[20]

The focus of this thesis, however, is not what Māori culture was prior to colonisation, but rather how Māori authors decolonise colonial impositions today. Samoan poet and writer Albert Wendt criticises the idea of decolonisation being a return to the past, claiming that

[16] Aspin and Hutchings, "Reclaiming the Past to Inform the Future," 416.
[17] Kerekere, *Part of the Whānau*, 21.
[18] Mead, *Tikanga Māori*, 348.
[19] Kerekere, 64-65.
[20] Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 81.

cultures are neither pure or static.[21] Decolonisation must be a process of progress rather than regression, and be the active forging of new traditions. The hybridisation of Christianity and Te Ao Māori, and the formation of Māori specific Christian movements such as Ringatū and Rātana, exemplifies how culture has irrevocably changed and shifted over time. This hybridisation of spiritual systems is also a phenomenon that has occurred across the Pacific. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be analysing authorial responses to colonial Christianity in Aotearoa New Zealand through the lens of Upolu Lumā Vaai's theory of relational hermeneutics. This theory is a framework of relationality through which indigenous peoples of the Pacific can decolonise, interpret, and perceive life.[22] In implementing a relational hermeneutics methodology in a specifically Te Ao Māori context, I will identify how Māori writing in English actively works to decolonise and reconceive the relationships between gender, God, and culture.

Vaai describes relational hermeneutics from a specifically Samoan context, writing that a relational hermeneutics "starts with the people and their itulagi."[23] The itulagi is the lifeworld, the unique contexts that make up the perspectives of individuals and the universal contexts that connect all. It is the open ended connection between the individual and the universal. It is through exploration of the itulagi that Vaai defines relationality as the foundational key to life and wellbeing for peoples across the Pacific. In building a relational hermeneutics, Vaai is looking to the idea of relationships—between people, the land, God—as dictating the rhythms of life pre-colonisation. The centring and privileging of relationality is a key tool and core value for decolonisation in the Pacific. This conception of a relational hermeneutics rejects the Western idea of relationality which is dualistic, calling for the rediscovery of a Pacific mindset that is fluid and dancing, that is non-dual in nature. Consequently, Pacific relationality is holistic and is a complete whole: it is not the relationship between two, or more, separate wholes, but instead the synthesis of all elements into one whole, through how bodies and spaces are related to and in each other.

Relational hermeneutics seek to honour all aspects that make up relationality, through an open ended, discursive, and ultimately dialectical engagement with the world that is critical of anthropocentrism. By honouring the relationship between opposing perspectives, the ways in which they are found within one another, relational hermeneutics seeks to reconcile and deconstruct their opposition. Within the whakataukī, most commonly referred

[21] Wendt, "Towards A New Oceania," 52-3.
[22] Vaai, "Relational Hermeneutics," 17-41.
[23] Vaai, 23.

to in English as proverbs, and pūrākau that offer wisdom on how work, rituals, and daily life should be carried out in Te Ao Māori, there is always an acknowledgement of these reciprocal relationships between the environment and humans.[24] It is understood that all things have mauri, an essential vitality or life force, and thus must be treated with respect.[25] As within a relational hermeneutics framework, Te Ao Māori conceives of humans as being "subjects of the environment, rather than its masters," with the whakapapa of Māori tracing a direct lineage not only to their human ancestors but, through Papatūānuku, the land itself.[26] Within Te Ao Māori, this relationship between people and the land is one that is deeply important. Mana whenua, people who hold authority over, and have a familial relationship to, specific bodies of land, had reciprocal obligations to their land. As kaitiaki, custodians of the land, they were not conceived of as owners of the land but rather as being part of a reciprocal relationship in which they took care of the land, which in turn provided for them.[27] Te Ao Māori therefore follows the conception of relational hermeneutics as a bodily, disruptive, non-normative, and reflective engagement with the world.

In articulating his framework of relational hermeneutics, Vaai asserts that there is a problem in the "human consciousness to weave together 'one' and the 'many'... into a holistic relational whole."[28] Being relational is about having a fluid and harmonious grasp of both individual and community as being aspects within one another, the integrated sum total of a whole. Relational hermeneutics thus celebrate Pacific life and are critical of colonial mindsets, including those already embedded in local cultures and traditions. Vaai talks explicitly about God as relational, stating that "God is *in* the world and the world is *in* God."[29] Throughout the Pacific, Western Christianity has flourished, often acting as a repressive tool of colonial capitalism. In looking at God as being within the world and the world within God, relationality rejects the dualism of colonial Christianity: the separation of secular and sacred, mundane and divine. This conceptualising of God as relational is key to reconfiguring how religion operates in a Pacific context. Within Te Reo Māori, the relationships between God, people, and the land are clearly articulated in the multiple meanings of particular words. The word whenua is known to mean land, ground or earth, and is also the body of Papatūānuku, the atua from which all Māori are descended. Whenua also

[24] Patterson, *Exploring Maori Values*, 20.
[25] Patterson, 18.
[26] Sanders, "Beyond Human Ownership," 211.
[27] Sanders, 212.
[28] Vaai, "Relational Hermeneutics," 26.
[29] Vaai, 32.

has the meaning ‘placenta,’ the organ which nurtures a developing child in the womb.[30] As outlined earlier, the placenta, once expelled, would traditionally be buried and in turn would nourish the earth. Likewise, the words whānau, hapū, and iwi, each hold multiple meanings. In articulating the kinship structures of Māori society, a whānau is taken to mean an extended family, while a hāpu is a collection of whānau who share common tūpuna, and an iwi is a group of several hāpu. However, the word whānau also means ‘to give birth,’ to be hāpu is to be pregnant, and the term iwi can refer to bones, which in Māori society are usually buried in caves or the earth following an individual’s death.[31] Both the customary practices surrounding birth and death, and the specific language used to discuss people and land, articulate the significant symbiotic relationship between people and land, and the importance of the land to mana whenua.

The separation of God from the world is a core component of how authority has been mandated within a colonial context: monarchs throughout Europe were said to be given the divine right to rule.[32] In introducing a God that was separate from the world, colonisers also set apart people, introducing the idea of fixed boundaries, which ultimately disallowed space for gender fluidity. In seeking to engage with relational hermeneutics in relation to Te Ao Māori and colonial Christian gender hegemony, I look to Mikaere’s description of “an overarching principle of balance” as being central to Te Ao Māori, and to understanding gender roles according to tikanga Māori.[33] Mikaere points to the central roles of women in Māori cosmogony, and the gender-neutral nature of Te Reo Māori as further indicators of the absence of a rigid gender hierarchy pre-colonisation. The creation of two distinct categories of gender was mandated by interpretations of biblical texts. God, in Heaven, who creates man, on Earth, in His image, after which woman is created *from* man. This common iteration of Genesis is not only a very patriarchal interpretation of the text, but is a narrative that is reliant on dualism that first and foremost separates God from the world. In comparison, Māori cosmogony is rooted in relationality, with people and the environment having a shared lineage all the way back to the atua, or Gods, with Ranginui and Papatūānuku being the original progenitors of life. Everything is interrelated, with both ancestors and descendents being *in* the individual, similar to how Vaai conceives of God being *in* the world. Whakapapa is therefore of fundamental importance to Māori, and the introduction of colonial Christian

[30] Mead, *Tikanga Māori*, 378-380.
[31] Mead, *Tikanga Māori*, 380.
[32] Goucher and Walton, *World History*, 497-498.
[33] Mikaere, *Colonising Myths*, 186.

gender hegemony created a unique issue for takatāpui: that of needing to balance cultural identity with sexuality and gender diversity.[34] The term takatāpui is thus itself of particular importance to those individuals who identify as such, as it "embraces both cultural and sexual components of one's identity with fluidity being a key feature of this descriptor."[35]

Beyond being the vehicle through which this new gender hegemony was brought to Aotearoa New Zealand, Western Christianity can also be identified as the ideological state apparatus through which the event of colonisation was mandated. The Doctrine of Discovery, a legal concept issued by the Catholic church at the end of the 15th century, served as the basis for the colonisation of land and commodification of indigenous bodies by European Christians.[36] The trans-Atlantic slave trade throughout the 17th and 18th centuries was likewise justified by the Church, with the dual oppression of Black women as both non-white and non-male being due to their position as the non-canonical Other.[37] In looking at the intersecting oppression of gendered and racialised bodies, it is important to acknowledge that the overarching kyriarchy in place in colonial capitalist states were thus ordained by the colonial God. The term 'kyriarchy,' as coined by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, is used here in place of hierarchy to connote a "social-political system of subordination and domination."[38] Fiorenza uses the term in her argument that gender constructions are created and policed by the state, rather than identifying misogyny as being rooted in essentialist Western gender dualism.

Despite the active role of the colonial Church in the ongoing and violent oppression of women, racially Othered and queer individuals, Christianity has experienced astounding success as a religion globally. Liberation theologists identify this phenomena as having its roots in biblical narrative, with James Cone pointing out that in the Old Testament "the prophets of Israel are prophets of social justice, reminding the people that Yahweh is the author of justice."[39] Christian narrative is rooted in the emancipation of people who are under occupation or in a position of, often involuntary, exodus. As such, the Christian Bible and its teachings become a source of comfort, a promise of emancipation, for disenfranchised and diasporic populations. Cone goes on to claim that "white theology" is not a true theology, in

[34] Kerekere, *Part of the Whānau*, 21.
[35] Aspin and Hutchings, "Reclaiming the Past to Inform the Future," 422.
[36] Ngata, "The Right to Conquer and Claim."
See also: Healy, "Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery."
[37] Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*.
[38] Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 14, n. 51.
[39] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2.

that it uses Christianity to justify oppression.[40] As a response to the violent subjugation, dispossession of land, and commodification of human life that had been enacted by colonial Christianity, oppressed populations turned to the teachings of scripture and culturally specific iterations of the faith emerged. In Aotearoa New Zealand, new forms of Christianity arose that blended tikanga Māori with the teachings of scripture. As outlined by Keith Newman in his essay "Rātana, the Prophet: Mā te wā - the Sign of the Broken Watch," Māori felt a strong connection to the stories of the Bible, as well as an "awareness that their customs and practices and land issues were similar to those of ancient Israel."[41] While Te Ao Māori conceives of the world as relational, with each person and object existing in relation to one another, it is not animistic. There is also the understanding of a distinct, spiritual realm, allowing the space for syncretic Māori Christian faith systems to arise.[42]

While the commodification of land and bodies was an objective of colonial Christianity, the teachings of the Bible, and the narratives around the displacement of the Jewish people from their homeland, held resonance for Māori who were being systematically dispossessed. Akin to the itulagi articulated in Vaai's conception of a relational hermeneutics, Te Ao Māori conceives of the relationship between God, land, and people as being inextricably linked. As all things in Te Ao Māori are related through their whakapapa back to the original atua, the earth itself is viewed as an ancestor, to be respected and nourished. In identifying themselves, Māori recite their whakapapa, including their tūrangawaewae, their place of belonging. Māori Catholic Tui Cadogan articulates that a "landless Māori is literally a non-person; there is no 'place' they belong."[43] Traditional Māori practices involved the burial of placenta at birth, and body at death, in their tūrangawaewae. The appropriation and commodification of land thus separated mana whenua not only from their place of origin, but also from the land which was inextricably bound up in their identities and understanding of the world. Due to the ancestral, spiritual relationship between Māori and the whenua, the ideas of land ownership, land gifting, and the commodification of land were not present within Te Ao Māori.[44] The systematic removal of Māori communities from the land to which they had a reciprocal obligation resulted in the disruption and disintegration of cultural practices. Consequently, Māori connected with biblical narratives, such as the Canaanites' experience of being dispossessed of both land and culture in Deuteronomy. Further, Māori

[40] Cone, 9.
[41] Newman, "Rātana, the Prophet," in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, 247.
[42] Healy, "Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery," 41.
[43] Cadogan, "A Three-Way Relationship," 31.
[44] Cadogan, 35.

were able to resonate with the cultural experiences laid out in the Book of Joshua, which articulates the notion of ancestral land being allocated to a specific group, who have a set of responsibilities to live on, care for, and be buried on that same land.[45]

Conversely, the separation of bodies from land, and the commodification of both bodies and the land functioned as a dual objective of colonial Christianity. The appropriation of indigenous land and subsequent creation of a property-less class allowed for the colonial capitalist settlers to subjugate the Māori population into a human labour-force.[46] This subjugation of Māori was furthered through both the implementation of colonial Christian gender hegemony and the construction of Māori-specific gender ideals. Māori women were conceived by colonial settlers as "either in family terms as wives and children, or in sexual terms as easy partners,"[47] a construction that ignored Māori women in positions of authority, and simultaneously fetishized and subordinated Māori women. The colonisers also perpetuated the idea that Māori men were physically outstanding but intellectually limited, a myth that enabled settlers to funnel Māori into a manual labour workforce.[48] In creating and circulating the idea that Māori were innately physical, hyper-sexual people, colonisers objectified and commodified Māori bodies in order to continually exploit the indigenous population for the reproduction of labour.

Contemporary institutionalised racism and the violent history of colonisation, combined with the ongoing trauma of land theft, land desecration, and the imposition of Western epistemologies and hegemonies has had an ongoing traumatic impact for Māori, resulting in the effects of colonisation being very much felt today.[49] Research into Māori health and wellbeing has revealed that this has resulted in epigenetic trauma, in which the pain of past and present trauma is felt in the body. The spiritual and psychological impact of colonisation has resulted in ongoing, material health issues for Māori.[50] The systematic removal of Māori communities from the land to which they had a reciprocal obligation has had an ongoing traumatic impact for Māori today. Consequently, the introduction of colonial Christianity as a system that commodified both the bodies and land of Māori has had a deeply devastating impact on the Māori population.

---

[45] Cadogan, 32.
[46] Poata-Smith, 12.
[47] Tuhiwai Smith, "Māori Women: Discourse Projects and Mana Wahine," 48.
[48] Hokowhitu, "Tackling Māori Masculinity," 266-268.
[49] Reid et al., *The Colonising Environment*, 16.
[50] Reid, Taylor-Moore and Varona, "Towards A Social-Structural Model," 522.

1.2 On Reading Māori Writing in English

In the research around the literature of Aotearoa New Zealand, there is still only a limited number of works that focus on Māori writing and mātauranga Māori. Jon Battista Lois's PhD thesis, *Me He Korokoro Komāko: A Māori Aesthetic in Māori Writing in English* identifies a distinct Māori aesthetic, that is stylistically rich and draws extensively from Te Ao Māori. Lois identifies the centrality of myth, the oral dimension, names, language, and symbolism as key components of a Māori aesthetic in Māori writing in English. She asserts that the centrality of myth is indicative of the importance of cosmogonic myth for understanding tikanga and the "complex paradigm within which a Māori aesthetic operates."[51] There is a history of denigration of the English term 'myth' that undermines the reality of these stories for Māori,[52] and for this reason I will be using the term pūrākau when engaging with the traditional stories of Māori cosmogony. Witi Ihimaera and Whiti Hereaka likewise highlight the importance of pūrākau in the introduction to *Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers*, outlining the role of pūrākau prior to colonial Christianity through to today, and asserting the whakapapa of humankind in relation to the gods as very much real, anchored in Māori life, as demonstrated in the ritual acknowledgement of atua in formal settings, despite the Christianisation of many Māori.[53] Further, Ranginui Walker asserts that there is ongoing cultural relevance to the "myth-messages and cultural imperatives" that are embedded in traditional pūrākau.[54] My analysis of the use of pūrākau in Māori writing in English will therefore be drawing on Robert Pouwhare's claim that pūrākau, as sources of mātauranga Māori, are, and should be used as, a decolonising instrument.[55]

Traditionally pūrākau, as repositories of mātauranga Māori, were passed down orally through the generations. Lois identifies the oral dimension as a further defining characteristic of a Māori aesthetic, outlining how orality is conveyed through Māori writing in the use of narrative voice, rhythm and patterning, and the incorporation of sung or spoken performances. Many of the texts I will be discussing in this thesis are poetry, a form that benefits from being spoken aloud and is often written with this intention. The decision to analyse both poetry and short stories, rather than focus on one form, comes from my understanding of Māori writing in English being part of a whakapapa of stories traditionally spoken aloud and told to convey mātauranga Māori—a whakapapa of kōrero, conversation

[51] Battista, *Me He Korokoro Kōmako,* 75.
[52] Pouwhare, "Kai Hea Kai Hea te Pū o te Mate?," 8.
[53] Ihimaera and Hereaka, "Introduction" in *Pūrākau,* 12.
[54] Walker, "The Relevance Of Maori Myth And Tradition," 170.
[55] Pouwhare, "Kai Hea Kai Hea te Pū o te Mate?," 16.

and narratives, and pūrākau. The dimension of orality in Māori writing in English results in a shared aesthetic across short stories and poetry, with narrative voice in short stories often being employed in such a way as to convey rhythms and patterning that are identified, in English literature, as usually being part of poetic tradition.

Following on from the importance of the oral dimension, Lois looks at names and language within Māori writing. The use of names in texts is deeply important, with place names drawing on rich whakapapa and personal names having specific meaning and intention. The code switching between English and Te Reo Māori is prevalent in many of the examined texts, exemplifying the importance of language, and names, as receptacles that hold culture. Tina Makereti, in her essay "He taonga Te Reo: How ngā Kupu Māori contribute to New Zealand Writing in English," argues that Te Reo Māori offers a richness of meaning that honours the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and the distinct cultures here, meaning that cannot be conveyed in the use of English alone.[56] Further, the use of kupu Māori, words in Te Reo Māori, in works written predominantly in English acts as a resistance to the implicit privileging of Western norms and experiences in the use of colonial languages.[57] This is an act of reclamation, resisting colonial dominance and integrating indigenous language into colonial literacy in order to locate the poem in a specific geographical location and within a specific cultural community.[58] As mentioned in my discussion of the relationship between people and the land, names and words in Te Reo Māori offer up a multiplicity of meaning that cannot be found in English. Consequently, the use of Māori names and kupu opens up texts to diverse and layered interpretations. For example, the multiple meanings of the word "kōrero" emphasise the significance of the oral dimension in Māori writing in English, with the kupu being translated as both the verb 'to speak,' as well as the nouns 'conversation,' 'speech,' 'narrative,' and 'story.' This multiplicity of meaning can bring symbolic meaning to texts that would not be found without the use of kupu Māori. For the purposes of this thesis, I have glossed the kupu Māori used throughout. This decision was made in recognition of the Western academic framework of the thesis as a body of work in the discipline of English literature. There are a number of limitations that come with the decision to gloss, due not only to the multiplicity of meaning found within kupu Māori, but also due to the fact that there are terms that are culturally specific and lose aspects of their meaning when translated.

[56] Makereti, "He Taonga Te Reo," 116.
[57] Spahr, "Connected Disconnection and Localized Globalism," 77.
[58] Spahr, 100.

Symbolism is the final aspect of Lois's identified Māori aesthetic, with forms and objects from Te Ao Māori being often incorporated into texts in order to codify meaning.[59] For the purposes of this thesis, I will be looking at the tokotoko, and the cross as symbols that are codified within the texts. In the preface to *Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold By Māori Authors*, James Ormsby provides a breakdown of the tokotoko form that serves as the book's cover image. The tokotoko depicts versions of the cosmogonic pūrākau through images drawing on traditional whakairo, detailing "Creation; The Ancestors; The Sea to the Land; Mythical Beings; and Rarohenga."[60] Ihimaera and Hereaka further expand on this symbol, inviting the reader to conceive of the book as a tokotoko and stating that the tokotoko is "the symbol of the storyteller… [it] also evokes the pou that Tāne might have used to separate his parents."[61] The tokotoko, as the ceremonial walking stick of an orator, and poupou, as the carved posts of the meeting house, are symbols that are characterised by the carved pūrākau that allows them to operate as repositories of knowledge, sharing mātauranga Māori through the whakairo, traditional carving, that adorns them. I invite you to conceive of this thesis as a tokotoko, mapping the genealogy of author responses to colonial Christian gender hegemony through the evocation of pūrākau.

Throughout this thesis I will be returning to the central importance of tokotoko as a claim to the right to speak, and as the rākau presented in challenge, positioned in opposition to, and at times synthesised with, the symbol of the cross, another richly symbolic carved wooden object. This idea of binary opposition is a distinctly Western framework. In taking an approach that is rooted in the values of Te Ao Māori, this thesis will be looking at the ways symbols, objects, and spaces are transformed, synthesised, and given value and spirit in ways that fall outside of, or challenge, the colonial paradigm. As Reverend Māori Marsden articulates, it is through poetic imagery, not Western research, that the writers examined in this thesis demonstrate tino rangatiratanga and claim sovereignty of their worlds, and words.

[59] Battista, 121.
[60] Ormsby, "James Ormsby Decodes his Tokotoko Form," 9.
[61] Ihimaera and Hereaka, "Introduction," 20.

2. Presenting the Rākau: Challenging Colonial Christian Gender Hegemony

In my reading of Māori authors whose texts dealt with the impact of colonial Christian gender hegemony, I came across many critical and contemptuous rejections of this imposed construct. It became clear to me that these challenges to the authority of colonial Christianity were the starting point for tracing the whakapapa, or lineage, of these textual responses. They were the foundational texts for my analysis, highly critical condemnations and rejections of colonial impositions that demanded a return to indigenous-centred epistemological assertions. Delving deeper into the texts, I became aware of the recurring motifs of the phallic object and the symbols of Christianity. These were at times conflated, as is seen in Tayi Tibble's poem likening the bible to both a rifle and penis. The tokotoko itself has been conceived of as a phallic object, with Māori artist and illustrator James Ormsby stating that the shaft represents the ure, the penis, of Tāne, "the progenitor of humankind."[62] If this thesis is to be taken as a tokotoko, then the texts I examine in this chapter have been conceived of as the rākau: the tree, the timber, from which the tokotoko is carved.

The rākau is the raw material which is used to construct, to carve, to create. The rākau is the foundation of spaces inhabited and objects of authority. The rākau is also a symbol of wero, challenge, as the taiaha, fighting staff, that is presented as a customary challenge to important manuhiri, visitors, during pōwhiri. It is no wonder, then, that the narrator of Witi Ihimaera's short story "Hine-Tītama—Ask the Posts of the House"[63] carries a rākau, a walking stick. Isaac Tairāwhiti Jnr plays the role of orator for Ihimaera's contemporary retelling of the traditional pūrākau of Hine-Tītama's transformation into Hine-nui-te-Pō, with his walking stick acting as a proxy tokotoko, the orator's rākau. Characterised as incapable of attaining the ideal hegemonic masculinity of his family due to his club foot, the rākau that aids Isaac's mobility throughout the story acts both as a phallic symbol and an emblem of his authority, and a marker of his divergence from hegemonic Māori masculinity.

Isaac is characterised from the outset as being an early disappointment to his family, stating that his parents were "shocked by my deformity, especially my father, who was a highly regarded sportsman in Māori tennis, rugby and wrestling"(Ihimaera, 60). Isaac's disability bars him from attaining hegemonic Māori masculinity, resulting in him becoming successful academically. However, he does not find celebration of his academic prowess until he is leaving his whānau for a prestigious boarding school. Physical prowess is valued over

[62] Ormsby, "James Ormsby Decodes his Tokotoko Form," 9.
[63] Ihimaera, "Hine-Tītama—Ask the Posts of the House," 55-91.

the academic, indicative of the values and expectations placed on Māori men. This introduction to hegemonic Māori masculinity as being centred on physical prowess is further emphasised by the characterisation of the other men in Isaac's family as "smiling, physically imposing beings who strode through life with careless charm and abandon" (66). The physicality and virility of Isaac's father and uncles is repeatedly emphasised, with Isaac stating that "[a]s young men they were notoriously phallus-driven, creating the template by which my own weedy masculinity could only be measured in the negative" (66).

This concept of an ideal Māori masculinity that has its foundations in virility and physicality is a historical construction from the time of early colonisation.[64] In his essay "Tackling Māori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport," Brendan Hokowhitu describes how, in conceptualising an innate Māori masculinity, settlers created a hegemonic construct comprised of "selected qualities of British colonial masculinity."[65] Since colonisation, Māori men have assumed the qualities of this colonial construct of Māori masculinity in order to gain "limited, conditional access to the white man's world."[66] Access to academic education was restricted, with schools focusing on pushing Māori men into agriculture and sport.[67] Early colonial settlers and missionaries conceptualised Māori men as being "physical, whimsical, unsophisticated, childlike, ruled by passion—and therefore in need of enlightenment through civilisation."[68] The construction of a hegemonic Māori masculinity functioned to position Pākehā men as superior, while celebrating specific traits constructed as inherently Māori in order to subjugate Māori for settlers' benefit.

Hokowhitu argues that Ihimaera's characters that challenge hegemonic Māori masculinity have a tendency to rely on the opposing characterisation of patriarchal, "traditional" Māori men who embody the ideal.[69] Indeed, the "sexual personalities" of Isaac's father and uncles are described as being "more like the god brothers of Māori mythology" than followers of "the Christian values of fidelity" (Ihimaera, "Hine-Tītama," 66). In drawing on pre-colonial pūrākau in the descriptions of these men, the implication of the text is that these masculine ideals are inherently Māori, or at least pre-colonial in construction. However, the positioning of a hegemonic Māori masculinity that is at odds with colonial Christianity is part of the system of control put in place to limit Māori access to achievement in the colonial

[64] Hokowhitu, "Tackling Māori Masculinity," 264-5.
[65] Hokowhitu, 269.
[66] Hokowhitu, 269.
[67] Hokowhitu, 267-268.
[68] Hokowhitu, 265.
[69] Hokowhitu, 276.

world. The impact of Christianity is first hinted at in Ihimaera's "Hine-Tītama" with the men's "saintly names" being described as due to "the early Christian missionaries" who "totally blitzed Māoridom with their bibles and baptisms"(66). Christianity is used to justify transgressions later in the text, but prior to this the juxtaposition of hegemonic Māori masculinity with hegemonic colonial masculinity is explored.

The characteristics of the 'noble savage,' an imposed colonial construction, are explicit defining qualities of the Māori men in the story. The legal construction of the 'savage' was defined as a perceived absence of law, religion and property, creating a hierarchical framework to justify the colonial mission.[70] A minority of eighteenth century thinkers, including Rousseau, viewed the archetype of the noble savage as being morally superior due to being closer to nature.[71] While this archetype implicitly critiqued the Western perils of civilisation, it simultaneously maintained race-based power hierarchies and codified non-white populations as being animalistic, particularly in their perceived susceptibility to what were deemed 'immoral' sexual practices. The character of Uncle Aaron is described as the ideal hegemonic Māori man, whose "amatory exploits were legendary," and who "was indulged in his escapades by his siblings" (Ihimaera, 66). Aaron's hyper-sexuality is treated as inherent to his identity, and his tendency towards extramarital affairs is subsequently excused. This conception of Māori masculinity being hyper-physical and hyper-sexual to a fault feeds back into the colonial ideals that lauded Māori for their physicality while simultaneously denigrating them as sinful and immoral.[72] The hyper-sexualised gendering of Māori is a construct pushed by colonial Christianity that is simultaneously at odds with the ideals of abstinence, purity, and chastity enforced by the Church. In constructing the image of the noble savage, settlers established a hierarchy in which Māori men were celebrated for physical strength, which they could be exploited for, while also positioning themselves, the 'civilised' white men, as morally superior.

However, although Aaron and his brothers are characterised in terms of Māori mythology while simultaneously adhering to colonial Christian constructions of Māori gender, Isaac Jnr fulfils traditional roles and expectations while being characterised as failing to meet the expectations of the established gender hegemony. In positioning the physically disabled and intellectually successful Isaac Jnr as the authority of the text, Ihimaera privileges a form of masculinity that is contrary to the established norm. Despite his markers of

[70] Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage,* 25.
[71] Miles, *Racism,* 37.
[72] Hokowhitu, "Tackling Māori Masculinity," 265.

difference, Isaac Jnr fulfils the role of head of the family as kaumatua and, in his narration of the story, performs the role of orator. In his retelling of his family's past, Isaac Jnr draws on traditional pūrākau to cast Aaron in the role of Tānemahuta—the atua, or God, credited with separating his parents, Ranginui the sky father and Papatūānuku the earth mother, to bring about the world as it exists for humankind. Isaac Jnr recounts Tānemahuta's creation of the first woman, Hineahuone, who gives birth to Hine-tītama, "Girl of the Dawn," then "disappeared from the story" (67). In setting up the parallel between Aaron and Tānemahuta, Isaac Jnr states that "humanity became Tānemahuta's marvellous playthings. Just like the god, Uncle Aaron was granted immunity for anything he did with them too" (67). This explicit parallel between the traditional pūrākau and the narrative of the short story is furthered when Aaron's wife dies, disappearing much like Hineahuone, but not before warning Isaac Jnr that his uncle is "looking at" their daughter, Georgina (68). This direct reference to traditional pūrākau establishes Isaac Jnr as a repository of traditional knowledge and, along with the first person narration of the text, gives the story a quality of orality. In privileging the spoken word and Isaac Jnr's role as orator, Ihimaera draws on values from Te Ao Māori to further establish the authority of Isaac Jnr due to, rather than in spite of, his performance of masculinity placing him squarely outside the realm of colonial Christian gender hegemony.

As narrator, Isaac Jnr further imbues the overarching narrative of the text with repeated condemnation of colonial Christian gender hegemony. When Isaac Jnr returns to the family after time away at boarding school, his response to the discovery of Aaron's ongoing rape of Georgina is one of visceral disgust. His recollections of his wider family's justification of the situation is condemnatory of both their hypocrisy and their drawing on biblical concepts, both explicitly and implicitly through language use, to justify the relationship. Aunt Leah claims that Georgina's mother had told her daughter that "she should go and lie with her father and give him comfort" (72), while Isaac Jnr's father tells him that "[n]obody should come between a man and his wife" (74). The use of this language evokes biblical scripture, in which "lay with" and similar euphemisms are used to refer to the act of intercourse, as in the verse of scripture later referenced by Whaea Hera.[73] Likewise, the idea of "a man and his wife" is steeped in both language and ideology that positions women as the property of men. The idea of women as the property of their husbands or fathers, not to be interfered with by other men, is perpetuated throughout biblical scripture. Numbers 30

[73] Genesis 19:32-34, (King James Version).

outlines that a woman's decisions can be nullified by her husband or father,[74] and Ephesians 5:22 instructs women to "submit" to their husbands.[75] This gender hierarchy is explicitly transactional, with the woman's body implicated as a commodity, as in Deuteronomy 22:29 in which men are instructed to pay the fathers of women they sleep with, before taking them as wives.[76] Isaac Jnr responds to his family drawing on this ideology with scepticism and disbelief, stating that Leah was "always making up stories" and responding to his father's statement with the exclamation "[s]he's his daughter!" (Ihimaera, 74).

The rejection of colonial Christianity becomes more explicit in the text's treatment of Whaea Hera, whose decision to justify the situation by drawing parallels to scripture results in Isaac Jnr's fierce condemnation:

> …it was Whaea Hera who took the cake. When I went to visit her she preened herself in her self-righteousness and turned to Genesis, chapter 19, verse 40 in her bible. You will recall, nephew,' she began, 'that the prophet, Lot, had just lost his wife. Against the Lord's instructions, she had looked back at the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and had been turned into a pillar of salt. Poor Lot, his two daughters saw that he was disconsolate at the loss—and that he also needed an heir—and so they went unto him.'
>
> Hera closed her bible and looked heavenward.
>
> 'In likewise, your cousin Georgina is doing her duty just as Lot's daughters did. Her union is sanctified by their example.'(72).

Isaac Jnr describes Hera in language that is disparaging and critical, referring to her as "self-righteous" and then reiterating that her attitude is "sanctimonious" (72). Hera's claim that Georgina is "doing her duty" and that the "union is sanctified" speaks volumes to the roles of women in colonial Christian gender hegemony. The choice of passage here is significant, as Genesis 19 is a chapter that has been, and still is, oft drawn on to validate hegemonic gender and sexuality. Prior to the fall of Sodom, Lot offers his daughters as sexual commodities to a mob of strangers, indicating the disposable attitudes held towards women. The strangers reject the women, as they would rather "know," a euphemism for sexual intercourse, the two angels in their masculine forms, that are visiting Lot, indicating a preference for homosexual relations that is considered one of the sins for which the city is destroyed. Katherine B. Low's psychoanalytical interpretation of the passage suggests that the acts of father-daughter incest are committed as a means of attaining power in response to this: having had their autonomy

[74] Numbers 30:3-16, (KJV).
[75] Ephesians 5:22, (KJV).
[76] Deuteronomy 22:29, (KJV).

earlier undermined by their father, the daughters seek to acquire progeny as they will never be able to attain power in their own right.[77] Thus, Hera's claim that Georgina is "doing her duty" directly references the lack of autonomy granted to women. Isaac Jnr vehemently rejects this ideology, stating that he "couldn't stand it," and telling Hera repeatedly, and emphatically, that her preaching is "[b]ullshit" (Ihimaera, 72).

Hera's account of Genesis 19 also intentionally omits that the passage presents the act of father-daughter incest as a sin. Without interrogating the gendered dynamic and lack of sexual autonomy experienced by Lot's daughters, the passage presents the women as conscious perpetrators of incest. They hold the burden of sin, while Lot is exempt due to his ignorance. In using the passage to justify Aaron's sexual abuse of Georgina, Hera not only omits this aspect of the passage, but also does not mention Aaron at all. As the patriarch, Aaron's behaviour is ignored and he is exempt from criticism as he fulfils the trappings of ideal manhood. At this point in the narrative, Hera also absolves Georgina, as she is playing the part of the subservient woman, the ideal wife. When, decades later, Hera changes her tune, it is Georgina and her female descendants who are condemned for the sin, revealing the deep seated misogyny present within colonial Christian gender hegemony.

Hera consistently speaks about the taboo of incest in terms of biblical ideology: first to justify, later to condemn and pass the blame to the woman and children. The spiteful decision to reveal to Aaron and Georgina's granddaughter Talia the secret of her mother Makareti's parentage is an act that demonstrates Hera's commitment to the upholding of colonial Christian gender hegemony. This divulgence is made ostensibly because Talia was "too whakahīhī," meaning conceited or arrogant, and "needed to be brought down a peg or two" (59), implicating both the hegemonic expectations put on women, and Māori women in particular. Rather than conforming to the expected role of wife and mother, or to the hegemonic expectation that Māori do not excel in intellectual pursuits, Talia is a Māori woman who is well educated and does not hide it. Hera's divulgence is therefore a punitive act; she takes it upon herself to tell Talia that she has "tainted blood," and refers to the conception of Makereti as a "sin" that is borne by both daughter and granddaughter (87). The colonial Christian gender expectation here is double-fold, reinforcing the expectation that women be submissive and subservient, and furthering the idea that women are the source of all sin. In both Hera's justification and condemnation of the act, the abuser is not held into account, as he is performing his ascribed role within colonial Christian gender hegemony.

[77] Low, "The Sexual Abuse of Lot's Daughters," 47-48.

Instead the women involved are condemned and, in the case of Talia, this condemnation is a punishment for not adhering to hegemonic gender expectations.

Where Ihimaera's focus on women is on the trappings of colonial Christian gender hegemony, Tayi Tibble's poem "Tohunga"[78] further explores the racialised gender expectations cast on Māori women by colonial Christianity. The first stanza of the poem opens with a relational call to Tibble's tūpuna, ancestors, claiming "Visionary like my ancestors I / saw a sky of whales / a pale people / like my ancestors I /inhaled the bible / swallowed the rifle like / an 8 inch cock / whateva" (st. 1). Immediately the concerns of colonial Christianity are pushed front and centre, with visceral parallels between subjugation and sexuality opening the text. The sexualisation and sexuality of the indigenous woman's body is captured in this first stanza, which carries on:

> Like Donna Summer I swirled / in a floor length dress / said I love to love / I love to fuck / but just like my ancestors knew / to you I was a savage wild jasmine / a$$ out / blacked out / with dollar signs / feline like a bengal tiger and it's true / that anyone on their hands and knees / is essentially a praying animal. (st. 1).

The juxtaposition in this opening stanza of images of Christian piety and unconcealed sexuality speaks to an extensive history of both the fetishisation and subjugation of Māori and other Pacific women. Pre-colonial Māori societal norms around sexuality were far less restrictive, as without the colonial Christian conceptions of shame and purity women were comfortable taking sexual partners outside the bounds of marriage.[79] Following colonisation, the conversion of Māori to Christianity led to the adoption of Christian morality around sexuality and gender norms, values that themselves were at odds with the ongoing fetishisation and exoticisation of the bodies and sexualities of Māori. The claim "I love to love / I love to fuck" thus implicates a comfort in body and sexuality that is at odds with the battered down and brutally constrained norms of colonial Christian gender hegemony. Simultaneously, the woman's body is commodified as a fetish, and through the eyes of an implied white male partner is exoticised and Othered: "to you I was a savage wild jasmine."

---

[78] Tibble, "Tohunga." https://lithub.com/tohunga-a-poem-by-tayi-tibble/
n.b. This edition of "Tohunga"was published as a digital poem and does not have set lines. While a singular slash is used elsewhere in this thesis to indicate multiple lines are being quoted, in the case of "Tohunga," these slashes are typographical inclusions by the author that do not represent line breaks. As such, I will be referring to quotations from the poem by stanza number.
[79] Salmond *Two Worlds*, 175-176.

Alongside the colonial construction of the noble savage, European travellers brought back images and accounts to the West that portrayed Pacific women as "exotic, vulnerable maidens."[80] Māori gender studies scholar Michelle Erai notes that clearly racialized and gendered images of Māori women worked to perpetuate the colonial myth of the Māori as child-like savages.[81] The infantilization of Māori women, alongside the focus on their nude or semi-nude bodies, fed into the idea of Māori women being sexually available and submissive: commodities to be exploited by white men. Women were further exoticised and eroticised through portrayals in which they were "sexually receptive as well as distant and dangerous."[82] This dehumanization of Māori women is an idea Tibble draws on within the poem. In likening indigenous bodies to that of animals, Tibble first creates a sense of the body as untamed in the words "feline like a bengal tiger," and then presents a subjugated figure that "is essentially a praying animal" (Tibble, st. 1). This movement from untamed to subjugated is reflective of the aspirations of the coloniser's civilising mission.

Vaughan Rapatahana likewise characterises indigenous bodies as dehumanised and animalistic in his shape poem "anglican prattle."[83] The poem's opening stanza immediately evokes the image of a domesticated congregation for whom the event of church attendance is a reluctant obligation:

> compelled to attend
> this cross-high byre
> every sacrosanct sunday,
> lined up to listen to
> a blubber & blither
> of blustery bullshit
> on repentance, remission,
> omission and missions. (lines 1-8).

The metaphor of the church as byre is further explored in the second and third stanzas, with church attendees being portrayed as mindless livestock who are "fed out forage" (line 10 *L*), and sing "in lines / like synchronised swimmers" (lines 13-14). This running metaphor of domesticated livestock comes to head in the fourth and fifth stanzas, in

[80] Tamaira, "From Full Dusk to Full Tusk," 6.
[81] Erai, "Civilizing Images," 85-87.
[82] Tamaira, "From Full Dusk to Full Tusk," 11.
[83] Rapatahana, "anglican prattle," 94.
n.b. For the citation of this shape poem, I have opted to count stanza 2 and 3 as occurring on the same lines, with the orientation cited as L for left (stanza 2) and R for right (stanza 3) hereafter. .

which the "bovine-eyed herds" (line 22) of the congregation are characterised as ignorant to their own ruination:

> this pareidolia
> of pawns, or peon
> to the slaughter. (lines 27-39)

This idea of a minister viewing his congregation as members of a disposable working class to be manipulated at will is damning. In highlighting a disconnect between minister and congregation, Rapatahana explicitly represents Christianity as a system that treats the indigenous population as expendable and less than human. Susan Healy, a Pākehā Māori studies scholar and Dominican Christian, states that the "classification of Indigenous peoples as a lesser form of humanity has long been part of Western Christianity," pointing out that the denigration of Māori ancestors continues to impact Māori and inhibit their access to mātauranga Māori.[84] The livestock metaphor that permeates "anglican drivel" reveals this ongoing denigration, and Rapatahana actively undermines and challenges the authority of the colonial Church.

Moving on from the livestock metaphor, the sixth stanza begins with an explicit critique of the Church through a blasphemous dismissal of the minister's authority, stating "god, no need for this / deliberate evasion" (lines 30-31) in reference to the sermon. The livestock metaphor is carried through as the stanza goes on to urge the minister to "just lead us to pasture,/ to seek our own succour" (lines 32-33), painting the clerical claims of redemption and salvation as false promises. The disconnect between minister and congregation is further emphasised in an explicit rejection of the sermon:

> we don't wish to be fed
> such anglophile drivel,
> we won't pray for glib penance. (lines 34-36).

Here the poem is implicating the Christian authority offering up salvation as a form of colonial hegemony, deliberately seeking to control the behaviour and beliefs of the indigenous population.

The undermining of the minister and his liturgy is a central and ongoing theme of the poem, starting with the title "anglican prattle," which immediately dismisses the sermon as foolish or inconsequential. The disdain of the implied narrator is further

[84] Healy, "Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery," 36-39.

conveyed in the initial description of the sermon as "a blubber & blither / of blustery bullshit" (lines 5-6), disparaging the content of the words being preached in the space of the church. This idea is built on further in the fourth stanza, in which the sermons are referred to as "an obloquy of ordure / from the lips of a jester" (lines 19-20). To have the minister figured as a jester, the court fool, who is condemning literal excrement, is a flash of dark humour that emphasises the emptiness of the ritual. The figure of the minister as jester is "dressed across gender" (line 21), a description that further ridicules the authority of the minister. In ridiculing the ritual attire of the Church for not conforming to its own enforced gender expectations, the poem undermines the authority of the Church in its role as an ideological apparatus of the colonial state. The clergy's exemption from the hegemonic ideals enforced by the Church is presented as hypocrisy, intimating a lack of self awareness on the part of the minister, who is being painted as ridiculous throughout the poem. This lack of self awareness is further demonstrated in the juxtaposition of the imagery of the minister as jester with the subsequent description of him shaking the hands "of choleric clergy" (line 26).

Rapatahana's critique of colonial Christianity is a scathing rejection of biblical ideology that navigates the space between word and page through the image of the cross. The poem is set out in the shape of a cross with an empty centre, which acts as a symbolic marker of the narrator's disdain for this type of religious experience. Rapatahana's cynical and disparaging descriptions of biblical verse as "pages of gibberish"(line 11, *R*), and of the congregation buying into the preaching of "repentance, remission" (line 7) are emphasised by the empty centre of the cross. The poem is both visually and textually demonstrating that the words of the minister are empty, his actions are empty, and the centre of the cross, where Christ's body should be, is tellingly empty. This creates a sense of hollowness to the act of worship, and the image of the cross that fills the page functions as a looming, oppressive symbol that is wound up in vitriol.

The cross is a symbol that has long been drawn on by many Māori and other Pacific writers as a motif through which to investigate how Christianity has been an oppressive force throughout the Pacific. Ni-Vanuatu poet Albert Leomala's poem "Kros/Cross," published in the first anthology of Pacific Writing in English *Lali: A*

Pacific Anthology,[85] succinctly communicates how the cross has come to symbolise the destruction of indigenous ways of being:

> Cross I hate you
> You are killing me
> You are destroying
> My traditions
> I hate you Cross (p. 121, lines 1-5).

Christianity thus becomes indigenous peoples' own cross to bear, the weight of which is immense and ongoing. The base of Rapatahana's shape poem echoes this, stating that the minister's liturgy is steering the congregation to "some sort of communion/ with these white waves and ways" (Rapatahana, lines 39-40). This end of the poem reveals the foundation of the church to be that of an ideological state apparatus, deliberately and systematically functioning as a propagator of colonial hegemony. In specifying the Anglican faith in the title, the poem deliberately references the specific mission brought with colonisation: the Church of England. The final stanzas of the poem call out the manipulations of the church and satirically requests the Church "just lead us to pasture" (32) to seek their own "succour" (33). This demand draws on the Christian conception of congregation as 'flock' and minister as 'shepherd,' while insisting that this particular herd would be better off returning to pasture, to the land, and implicitly, their own cultures and practices.

Likewise, the criticism of colonial Christianity carved out in Tibble's "Tohunga" rejects the enforced gender hegemony in favour of a reclamation of Māoritanga. The title of the poem honours the sacred experts of Te Ao Māori from the outset, with the epigraph "the world / is getting unbearably hot" centring contemporary concerns of the impact of colonial capitalism on the environment. The relationship between the physical body of the indigenous individual and the material body of the colonised land are intrinsically linked, with Tibble's narrative voice embodying the land, held within the woman's body:

> the atmosphere is betraying you / and you are reddening in places / where I can bare it. / A warrior / like my ancestors I survived / annihilation. And the awa / that run beneath my skin / have not been lapped dry / just yet / and you can see it all / the unpanned gold / the wild pounamu / the thrashing tuna / family jewels / you can never have / taonga / you can never taste / forbidden fruits / reserved for me /

[85] Leomala, "Kros/Cross," 120-121.

> are you afraid again? / like you were of Eve? / the world / is getting unbearably hot / but so am I / and so is she. (st.4).

In this stanza, the woman's ownership of her body is couched in the relationship between body and land, with natural resources being part of the narrator's whakapapa. The poem explicitly references the colonial Christian idea of women being the source of all evil, acknowledging the fear of Eve, the source of 'original sin', and drawing on an ongoing history of anxiety around women in Christianity. The use of the homophone "bare" in the initial line of the stanza offers up a dual reading, not only of the indigenous narrator's skin being able to 'bear' the climate where the colonial figure can not, but also of being able to bare skin, where colonial Christian norms dictate that skin should be covered up. Thus, the naked body of the indigenous woman is linked both to the environment and to this colonial Christian fear of women and their sexuality. For Tibble, this fear of women is inextricable from a specific fear of Māori women. The narrator's body holds the flora and fauna of the land, with this taonga being characterised as the forbidden fruit of Genesis, inaccessible to the implied reader but held proudly within the narrator's body as a fundamental aspect of self.

This relationship between land and body is one of paramount importance within Te Ao Māori, with Māori tracing their whakapapa back through their ancestors to the land and atua of Māori cosmogony.[86] Tibble draws on traditional pūrākau to express this relationship in her second stanza:

> Radical like my ancestors I / saw the flower child / the wasted liberals / and my prehistoric / flare wearing prince / and like my ancestors I / kissed and kissed and kissed / and tasted / an entire lifetime of taking advantage and / being aware of it. / So at least / when my dress hits the floor / like molting bark / your eyes follow / and I can interpret / your fixation as shame. / Are you sorry? / And what does that say about me / if I think even a suggestion / of an apology is sexy? So like / my ancestors I / sculpt you from the dirt until you rise I / make you meet my eye / then suck you all up / with a slurp like a kina. / That's Te [sic] Hei Mauri Ora. / Just like Papatuanuku / I breathe life / which is why my mother tongue spits praises despite / it's [sic] history of whippings / I say (st. 2).

In referencing both Tane's creation of the first human, Hineahuone, from earth, and Papatuanuku as the primordial mother of life, Tibble signals the entwined relationship between body and land in Te Ao Māori. This framing results in the sex act described as

[86] Sanders, "Beyond Human Ownership," 212.

one of power held in the body of the woman, who proudly owns her sexuality rather than playing the role of submissive. The imagery of fellatio is presented through the lens of the creation of life, of humankind, from the land. In stating that this is "Te [sic] Hei Mauri Ora" Tibble is likening the sex act to the sacred breath of life, and staking a claim on her right to speak. The poem implicitly acknowledges the ongoing desecration of land and the commodification of indigenous bodies in a moment of self reflexivity, in which the poem states that the narrator "spits praises" of her lover, despite this "history of whippings."

The self reflexive moment at the end of the stanza is a reiteration of self-critique that is present in the earlier question posited: "Are you sorry? / And what does it say about me / if I think even a suggestion / of an apology is sexy?" (st. 2). This question raises the issue of indigenous complicity in the relationship between land, body, and desire. The poem continues to explore ideas around the colonial commodification of land and bodies through this imagined relationship between a Māori woman and Pākehā man:

> good on you babe. / You got what you wanted. / The juicy earth / the factoried women / the rivers / the mountains / all bowing for you. / I'm proud of you / the way you erected / monuments in your image / so foreign so / violently unimagined / just like my ancestors I / couldn't even have even dreamed it. / Pou after pou / of grey and glass / cracking the sky and the sky / was full of whales. / Wow I say / good on you babe / then I spread / my hair all over the hotel pillow / because I love a winner. And you / hit the jackpot with me / with all us silly girls / for believing you were god / for as long as we did. / But now / (st. 3).

The images of rivers, mountains, and women bowing to men creates a clear relationship between the land and bodies inhabiting the land. Indigenous women are dehumanised and become commodities, described as "factoried," while the land is "juicy," an adjective that is associated not only with bountiful produce, but also with the sexualised objectification of human bodies. In describing the "monuments in your image" as "foreign" and "violently unimagined" skyscrapers, the narrator expresses self-deprecation, reprimanding her own desire for this nameless individual. This characterisation of the narrator's desire articulates a complicity in the upholding of the colonial Christian ideal that positions the settler figure as "winner," as man made in the image of God. The poem's treatment of its implied audience dances between reverence and disgust. The subject is himself reduced to a phallic symbol, with the skyscrapers

described as "erected" upon urban, domesticated, desecrated land, and as being "pou," a rākau that has significance within Te Ao Māori.

In describing the skyscrapers, monuments to those who disenfranchised and dispossessed Māori of their land and taonga, as "pou after pou / of grey and glass," Tibble conceptualises skyscrapers, modern buildings created to sustain mass population and booming industry, as symbolic of the ideals of colonial capitalism. The parallel is drawn between these buildings and pou, a term which often refers to the carved standing posts within the wharenui on marae. Pou are likewise a central image within Ihimaera's text, with the title "Hine-Tītama—Ask the Posts of the House" directly referencing the pou of the marae. In an explicit retelling of the traditional pūrākau, Isaac Jnr outlines how Hinetītama discovers that her husband Tāne is also her father. Receiving no answer from Tāne, she is instructed by the forest birds to ask the posts of the house, who tell her that "Tāne is both the father and the husband" (Ihimaera, 89). Isaac Jnr goes on to explain how she received this answer, stating:

> The Māori meeting house is a world of its own. It has a head which you see when you approach from the outside and, when you enter, you are within the body of the house. You are literally within the stomach of the tribal ancestor who begat the tribe and with whom the tribe is associated. There are a number of carved posts which support the structure of the meeting house, the main ones are the poutokomanawa, the heart post, and the poutāhuhu, the ridge post. In the old days, the pou, which also include the wall posts, were said to be living, sacred, able to talk. (89).

To this day, the carved pou of the meeting house details the whakapapa of the hapū as well as facets of Māori society. Amongst the whakairo, carvings including pou, at the time of colonisation, were those that depicted same-sex relationships. These depictions were at odds with the puritanical mores of Victorian Christianity, and the whakairo were subsequently destroyed or removed to Europe, where they were displayed as curiosities that fed the narrative of Māori as a divergent, hyper-sexual people.[87] In referencing "pou," the narrator of "Tohunga" once again is calling attention to a long history of violence enacted upon Māo ri, and in particular the colonial Christian fascination with Māori sexuality. As pou, the skyscrapers of "Tohunga" become symbols that convey a history, that of ongoing colonisation.

Much like Tibble drawing on pou in her descriptions of a phallic symbol or monument, the traditional rākau and their symbolic parallels within Ihimaera's "Hine-

[87] Aspin and Hutchings, "Reclaiming the Past to Inform the Future," 419.

Tītama" have phallic connotations. As I addressed in the introduction to this chapter, the tokotoko has itself been associated with the ure of Tāne. The tokotoko is also, through the symbol of Isaac Jnr's walking stick within the text, a symbol of authority that is to be valued and respected. This connection between power and the rākau as phallic symbol within the story can be viewed as a symbol of Isaac Jnr's own complicity in maintaining the power structures introduced by colonial Christian gender hegemony. Isaac Jnr, as head of the family, is valorised in his role as orator, whereas Whaea Hera, herself an orator, is demonised. Hera, as a woman, lacks the authority to pass on knowledge, due to the fact she is without a phallus, symbolic or otherwise. Instead, the story casts Hera as a despicable character, describing her only in the negative, when even Aaron, the actual perpetrator of incest, is granted redeeming qualities and, more damningly, objective agency in the text. The narrator's description of the characters in the text is complicit in failing to grant women agency, with women either being valorised, such as Talia, or demonised, such as Hera.

The role of Georgina as Isaac Jnr's idealised woman further strips women of agency, with the character reduced to an archetype of the Hine-Tītama figure. Within the cosmogonic pūrākau, the revelation of Tane being both the father and the husband results in Hine-Tītama leaving the human world to become Hine-nui-te-Pō, characterised in Ihimaera's retelling as "the redemptive role" through which we, humans, "achieve forgiveness" (Ihimaera, 90). This characterisation of Hine-nui-te-Pō as a nurturer and the "Great Mother of the Underworld" (90), rejects the demonisation of the atua as a goddess of death only to valorise her as another archetype of femininity. The parallel of Hine-Tītama's descent into the underworld of Georgina's murder-suicide also highlights the feminine archetype of a protective nurturer. In the act of killing her father, Georgina sees herself as protecting her daughter Makereti as Aaron has been "interfering" with her and "has to pay" (84). After inflicting herself with a fatal wound, Georgina asks Isaac, "if I go to hell will you come get me?" (84). This ingrained belief that Georgina is guilty of sin due to her father's actions further emphasises the influence of colonial Christian social mores. Further, the line implicates Georgina as descending to an underworld, and the subsequent line, "[t]he sun burst over the hills" (84), further emphasises the parallel with Hine-tītama in her role as the first human, the dawn maiden. The reduction of Georgina to an archetype is, to an extent, understandable in a short story that is a retelling of a cosmogonic pūrākau. However, her idealisation as an archetypal mother figure underscores the lack of representation of meaningful experiences and agentic actions performed by women in the narrative.

In contrast, “Tohunga” centres the agency of the indigenous woman, with the repeated refrain “like my ancestors I...” introducing the homonym ‘eye’, and the kinds of agentic seeing that goes on within the poem. That ‘I’ itself is in the visual form of a rākau, a tokotoko that symbolises the authority to speak. The agency of Tibble’s narrator is reflected in her self-reflexive positioning, her exploration of her sexual relationship operating in tandem with her relationship to the whenua. The forward slash that breaks apart clauses within the text, giving phrases emphasis and breaking sentences, often after the pronoun ‘I’, can be seen as that agentic eye pushing forward, leaning into space and page that results in the poem visually reflecting the sense of urgency pushed forward by the repeated refrain. The agency of the narration becomes not only through the written word, but also through the visual demarcation of the rākau on the page, and the repeated first person pronoun working together with the disruptive forward slash to give the text a sense of orality, a distinct rhythm as it is read.

This concern with agentic seeing is likewise centred in Briar Wood’s “Whare Rama,”[88] in which the titular lighthouse acts as a symbolic cognate to the rākau, as phallus, tokotoko and pou. Just as the tokotoko grants agency to speak, as the ‘I’ of Tibble’s poem centres the agentic seeing of the indigenous narrator, the lighthouse offers agency to see and be seen. Wood’s poem describes the lay of the land as seen from the whare rama, opening with a mihi to the ancestors of Pōneke followed by the lines “Kupe’s waka’s early crossing / battling te wheke of Muturangi” (Wood, p. 62, lines 3-4), describing the first in a series of events that have been seen from the location of the lighthouse. In both the opening mihi and the subsequent reference to the story of Kupe, the whakapapa of the mana whenua of the area is acknowledged. The poem follows this up with an acknowledgement of Hinepoupou’s swim, with the woman being characterised as “patron to abused wives” (p. 62, line 6). The story of Hinepoupou is of a woman who, deserted by her husband, swam across Raukawa, the Cook Strait, to return to her father’s home.[89] From the immediate outset of the poem, it is clear that a history of the land and sea is being told, as seen from the vantage point of the lighthouse. Whare rama becomes the symbol of agentic seeing that privileges the pūrākau, the experiences, and the actions of both mana whenua and women.

The poem subsequently references significant landmarks such as the mast of the *Wahine,* erected in memorial of the disaster of the passenger ship caught in an

[88] Wood, “Whare Rama,” 62-64.
[89] Pomare, “The Adventure of Hinepoupou,” 150-151.

extratropical cyclone, and the "towers of Mt Aoraki" (p. 62, line 23), painting a picture of the landscape seen from the vantage of the lighthouse. The land, sea, and environment are described as untamed and uncontrollable, with stretch of water being described as dangerous:

> How rocks seem like great ships
> from a distance—carracks—
> and how suddenly those ships
> can become wrecked on rocks. (p. 63, lines 36-39).

This is contrasted with the reference to "Wanganella weather" (p. 62, line 13), a term used to describe the calm conditions the MS *Wanganella* experienced upon the very same body of water that the TEV *Wahine* disaster occurred. These references to significant events, landmarks and individuals, with the land being described as "Alistair Te Ariki Campbell country" (p. 62, line 11), acknowledge the history of the area, and the stories of the land after the event of colonisation. However, the focus remains on the agency of the environment itself, the untameable sea and undomesticated land, with the central stanza asserting "Āke, ake, ake—the land remains Māori" (p. 63, line 26). This focus on the land being Māori, and implicitly the relationship between mana whenua and land, is highlighted by the absence of symbols of colonial Christianity. The body of earth is composed of rocks and hills: there is no "mariner's church" (p. 63, line 44). Instead of the colonial faith offering home and community, it is the land itself, in the form of "raw-boned hills" (p. 63, line 47), that fulfils this role. In this description of the land we again have reference to the land as body, and to the damages wrought upon that body of land by colonialism.

This personification of land, and the honouring of the land's agency, is an idea steeped within Māoritanga that Wood draws on in her descriptions of Scotland in "Kilmarten Glen."[90] Published in Wood's poetry collection *Rāwāhi*, meaning 'abroad' or 'overseas,' both poems are concerned with the connection between Māori and their ancestral lands. While "Whare Rama" honours the mana whenua of the Pōneke region, drawing comparisons to Wood's ancestral lands of Cornwall, "Kilmarten Glen" outlines the author's own connection to her tūpuna and ancestral lands, both in Scotland and in Aotearoa New Zealand. These connections are asserted throughout the third stanza:

> But I had mostly come to greet the stones,

[90] Wood, "Kilmarten Glen," 25-26.

to walk where the ancestors had walked,
to consider grandmother Phyllis,
to put a foot in the print at Dùn Ad,
to walk tenderly on Mòine Mhòr
towards the coasts and ports of Ireland, (Wood, "Kilmarten Glen," p. 25, lines 27-32)

These lines in which the narrator is retracing the steps of her tūpuna evoke the whakataukī, proverb, "kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua," meaning 'I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.' The idea of past, present, and future all being interconnected within Te Ao Māori is informing the narrator's engagement with her Pākehā tūpuna and associated ancestral lands. Throughout the poem, the body of the land itself and the experiences of the narrator's female ancestors are prioritised and embodied within the narrator herself. In putting "a foot in the print at Dùn Ad," the narrator makes an assertion of belonging, of having a tūrangawaewae, a place to stand, in Scotland. This assertion, steeped in tikanga Māori, is a direct response to the experience of racism and exclusion that is informed by Western Christian ideology in the first two stanzas of the poem.

Throughout these stanzas, the experience of racism and the beliefs of Western Christianity are tightly bound together. The opening stanza implicates Western Christianity's conflation of indigenous spiritual traditions:

"Don't bring your voodoo here!"
the woman at the museum snarled
"The Christian group won't use the hall
after you do your ceremonies." (*KG*, p. 25, lines 1-4).

The "voodoo" spoken of is the "karakia / for the flax weavers gathering" (*KG*, p. 25, lines 5-6), of which the narrator thinks "wrong islands, not even close" (*KG*, p. 25, line 10) before claiming the comparison to be "flattering, / such as immrama or hejra would be" (*KG*, p. 25, lines 11-12). This racist microaggression, performed in the name of Christianity, is rejected by the narrator, who instead chooses to celebrate the cross-cultural links between indigenous spiritual traditions. This form of Christianity, that is both racist and unwelcoming, is explicitly rejected in the second stanza, in which the narrator's response to a glaring "woman in the bookshop" (*KG*, p. 25, line 13) is to state "[i]f that's Christianity, / they can keep it" (*KG*, p. 25, lines 17-18). Wood's rejection of

Christianity is gentle but firm, contrasted with the aggressive attitudes of the women in the bookshop and museum. The poem's response to "a local writer, / Christian, male, in the Columba / tradition" (*KG*, p. 25, lines 21-23) is the assertion that "I respected, / though I did not worship him" (*KG*, p. 25, lines 23-24). This assertion, alongside the poem paying homage to "grandmother Phyllis," disrupts the gendered hierarchy of Western Christianity by centring women's experiences and voices over that of men.

This rejection of the patriarchal precepts of Western Christianity is echoed within "Whare Rama," in which Wood claims that, as a phallic symbol, the lighthouse is "low / on the figurative register— / more beacon than gender sign" (*WR*, p. 63, lines 40-42), in an acknowledgement of the embedded symbolism associated with the tower structure. This dismissal of the symbol acts as a deliberate rejection of the phallus as a symbol of power and agency. Patriarchal dominance is further rejected in the honouring of the legacy of "Mary Jane Bennett, / first woman lighthouse keeper" (*WR*, p. 63, lines 54-55), whose presence in the text subsumes the phallic associations with the structure. The rejection of overarching colonial Christian gender hegemony is further delineated by the structure's characterisation as a "Jesus substitute" (*WR*, p. 64, line 66) and as "a point of return in all weathers" (*WR*, p. 64, line 67), a wayfinding symbol calling back to the indigenous mapping of both land and sea. In stripping the tower of phallocentricism and replacing the figure of Jesus with a wayfinding symbol, the poem transforms the lighthouse into a new symbol, one that has agency, that challenges the colonial landscape to centre a return to land and a return to Māoritanga.

The transformation of the new, colonial structure of the lighthouse into a symbolic rākau, an emblem of agency, and a wayfinding symbol, prioritises the relationships between people and land within Te Ao Māori. The titular whare rama is the lighthouse at Pencarrow Head, the first lighthouse built in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1858. With the body of land now polluted by "simmering city lights" (*WR*, p. 63, line 49), the traditional methods of star navigation can no longer offer guidance for a return home. The lighthouse itself is offered up as a new marker for those voyaging by sea, beaming out to "haere mai" (*WR*, p. 64, line 61) those coming into land. The poem's opening mihi to the ancestors becomes a call to return home, even as these ancestors depart. This call to the dead, to those departed, to return emphasises the central affirmation of the land remaining Māori, as in order to leave and return, one must have a home to which they can return.

Much in the same way that the lighthouse can be utilised as a new wayfinding system, calling voyagers to shore, this call for a return offers the space for transformative decolonisation, a synthesis of old and new, rather than a return to an idealised pre-colonial Aotearoa New Zealand. In advocating for a return to the whenua, each of these authors lay down a wero, presenting the rākau to colonial Christianity and explicitly rejecting the dehumanising objectives of introduced gender constructs. By drawing on concepts from Te Ao Māori, the interconnected relationships between Māori and their traditional whenua are prioritised, revealing the ongoing and traumatising impact of the commodification of both bodies and land. The inequitable and damaging constructs of an introduced gender hegemony continue to have detrimental impact on Māori, with the values of colonial Christianity ingrained at a systemic level. Whether quiet and steadfast or unambiguously scathing in their rejection of colonial Christianity, the call for a return to land, and the affirmation of the connections between mana whenua and their turangawaewae, is at the heart of each wero laid down.

3. Carving the Cross: Synthesising Mātauranga Māori and Christianity

Just as the carved rākau, in the form of the pou or tokotoko, can convey a wealth of purākau, so too can the symbol of the cross. In looking at the ways in which Māori authors have challenged the imposition of colonial Christianity in the prior chapter, I have chosen to omit reading into the potentiality of that space at the centre of Rapatahana's cross, as it can relate to the translingual iteration of Leomala's "Kros/Cross." These texts each offer up an opportunity to explore that space of potential in which indigenous spiritualities and the Christian faith do not have to be at odds, but instead can each be transformed and synthesised into something new, or reimagined as something old—a spirituality concerned with the Divine's connection with humanity, rather than humankind's attempt to understand or control the Divine. Through my examination of the works of both early and contemporary Māori authors, the idea of how relational thinking and the invocation of traditional pūrākau can create new, syncretic faith systems has emerged within this space. It is here that a new form has had the potential to emerge from the raw form of the rākau: that of an indigenous reimagining of Christianity, the carved cross.

While that empty space at the centre of Rapatahana's shape poem draws awareness to the absence of indigenous agency within Christianity, signalling the emptiness of "anglican drivel," it is also the space of potentiality from which a new, indigenised Christianity could emerge. It is here, the centre of the cross, that is the space of resurrection. Rapatahana urges for a return to mātauranga Māori, but what that return looks like is not, and cannot be, clearly defined. In this space there is the potential for agency to be wielded in meaningful indigenous engagements with Christianity. As with the empty tomb following Christ's resurrection, perhaps the discarded bandages of an introduced colonial religion that has been used to wield and abuse power may be left behind in the wake of a living and breathing faith. The space at the centre of the cross thus sets up a dichotomy of two separate iterations of what Christianity is or could be. This division is likewise represented in Leomala's "Kros/Cross," in which the translingual nature of the poem both critiques colonial Christianity and simultaneously promises the possibility of an indigenous engagement with the faith. The poem speaks directly to the symbol of the cross, expressing a vehement critique of an explicitly colonial Christianity through the repeated, accusatory. second person pronoun:

> You thought
> I was ignorant
> You thought
> I was primitive
> You thought

> My traditions
> Were disgusting, (Leomala, p. 121, lines 9-15).

The figuring of the cross as a looming, oppressive symbol through Leomala's poem is mirrored within poet and prose author Apirana Taylor's short story "Carving up the Cross,"[91] where the juxtaposition of colonial Christianity with an indigenous iteration of the faith is the focus of the narrative.

Within this story, the relationship between colonial Christianity, mātauranga Māori, and gender roles is explored through the symbol of the cross. The narrator is commissioned by Māori clergy to build a cross for an annual hui put on for Māori Catholics across Aotearoa. The cross is to be blessed by the Cardinal who will be opening the hui, and to stand on the marae, behind the dias where the Cardinal will speak. The initial cross built is bare and plain, but it has a looming presence in the text, standing outside in a place "where you could once talk to your mates, and suddenly you're supposed to kneel and pray" (Taylor, 120). This large, unadorned cross shadows the work the narrator is undertaking as a builder on the marae and operates within the text as a symbol of colonial oppression. While in discussion with Sister Hannah and Pitama, the clergy, the narrator finds himself inspired to carve a cross using traditional toi whakairo, the art of carving, a cross that is instead a celebration of both the faith and mātauranga Māori. The clergy agree to this, as "[b]eing Maori [sic]... there was a big place in their hearts for wood carving" (121). Following this, the narrator and his colleague Ben get to work carving the cross, utilising imagery from traditional cosmogonic pūrākau:

> We were carving the story as we understood it. For here was Tane Mahuta who gained the light for mortals and here was te tara o Hine nui te po, the female organ, the gateway. The male and female element. There also as a sign of tapu was the lizard. Te tipua. This was the truth. Any fool could see that. (123).

In reworking the image of the cross with the images of Māori cosmogony, the carver incorporates Te Ao Māori and builds a relationship between two spiritualities, merging them together. This ownership of Christianity is utilising the faith as celebratory of Māori, redemptive rather than repressive.

As with Ihimaera's "Hine-Tītama," Taylor's short story is written in the first person, imbuing the text with the quality of oral tradition. Just as the cross within the text is reworked

[91] Taylor, "Carving up the Cross," 119-126.

through whakairo, the text is reworked by the author. Taylor's use of stream of consciousness prose brings poetics into the text, deconstructing the restrictive text categories of Western canon. The establishment of these categories exemplifies the colonial capitalist need to separate and label ideas, thoughts and things in order to build an individualist hierarchy. Within the interconnected and interrelated systems of Te Ao Māori, the need for binary categorisation of storytelling methods becomes defunct. Taylor's use of language is vivid and deliberate throughout the story, full of depth and meaning. In an internal monologue pondering the decision to carve the vulva of Hine-nui-te-pō at the centre of the cross as being fitting, the narrator muses: "Life born of death these things in the seeds blown…" (122). This fragment of the text reads as if it has been designed to be spoken aloud, the rhythm almost lyrical and the language used evoking the breath. The line thus acts as a verbal incantation that invokes the right to speak, akin to 'tihei mauri ora,'[92] establishing the authority of the carver and his placement of the whakairo as a deliberate choice.

The thoughts, motivations and feelings of the narrator portray a complex and multifaceted relationship with Christianity that is deeply informed by a distinctly Māori worldview. The narrative of Christ's resurrection after his death on the cross has echoes in the imagery used, as it is through te tara, the vagina, of Hine-nui-te-Pō, the birth canal through which humans come into life, that Māui's quest for immortality meets its end. In attempting to enter and kill Hine-nui-te-Pō through her vagina, Māui is instead crushed to death and returns to the primordial womb. As Robert Pouwhare states in his essay "Kai Hea Kai Hea te Pū o te Mate? Reclaiming the Power of Pūrākau," the death of Māui ties together the idea of life and death as "from the sex act comes both new life and the sure knowledge of mortality," as well as indicating that, within mātauranga Māori, "women are a source of power, life and death."[93] Just as Christ must physically die in order to attain metaphysical immortality, Māui's death ensures the fate of human mortality and emphasises the importance of material death in the life cycle. The inclusion of the lizard within the whakairo has a connection to the pūrākau of Māui's death as, within some traditions, the form of the mokomoko, or lizard, is that which Māui takes in order to penetrate Hine-nui-te-Pō.[94] Further, the lizard was formerly "held in awe as it personified evil and death,"[95] and was seen within Te Ao Māori as a guardian of the dead, with lizards being released near burial grounds

[92] Meaning the sneeze or breath of life, this phrase is a claim to the right to speak.
[93] Pouwhare, "Kai Hea Kai Hea te Pū o te Mate?," 1.
[94] Pouwhare, 5.
[95] Mead, *Te Toi Whakairo*, 186.

to watch over those who had passed.[96] The narrator's reference to the lizard as "[t]e tipua" (Taylor, 123), meaning strange or supernatural, emphasises the tapu, sacred, importance of its placement. Each symbol carved into the cross is rich with meaning, and is carefully considered by the carvers.

The carving of the cross deliberately draws clear parallels between the narrative of Christ suffering for humanity, dying at the cross so he could be reborn, and the pūrākau that feature Hine-nui-te-Pō and the cycle of life and death. As conveyed within Ihimaera's "Hine-Tītama," in addition to bringing about the death of Māui, the figure of Hine-nui-te-Pō is that of a woman who has suffered and left the material human world so that she may offer redemption to those yet to pass.[97] Within Te Ao Māori, the relationship between birth and death is intrinsically linked, as humans are born anew holding the essence of their ancestors, of the atua, and of the land itself within them. This connection is evident in the word 'whenua,' which, amongst its many meanings, is most commonly translated to both 'land' and 'placenta.' This linguistic connection between that which nurtures life in the gestation and birth process, and the land to which people return upon death indicates an understanding of life and death being part of a recurring cycle. As a consequence of Māui's actions, all mortal bodies must too return to the whenua, that original source of nourishment, be it as land or placenta.

This centring of land when synthesising Biblical imagery and mātauranga Māori has its echoes in takatāpui poet Hinemoana Baker's "Whenua,"[98] explicitly named in reference to both placenta and land.[99] "Whenua" opens with the narrator recalling travelling through an unnamed Adriatic country, and with the description of purchasing seasonal fruit and receiving a single apple on a plate. The image of the apple immediately recalls the forbidden fruit of Genesis, described as a "beautiful apple" (Baker, "Whenua," line 5) that is "crisp, in season, utterly" (line 8). The apple becomes emblematic of both the fruit of knowledge, and of the bounty of burgeoning life. The Edenic quality of the narrator's location is further emphasised in the description of the nearby ocean as "a sea without tides" (line 10), and again when the location shifts to Vienna, with the narrator continuing to eat local produce while standing on "Glorietta Hill" (line 11), a spot located within the gardens of Schonbrunn Palace. The focus of these initial three stanzas is on the bountiful produce and idyllic quality

[96] Haami, "Ngārara – reptiles - Guardians or enemies?" https://teara.govt.nz/en/ngarara-reptiles/page-3
[97] Ihimaera, 90.
[98] Baker, "Whenua," 73.
[99] Baker, *mātuhi needle*, 75.

of the land. This Edenic imagery comes to a head with a direct reference to scripture in the fourth stanza:

> In the Bible my poppa gave me
> this passage is marked in pencil
> *may the earth swarm with you*
> *kia rea ki runga ki te whenua* (lines 17-20).

Here the connection is made between land and birth, with the focus of the biblical verse reflecting this core idea of the poem. It is unclear whether the Bible referenced is bilingual or whether either the English or Te Reo Māori, the only instance of Māori vocabulary within the poem, is a translated addition in the marked pencil.

As with the Bislama-English translingual form of "Kros/Cross," the use of indigenous language in the works of Māori writing in English can offer the space for indigenous agency, and an indigenous reimagining of ideas and beliefs introduced by colonialism. Within "Carving up the Cross," code switching between Te Reo Māori and English for the description of the whakairo of the cross is an act of heteroglossia that introduces two distinct worldviews, further emphasising the transformed, synthesised space that the cross inhabits. Likewise, the italicised lines of "Whenua" point to an indigenous interpretation of the Bible. These lines, asserting that humanity be fruitful and multiply upon the earth, are likely from Genesis, which is concerned with the inhabitation of the world.[100] As the language is a repository of Māori culture and world views,[101] rendering of the Bible in Te Reo Māori implicitly transforms the nature of the scripture, imbuing it with culturally distinct meaning and contexts. This image of the earth nourishing humankind comes back to the Te Ao Māori conception of the symbiotic relationship between land and people.

The final stanza of "Whenua" hones in on the function of the placenta, opening with "now here it is, in this sac—" (Baker, line 26) recollecting the amniotic sac and the fluids contained within which nourish and sustain burgeoning life. Nourishment is found within the space between body and land, at the edge of the sea, within the waters of the uterus. The sac is held up, making "ears sizzle" (line 28) and then allowed to hang "heavy as a beehive from our fingers" (line 30). The imagined removal of this sac from the body, to be held and cherished, once again recalls the forbidden fruit of the opening stanzas. Like a beehive, dripping with honey, the internal waters of the body promise nourishment and hold a taonga,

[100] See: Gen. 1:22-9:7, (KJV).
[101] Hakopa, *Pūrākau: the Sacred Geographies of Belonging*, 10.

a treasure that is given weight and purpose. While the material focus of the poem is centred on a land and sea far from Aotearoa New Zealand, the ideas and imagery metaphysically traverse oceans and return epistemologically to the realm of Te Ao Māori.

This move of focus from the material importance of land to the metaphysical traversal of oceans is further explored within J.C. Sturm's "Good Friday,"[102] a poem which explores the external restrictions placed upon the physical body through an immaterial dream space. The poem, named for the date of Christ's crucifixion, opens with the name of the atua "Tawhirimatea," who "claims the air" and "blinds the outward eye" with rain (Sturm, lines 1-3). The poem then shifts to a description of Tangaroa, evoking a sensory overload brought on by the atua himself:

> Tangaroa
> Rides the full tide in,
> Pounding the mind's beaches
> Incessantly with sound. (lines 5-8).

This imagery of an internal ocean, like that of the amniotic sac, once again centres Te Ao Māori as being within both the material and immaterial spheres. The idea of the immaterial dream space relating to the body is reflected within practices such as traditional healing in Te Ao Māori, with the concept of Te Whare Tapa Wha emphasising the importance of wairua (spirit), hinengaro (mind), tinana (body) and whānau (family) on overall wellbeing.[103] The idea of epigenetic trauma, material pain held in the body from historical, psychological, or spiritual damage, is explored within the text through a repudiation of the colonial Christian God. Simultaneously, the shift in description within the poem from a material grounding to a wholly immaterial contemplation is paralleled by a shift from the Māori pantheon to the Christian faith, positing the former spiritual system as having material grounding and reflecting the immaterial focus of the latter faith.

Likewise, in "Carving up the Cross" the Māori narrator's relationship with God, atua, and ancestors is firmly entrenched in the material world, in the carved wood of the cross and the construction of the house. The material act of carving is a method of channelling the divine, it is through the physical working of the wood that shape is formed, informed by the carver who holds his ancestors, his connection to the atua, within himself. This interconnected relationship between carver, the ancestors, and the divine is articulated in

[102] Sturm, "Good Friday," 53.
[103] Mark and Lyons, "Conceptualizing Mind, Body, Spirit Interconnections," 294.

Patricia Grace's *Potiki*, the opening sentence of which describes "a carver who spent a lifetime with wood, seeking out and exposing the figures that were hidden there."[104] The idea posited here is that, through karakia, prayer or incantation, and through channelling the divine, traditional craftsmen are able to access the manifestations of their Gods and ancestors within their materials. Rather than the materials merely being dead matter that is used to create an image of an idea, the images and ideas are held within the materials, which have their own mauri, that essential life force connecting all things. The material grounding of the work is immediately addressed in "Carving up the Cross," which opens with the simple "They'd come to the marae where we worked building the house and learning" (Taylor, 119). The narrator proceeds to spend the paragraph describing the work, how laborious it is, the poor pay. This introductory paragraph focuses on the material reality of working, constructing.

The narrator, without introducing himself or his fellow workers, refers to the work and the experience as a collective one. A "we" is set up in opposition to the "they" whose mention opens the story. Who "they" are does not get elaborated on or even mentioned again during this first paragraph, though they are later revealed to be the Māori clergy. The initial description of the visitors is the generic "a tall man […] and a nun" (119), with this sparing use of language and lack of specificity emphasising the significance of the later, more detailed, descriptions of Pākehā clergy. The decision to only explicitly describe the Pākehā characters within the text privileges Māori as the norm, in stark contrast to the common phenomena of whiteness being a given, and non-whiteness being remarked upon, that proliferates Western literature. This decision further establishes a sense of solidarity between the Māori Christians and the Māori labourers, who are depicted as holding values in common which are opposed to that of the Pākehā Christians within the text. The minimal descriptions of all but the Pākehā characters carves out invisible divisions between the different iterations of faith. Just as the cross is carved up, so are the different cultural interpretations of Christianity throughout the text.

The simple, concrete language use of the narrator carries through the descriptions of the work that is being done and events that are taking place. Adjectives are used sparingly to describe the quality of the work he is doing, with the text stating simply that it is "hard" and "heavy" (119). The house the labourers are building is "a creation," and "a house of trees" (119). These descriptions again create a sense of the poetic, and we are invited to view this

[104] Grace, *Potiki*, 7.

construction as an artistic and almost cosmogonic act. The building of the house is a recurring motif integrated within the text, a space that is returned to again and again. What the house is being built for is not explicitly mentioned, but it can be assumed that it is a whare whakairo, a carved ancestral house, due to the descriptions of its construction. Each log comes to the construction site as a full, unshaped tree, and is then carved. It is a house that is specifically "all about Tane the God of forests and more" (120), a creation that becomes anthropomorphic and autonomous with the house itself being described as "slowly developing its bones" (120), while the workers were "shaping and fitting the arms and the shoulders and the backbone, and from inside the house, selecting the ribs to fit" (121). This endowing of the space with bodily characteristics and autonomy is steeped in tikanga Māori. Ngāpuhi scholar Cleve Barlow describes contemporary thinking around the whare whakairo, originally constructed in the form of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, in which the main ridge pole, rafters and barge boards of the house represent "the backbone, the ribcage, and outstretched arms of an ancestor."[105] The construction of the house in "Carving up the Cross" is a process that is described in the language of divine creation: the building of a body. The function of this specific house is further associated with the divine with the invocation of the atua Tane Mahuta, implicitly setting the whare whakairo up in opposition to the Church, as house of the colonial Christian God.

However, the space of the whare whakairo in contemporary Māori life is also often a space in which the synthesis of Te Ao Māori and Christianity occurs, as evidenced in Hone Tuwhare's "A Little Fall of Rain at Miti-Miti."[106] Set during a tangihanga, the traditional funerary rite for the dead, the sacred space of the whare whakairo, in the absence of a whare mate, a specific house of mourning, becomes a space of communion between two spiritual systems:

> Drifting on the wind, and through
> the broken window of the long house
> where you lie, incantatory chant
> of surf breaking, and the Mass
> and the mountain talking. (Tuwhare, lines 1-5).

Here, the environment merges with sacred space, with "the Mass and the mountain talking." Once again Tāwhirimātea and Tangaroa are invoked: in the "little fall of rain" of the title, in the breeze that brings the conversation together, and in the "incantatory chant" of the ocean

[105] Barlow, *Tikanga Whakaaro*, 179.
[106] Tuwhare, "A Little Fall of Rain at Miti-miti," 47.

outside. This conversation evokes the ritual of tangihanga, in which manuhiri, visitors, are welcomed upon the marae, and the two parties take turns talking in a highly structured, formal setting.

The tangihanga as it occurs today is exemplary of how Christianity and mātauranga Māori have been synthesised in contemporary Māori society. Further, as Hirini Moko Mead states in *Tikanga: Living by Māori Values*, although the ceremony has changed with the introduction of colonial Christianity, it is still "one of the most enduring and culturally significant tikanga" of Te Ao Māori.[107] The funerary rites follow a highly intricate set of rituals from the final breath of the deceased through to the unveiling of their headstone a year following the tangihanga. Each of these rituals are firmly grounded within tikanga Māori, regardless of how much Christian belief may or may not influence a specific hapū's unique rituals. The moment of time described in "A Little Fall of Rain at Miti-miti" is likely te pō whakamutunga, the final night of the tangihanga, in which whānau and friends commune around the tūpāpaku, the body of the deceased, as they lie in state in the whare whakairo.

The tūpāpaku of the poem is present in both the whenua and the Christian elements which permeate the poem. She is not named, but is referred to twice as whaea, meaning mother or aunt. The third stanza's description of the maunga, mountain, looming with "hands on massive hips" (Tuwhare, line 12) who can control the weather with a simple hook of a "finger to the sea" (line 13), evokes the image of a foreboding whaea managing her brood. This personification of the land calls to mind the presence of the whenua within the human individual, just as the individual is in the whenua. The parallel between the mountain and the deceased is further implicated through the use of the second person pronoun, with the tūpāpaku and the maunga being the only entities addressed directly. In addition to this characterisation, the description of "two candles" (line 6), at the feet of the tūpāpaku, lighting the "stained faces of the *whanau* [sic], the vigil / of the bright madonna" (lines 7-8) evokes a connection between the tangihanga and a Catholic wake, in which family likewise hold vigil around the body of the deceased. In the case of the tangihanga described, it is highly likely the faith of the tūpāpaku and her whānau were Catholic, as the marae at Mitimiti, Matihetihe Marae, is home to the historic whare karakia, or church, Hato Hemi, which is of Catholic faith.[108] The characterising of the tūpāpaku as "the bright madonna" both implicates the woman as having mana, spiritual power, and links the ceremony to Catholic belief systems.

[107] Mead, *Tikanga Māori*, 37.
[108] "Matiheti Marae." https://www.matihetihemarae.nz/

The subsequent description of the tūpāpaku as "*wahine rangimarie*" (line 10), meaning peaceful or quiet woman, emphasises these parallels drawn between the Madonna, the mother of Christ, and the deceased.

The passing of the whaea is portrayed as having divine significance, with the exclamation "*Aanei nga roimata o Rangipapa*" (17), meaning 'here are the tears of Rangipapa,' implying that the atua are also present and grieving for the deceased. This conflation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku in a poem steeped in both tikanga Māori and Catholic symbolism implicates an understanding of the divine that is outside the Western paradigm of gendered, distinct Gods. Within Te Ao Māori, just as atua, tūpuna and te whenua are held in the body of the individual, so are all these interconnected relationships held within one another. The distinctions between the divine, the land, and the human body are not separated, as further expressed by the depiction of those who are holding vigil as being in conversation with the outside environment:

> *quiet please, I can't hear the words.*
>
> And the rain steadying: black sky leaning
> against the long house. Sand, wind-sifted
> eddying lazily across the beach.
>
> And to a dark song lulling: *e te whaea, sleep.* (lines 20-24).

In these lines, the grieving atua who are drowning out the words of the mourning congregation respond to the request for quiet. The wharenui, the "long house," is further characterised as a "toy church" in which the mourners gather that "does not flinch," despite being materially diminutive in the face of the natural forces outside (line 9). These descriptions evoke a symbiotic relationship between the environment and humankind, and further reinforce the synthesis of mātauranga Māori and Christianity that is taking place in the space of the wharenui.

This space within the wharenui has parallels to the space within the Church described in Hinemoana Baker's "Rangiātea,"[109] in which the upset of the narrator is likewise reflected in the outside weather. Tāwhirimātea, according to originary pūrākau, was the child of Ranginui and Papatūānuku who was upset at his brothers' separating their parents. As atua of the weather, bad weather is associated with his upset. Within Rangiātea, the connection between the individual and the divine is evidenced in the lines:

[109] Baker, *"Rangiātea,"* 64.

We're in the Church. It's all around us.
The wind blows and I'm upset. (Baker, "Rangiātea," lines 7-8).

The poem here is drawing on the idea of ancestors, all the way back to the atua, being held within the body. The tempests of Tāwhirimātea reflect the upset of the narrator, who is within Rangiātea, a historic Church in the Horowhenua. An undetermined quality, perhaps that of the divine, is "all around," and the name of both Church and poem draws a parallel between the Church itself and Rangiātea, the divine space of learning and house of atua in the uppermost heavens. Within the poem, that space of learning can be read as both the physical structure of the Church, or the space of the relationship that is featured and described as being in a state of turmoil.

The symbol of the moon at the end of the poem can be read as emblematic of 'divine womanhood,' as within Te Ao Māori, akin to many other indigenous belief systems, the moon is closely associated with women, fertility, and menstruation. Within Te Ao Māori, the atua Hineteiwaiwa, who presides over the domain of women's "esoteric knowledge and ceremonial arts," is closely associated with the moon.[110] The poem's final image of the moon is positioned in juxtaposition to the title "Rangiātea," traditionally home to male atua. Te Rangiātea, the specific Church of this poem, is thus further implicated as part of the patriarchal system of Christianity. However, the poem ultimately rejects this system, instead adhering to a relational mindset by focusing on the divine in the mundane, with the space of the Church being tempered by discussions of "cheese-sauce dinner" (Baker, "Rangiātea," line 12). In the poem's shifts between locations, from Horowhenua to "the front lawn" (line 4) to the Church, the sanctity of spirit is redefined as being present within every moment. Christian imagery is further drawn on through references to the crucifixion in order to describe a moment of physical intimacy:

You use only your fingers to drive in the screw that's scratching my wrist.
We love the songs that have something to say about us. (lines 5-6).

This intimate moment likens the Passion of Christ to the passion and suffering experienced in a close relationship. By associating the divine with the mundane, the poem elevates the described relationship and emphasises the intrinsic interconnections between the material and the spiritual.

[110] Forster, "Restoring the Feminine," 8.

This relational connection is underpinned by the introduction of the celestial body that closes the poem as a visual illusion:

> you get me to stand with my hand cupped
> up in the air above my head.
> When the photo comes there's the moon (lines 13-15).

The idea of the moon being held in the hand puts further emphasis on the idea of a relational hermeneutics, of divinity being present within the material world. By taking that which is cerebral or esoteric and instead positioning it as part of the physical world, the repressive constructs of colonial Christianity are cast off, with the text further offering space for a potentially sapphic reading, as indicated by the private joy of "songs that have something to say about us" (line 6), and the final image of the moon being "a white ball in my hand" (line 19) symbolising the closely held, cherishing grasp of divine womanhood.

The celebration of women's sexuality within "Good Friday" likewise draws on the idea of crucifixion, as part of a wider repudiation of colonial Christianity that makes a call to action with "[o]ld altars" overturned and "[j]udgemental gods forsaken" (Sturm, lines 10-11). The idea of "the innocent self" (line 14) being crucified, and the purging of "guilt, shame, sin" (line 12) draws on ideas around Christian morality that are once again fixed on the patriarchal idea of all women being a source of sin and immorality. This idea, and Christian patriarchy as a whole, has its roots in the doctrine of the Fall, in which humankind are cast out of paradise and punished due to the actions of Eve, the first woman.[111] Sturm's repudiation is not one of Christianity as a whole, however, with the title "Good Friday" directly referencing the crucifixion of Christ and indicating the subject of the poem as being directly concerned with transformation, resurrection, and redemption. Within the poem, this redemption is that of women, and, in particular, of the self. In the spiritual dream space, the confines of external judgement that are wound up in colonial Christian gender hegemony are dismissed. This is a *good* friday. The poem rejects the judgement of women as being the source of sin, and focuses on a reclamation of the material sensuality of the woman's body. The third, and final, stanza of the poem makes this explicit, opening:

> The sensual dream
> Reveals another truth,
> Preaches to a different redemption. (lines 16-18).

[111] D. Marsden, *Dishonoured and Unheard*, 62-64

These three lines make clear the focus of reclaiming the pleasures of the flesh without guilt, rejecting the negative associations pushed by colonial Christianity.

Having moved through the invocation of both Māori atua and Christian imagery in the prior stanzas, this final stanza is subsequently concerned with "[s]teering by Venus" (line 21), the Roman goddess of desire and sexuality. This invocation of Venus not only makes a claim to the power and sensuality of the woman's body, but also brings to mind the planet, in a call back to traditional Māori navigation. The narrator, who dares to sail the "archetypal seas" (line 20) of redemption, is on a wayfinding journey across an internal sea of sound through to her present whole, complete self. The poem's central line of "[g]uilt, shame, sin" (line 12) sets up this trio as the critical constructs of colonial Christian gender hegemony that must be "cast out as devils" (line 15) after which the narrator traverses an ocean to find "landfall at last / A truly selfless shore" (lines 22-23). This central line consisting only of three words, and the three stanza structure of the poem, calls to mind the triplicate of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as a pantheistic rendering of the Christian God, alongside the referenced Gods of the Māori and Roman pantheons. The triplicate of the poem becomes that of these three faith systems, elevating the value of Te Ao Māori to that of Christianity, and of the oft idealised Ancient Roman civilisation. In synthesising these three spiritual traditions in order to reveal "another truth" (line 16) and preach "to a different redemption" (line 17), Sturm reconceptualises Christianity as a syncretic faith that can be employed without the constructs of colonial hegemony.

The validity, or 'truth,' of synthesised spiritual traditions is likewise emphasised in "Carving up the Cross," with the narrator stating of the whakairo adorning the cross: "This was the truth. Any fool could see that" (Taylor, 123). The carved cross becomes a point of contention for the characters of the story. Due to the size of the cross, the narrator and Ben carve it on a public street outside their flat, where they are visited by a husband and wife team of Pākehā Christian preachers. The wife takes a liking to the cross as it is being carved, shining "like golden light" (122) as she looks upon it, but as the imagery becomes clearer, her husband becomes infuriated due to the central motif of the vulva of Hine-nui-te-Pō. The man's "pursed, white rimmed lips" and red face "said it all" (122), and when the wife says the cross is beautiful, he ushers her away, unable to "hide his glare of rage" (123) This initial conflict over the whakairo adorning the cross indicates the sharp divide between Māori Christianity and colonial Christianity, particularly with regards to gender hegemony. The Pākehā woman finds beauty in the cross while her husband is angered by the disruption of the

status quo, and pulls his wife away from the carved cross that enacts this disruption, his Pākehā patriarchal sensibilities offended.

When the cross is finished, it is brought back to the marae and presented to Sister Hannah and Pitama, who understand the imagery and celebrate it: "Sister Hannah told us the cross was actually going to be presented for the Cardinal's blessing. She thought the cross was beautiful and Pitama understood" (123). However, the Māori clergy are accompanied by a silent Pākehā priest, who is described as "subordinate to Sister and Pitama in this matter" (123). Prior to the hui, the Pākehā priest does not have a say in the matter of the cross, as it is the Māori clergy who make the decisions, with the narrator explicitly stating that "Sister always made the final decisions" (123). Here, within the realm of Māori Christianity, it is apparent that the gendered hierarchy of colonial Christianity does not have sway. Further, the Māori men within the story do not hold issue with women holding power, as evidenced not only by their reaction to the cross, but also to Sister Hannah's authority as decision maker in the lead up to the hui. However, as the date of the hui draws closer, the narrator starts drawing parallels between the silent Pākehā priest and the Pākehā preacher who was so angered by the cross. The priest "seemed frightened" (124) of the narrator and his fellow carver, and, like the earlier preacher, is described as physically manifesting discomfort, with "his red-necked shaven raw face [getting] redder and redder" (124).

Upon the day of the hui, tensions around the reaction of the Pākehā priest are arising, however the Cardinal blesses the cross publicly, to the relief of the narrator. However, during the blessing, the Pākehā priest sows discord amongst the attendees, "darting amongst the people and stopping every few moments to whisper in their ears" (125). Finally, as the narrator takes a break outside, the Pākehā priest approaches him and demands the cross be taken down, ostensibly at the behest of a kaumatua who is nowhere to be found. "As though he couldn't believe it," the priest states, "'You have displayed a lady's private parts on the cross of our Lord'" (125). His response is wound up in "disgust and hatred" (125) that he cannot conceal, and reveals a fundamental inability to comprehend the spiritual meaning of the whakairo. This response is symbolic of the prevailing ideological force of colonial Christian gender hegemony. The Pākehā priest not only cannot understand the symbolism of Māoritanga, but is also deeply offended by the representation of a woman's body upon a sacred symbol. Despite having little agency within the hierarchy of the Māori church, he has put in considerable effort to sow discord so that he is able to maintain the benefits of the repressive gendered hierarchies of colonial Christianity.

The response of both the Pākehā priest and the earlier Pākehā preacher reveals that those within the story who seek to maintain the status quo are those who benefit most from it. Later, at the hui, the narrator comments that he remembers "every woman that saw the cross said it was beautiful" (124). Again, the contention around the toi whakairo of the cross is focused specifically on the reactions of Pākehā men. The women and Māori men of the text are not disturbed by the cross, as they are not afraid of women being emblematic of, or holding power. These blanket judgements imposed by the Pākehā men are critiqued within the text by the narrator, who recognises the reaction of the Pākehā men as inherently racist:

> The cross was taken down and taken away. Sister Hannah, Pitama and others had understood. I didn't care, though we'd worked a long time on the cross. I recognised this as just another giant slap in the face of the Maori [sic] by those who couldn't understand. (125).

There is a diametrical opposition between colonial Christianity and the ideas being put forward by the indigenous carver. However, the Christian faith itself is not being rejected, and is instead being synthesised with mātauranga Māori. The blend of marae and church does not appear to pose any conflict for either the Māori workers or Māori clergy involved. It is a hybrid space which the Māori Catholic clergy seem to inhabit, and that the text's eponymous carved cross embodies. The removal of the cross is thus an act of placation towards the Pākehā clergy, and the cross is taken away to a new space rather than destroyed, indicating that the Māori clergy will maintain their respect and admiration for the syncretic symbol. In being reinterpreted in toi whakairo, the looming symbol of the cross becomes a hybrid emblem of Christianity and mātauranga Māori, no longer a shadow across the text but instead a celebration of faith.

Rather than being assimilated into the system of colonial Christianity, those Māori who adopt the faith can hold onto the epistemological and ontological assertions present within Te Ao Māori. Within "Carving up the Cross," the narrator concludes his story with an assertion of his commitment to the work he has done:

> I often wonder now I've learned more … and more … about the chisel and to carve, how if … if I was asked again would I ever carve a cross for someone?
>
> If I did, they'd still get the same story. (126).

This assertion of the validity of mātauranga Māori, alongside the implicit act of placation in Sister Hannah taking the cross to her own community, establishes how Māori Christians hold onto tikanga Māori in their engagements with their faith. The ways of being and knowing

present within Te Ao Māori are not lost in the wake of Christianity, but are instead hybridised into a syncretic faith. In stating that "they'd still get the same story," the narrator emphasises that what he has carved is "the truth," and stands strong against colonial assimilation. This assertion speaks to a long history of Māori countering acts of desecration of their sacred tohu, or symbols, such as the chiselling off of the phallus in traditional whakairo, a common practice amongst early colonial missionaries.[112] The desecration and destruction of whakairo by Pākehā still occurs today, and is an ongoing issue that is indicative of the deeply ingrained and ongoing racist attitudes that date back to colonisation.[113] Despite the pervasive and prevailing acts of repression enacted by the colonial State, traditional pūrākau that convey mātauranga Māori are still shared, through toi whakairo, through the many other art forms available in the contemporary world, and through kōrero, conversation. Further, as evidenced by Taylor's carved cross, these pūrākau make their way into Christian faith systems as adhered to by Māori populations.

The synthesis of mātauranga Māori and Christianity has given rise to syncretic Māori Christian denominations, including that of Ringatū and Rātana. These faiths each follow the teachings of Māori prophets in the Christian tradition, and exist as both secular and religious movements that follow distinctly Māori theologies. The centring of mātauranga Māori in the emergence of syncretic faith systems demonstrates that different spiritual systems can coexist, rather than subsume one another. The tohu of the cross can unify a common ground between mātauranga Māori and Christianity, with the foundational shape of the cross being treated as a rākau in which the pūrākau, carrying the values and beliefs of mātauranga Māori, can be carved. The carved cross thus becomes a distinctly Māori symbol, just as Māori Christians have created distinct denominations of the religion. Yet, just as the Pākehā Christians revile the images wrought into the carved cross, colonial Christianity in its entirety is unable to coexist or compromise with mātauranga Māori, as at its core it is fundamentally opposed to the beliefs and values within. In this way, the carved cross takes on the role of the rākau in laying down its own wero, challenge, to the systems and structures pushed forward by colonial Christianity, operating as the emblem of a syncretic, indigenised faith.

---

[112] Aspin, "Hōkakatanga – Māori sexualities - Early Māori sexuality." https://teara.govt.nz/en/hokakatanga-maori-sexualities

[113] See: "Rangitāne Carving Irreparably Damaged," *Stuff NZ*. https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/113921766/rangitne-carving-irreparably-damaged-when-phallus-lopped-off-in-protest

4. Passing the Tokotoko: Deconstructions of Colonial Christian Gender Performance

Throughout the preceding chapters of this thesis, I have focused on the impacts of the introduction of hierarchical gender structures by colonial Christianity, including the establishment of hegemonic ideals of masculinity and femininity. In both the rejection and the transformation of colonial Christianity, there have been examples of authors inverting hegemonic expectations around gender. We see this in the descriptions of, and thoughts expressed by, both Ihimaera and Taylor's male narrators, as well as in the reclamations of female sensuality and sexuality in Tibble, Baker and Sturm's poetry. However, while the synthesis of colonial Christianity and mātauranga Māori has allowed space for the formation of new, distinctly Māori forms of Christianity, amongst these new denominations are those that continue to uphold the rigid, repressive structures of colonial Christian gender hegemony. A significantly damaging aspect of this has been the ongoing discrimination of takatāpui, Māori men and women who do not conform to heterosexuality, and tāhine, Māori individuals who do not conform to binary gender or the gender they were assigned at birth.

Having engaged with those texts that laid down the rākau, challenging introduced hierarchies, and carved the cross, synthesising multiple faiths, I look now to the passing of the tokotoko: the taking up of the orator's staff by a new generation of contemporary authors and poets who actively address takatāpui concerns. It is important to acknowledge that the takatāpui identity of authors examined in prior chapters, such as Ihimaera and Baker, has had influence on their writing and the ways in which they engage with ideas around gender and sexuality. However, the texts examined within this chapter have an explicit focus on deviations from hegemonic, heteronormative, gender performance, and from the male-female gender binary. With the exception of an early poem by Robin Kora, this chapter focuses on the texts of contemporary queer and gender non-conforming Māori writers working to consolidate their identities within the context of a society built on colonial Christianity. The act of taking up the tokotoko and claiming the right to speak is at the centre of these writers' works.

From the outset of the narrative, Kim McBreen's short story "Home"[114] highlights the feelings of displacement and the struggle to consolidate identity that are experienced by queer Māori, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad. Unlike the narrative voices of Taylor's "Carving up the Cross" and Ihimaera's "Hine-Tītama," McBreen's narrator speaks in the second person, a literary choice that immediately displaces the speaker from the narrative

[114] McBreen, "Home," 97-100.

being told. Instead of presenting a narrative for the reader to insert themselves into, McBreen's use of the second person is referring explicitly to the central character of her story, conflating implied narrator and implied audience in order to present a reflective, stream of consciousness narrative that takes place over a number of years. This displacement of the narrative voice mirrors the displacement experienced by the central character, emphasising the feelings of anxiety and of being an outsider who does not feel safe in her own country. The acts of oppression and micro-aggressions experienced by the central character as a queer Māori woman become emphasised by the displacement of the voice, as if the narrator is unwilling to face that the events and feelings she is experiencing are happening to her.

McBreen's narrative opens with a numbered list of three things the central character, Liz, does before moving abroad, in order to "ground" (McBreen, 97) herself to New Zealand. These three things are referred to as gifts to the self, though the only external material gift is one that is received from someone else. The first is a tattoo, "[a] simple double spiral — past and future touching in the present, a wave breaking and the land rising to meet it" (97). Immediately, Liz is presented as grounding herself through her Māori identity, receiving a tā moko, tattoo, that reflects epistemological assertions from Te Ao Māori. The land and surrounding ocean are inked indelibly into the skin, along with the acknowledgement of both ancestors and descendants existing within the present body. This tā moko grounds Liz within the whenua in a highly culturally specific manner, which is further emphasised in the second 'gift' on the list: a camping trip during which Liz receives a pounamu from a friend. The gift of pounamu is that of an important taonga, or treasure, with the hard green stone that is found in the rivers of the South Island having spiritual significance and being a highly valued commodity for trade, dating back prior to colonisation.[115] The most descriptive passage in the recollection of the camping trip is of the pounamu, which is "a long rounded piece… on black cord" (97). The passage describes the length, temperature, weight and quality of the pounamu in more detail than any other object or person within the story. The changing nature of the stone is also described, "dull" in the evening light, but with "strips of pale mingling with the dark green" in the morning (97). While the 'grounding' gift was ostensibly that of the camping trip, the focus and care that is put into the description of the pounamu stands out from the brevity and simplicity of the text. This focus emphasises the importance of the stone and implicitly draws the connection between camping, being surrounded by nature and

[115] Keane, "Pounamu – Jade or Greenstone." https://teara.govt.nz/en/pounamu-jade-or-greenstone/p

grounding oneself within the land, and the stone itself being a piece of the whenua that is carried with Liz in her travels abroad.

These two acts of grounding give a clear indication as to Liz's values and culturally specific identity, while the final numbered 'gift' is one that is concerned with national identity: going to a pub to watch an All Blacks game. The pub is described as being decked out for the event, "with black draping the walls" and "everyone… in black" (97). The communal warmth evoked by the imagery of patrons coming together is sharply undermined following the All Blacks' loss, with the pub described as "much quieter" and Liz's friend, and later girlfriend, Katy sighing,"'I'm just thinking how it's going to be at Women's Refuge this week. It's always bad after the All Blacks lose'" (98). This reference to domestic violence, and the anecdotal claim that domestic violence is exacerbated following rugby game losses, throws into sharp relief the correlation between national identity and harmful behaviours perpetuated by hegemonic gender ideals. As explored in earlier chapters, colonisation brought with it ideals of hegemonic gender roles that positioned women as subservient and Māori masculinity specifically as being aggressive and highly physical. The societal impact of this imposed gender construct has been of ongoing detriment within Māori communities. Further, Māori women and members of the LGBTQ+ community are significantly more likely to experience domestic violence, with both Māori women and LGBTQ+ individuals more than twice as likely to experience intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetimes.[116] Liz goes on to experience interpersonal aggression upon her return to New Zealand, the instances of which are concerned with her personal identity and New Zealand's national identity respectively. Liz's farewell to New Zealand being centred around national pride in the All Blacks and the social ramifications of the rugby team losing foreshadows the development of nationalist rhetoric and its repercussions as a key throughline of the text, around which Liz must navigate her identity as a queer Māori woman.

The concern of nationalist rhetoric in "Home" is introduced more explicitly through a comparison set up between New Zealand and America, in which a series of paragraphs inform the reader what America 'is' under no uncertain terms. Each paragraph opens with a concrete statement such as "Americans love America," "America has race issues," "America is Christian," and "America is morally conflicted" (98). These brief, anaphoric statements are subsequently expanded upon with Liz being positioned, and positioning New Zealand, as

[116] Marie, Fergusson and Boden, "Ethnic Identity and Intimate Partner Violence."
"New research and reports about violence affecting LGBTTQIA+ people," New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse.

contrary to this. Liz tells Americans that New Zealanders do not fly the national flag, claims Polish ancestry in response to a racist joke, and informs her American audience that New Zealand is a secular country. The themes of nationalism, racism, Christianity and homophobia are set up as being problematic within a specifically American context, and the passage ends with the statement that "it was a relief to go home" (98). In setting up Liz as an outsider within the U.S.A., the text emphasises the aspects of Liz's identity that isolate her from these 'American' problems, and sets up a dichotomy between the two nations that is subsequently deconstructed upon her return. As an outsider, Liz is able to recognise and feel discomfort while away from New Zealand, but upon her return she becomes steadily more aware of how these same issues occur at home.

Conversely, essa may ranapiri's similarly self reflective poem "To Get Out"[117] is firmly rooted from the outset in Aotearoa New Zealand as the space in which these same concerns around racism, non-normative gender or sexuality, and the impacts of colonial Christianity create an outsider identity. From the opening reference to the pūrākau of Kupe slaying "muturangi's pet" (ranapiri, p. 86, line 2), the poem is geographically localised to the Wellington region, and immediately immersed within a Te Ao Māori context. This opening reference characterises the tentacles of Muturangi's octopus as legs, describing the shape as "a green tear drop" and "ghastly slippage of flesh" (p. 86, lines 2-3). This preoccupation with the body of the octopus reflects the preoccupation with the human body that experiences alienation throughout the poem. The octopus becomes a recurring motif that opens the two distinct sections of the poem, from the first, extended, stanza's opening line "i didnt [sic] get through the article about the octopus" (p. 86, line 1) through to the third line of the second stanza, which reads "there was tentacle porn in that one film we both watched" (p. 87, line 47). The motif of the octopus, a creature often seen as completely alien, underpins the sense of alienation experienced when existing outside of colonial Christian gender expectations.

The poem's narratorial concern of how to navigate and consolidate takatāpui identity within colonised society is the critical throughline, the internal dilemma that the narrator needs "to get out" (p. 88, line 74). The fourth stanza reaffirms the localisation of the poem with the recollection of seeing "a wide-brimmed hat" while "walking up the kelburn hill" (p. 88, lines 65-66). This stanza reasserts the feeling of alienation in a society that adheres to the rigid hierarchy of colonial Christian gender, race and class structures. The hat is linked to witches, being deemed "suitable / for a halloween costume" (p.88, lines 66-67), and the

[117] ranapiri, "To Get Out," 86-89.

narrator poses the rhetorical "all the saints are dead aren't they?" (p.88, line 67), bringing up the question of why a contemporary, secular society still adheres to the archaic ideology of rigid, hegemonic gender constructs. The hat is left on the footpath and again a rhetorical question is posed: "would we / be burnt or drowned do you think?" (p. 88, lines 69-70). This assertion of solidarity, of community, with the women who were executed for witchcraft throughout Europe in the Middle Ages further underpins the idea of gender divergence resulting in alienation and ostracism for not adhering to colonial Christian ideals. The final stanza of the poem is once again highly fragmented, asserting that the narrator is "mostly sad" (p. 88, line 72). an emotion that resonates throughout the length of the text.

While McBreen's short story and ranapiri's poem both use a stream of consciousness method to convey complex, layered meaning, "To Get Out" utilises both thematic and visual fragmentation, rather than the second person view point, to emphasise the sense of disconnection. Unlike the vignettes of "Home," which document events taking place across a number of years and locations, "To Get Out" is predominantly concerned with the cerebral, the inner workings of the mind, with the snippets of day-to-day life in Wellington fuelling an internal monologue. The explicit subject matter of the poem moves rapidly between traditional pūrākau, biblical imagery, ruminations on gender, and the mundane particulars of daily living. In addition to thematically moving between supposedly disparate subjects, the fragmented form of the poem, and extended first stanza, create the sense of an unsettled identity and of a mind tangled in limbo.

The centring of the first person, signalled repeatedly throughout the poem as the lowercase 'i' further underpins the focus on individual identity, as well as staking a claim on the right to speak. Like the 'I,' of Tibble's "Tohunga," ranapiri's use of the first person pronoun operates simultaneously as the held tokotoko, the orator's staff, and the agentic eye which sees. The poem reads "look at that person look at that *man in a dress"* (ranapiri, p.86, line 7) in a moment in which the narrative voice attempts to embody an external perspective. This act of looking, alongside the use of italicisation, emphasises the sense of alienation experienced by the individual and can be read as both self conscious and sarcastic. The emphasis on the alienation of being gender diverse here is echoed in the only other instance of italicisation in the poem, where the narrator expresses "not wanting to be my father's / *son* in any way" (p.86, lines 25-26). The poem's preoccupation with the impossibility of 'knowing' speaks to the disconnection felt by the agentic individual existing outside of normative boundaries. This disconnect is highlighted in the subsequent shift from an external perspective of a 'man in a dress' to the unbroken lines:

> when
> did i exactly know that i was not a boy when did that question pop up
> i felt out of place but projection can do what it wants to memory
> i couldn’t remember my brother rubbing my arse until year thirteen
> baptised in year twelve or was it year eleven dye hair red but (p. 86, lines 10-14).

These lines address the sense of alienation felt by gender non-conforming individuals and introduces the corresponding critique of Christianity that is carried throughout the text. In linking Christianity to the memory of being sexually assaulted, these lines implicate the relationship between gender alienation and the negative ramifications of the colonial Christian gender binary. The follow up reference to dyeing hair “red / like the stuff that leaves veins” (p. 86, lines 14-15) and subsequent repetition of “i don’t know” (p. 86, lines 16-17) statements further underpin this sense of disconnection, conveying a feeling of displacement that severely impacts the health and wellbeing of the takatāpui individual. The experience of gender alienation is further explored as the unpunctuated, uncapitalised, fragmented passage moves on, with the word “person” opening a line followed by a visual blank space before the words “am i really a thing in the world” (p. 86, line 18). The scattered, disorganised thoughts on the page move from the idea that “no one is open-minded” to the question “how do we slide from man to woman” (p. 86, lines 19-20) through to the final self reflective “entropy is gendered violence and i am a neoliberal hot take” (p.86, line 26). This increasingly disordered stream of consciousness creates a sense of panic and urgency, with the visual fragmentation of the poem emphasising this state of anxiety. In being alienated from society through disconnection with imposed gender roles, the individual becomes confused and desolate.

The relationship between colonial Christianity and the sense of disconnection felt by the gender non-conforming individual is emphasised through the use of biblical references. The desire to “sit in the spaces between the / words” (p. 87, lines 31-32) in order to find freedom is followed by the idea that “there is a joke” in the narrator “listening to a song on repeat about the garden of eden” (p. 87, lines 33-34). This reference links back to the idea of ‘knowledge’ and explicitly to the knowledge of gender and sexuality. In the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve initially live unencumbered by their nakedness, experiencing freedom and paradise in the garden of Eden. However, following the serpent tempting Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge, the pair are banished from the garden as they now know shame, desire, and, crucially, the difference between their two bodies. At a rudimentary level, this narrative

can be read as the foundational text for gender hegemony in the Christian tradition, with Genesis 2:23 outlining how woman was "taken out of" man and Genesis 3:16 stating that, as Eve ate of the fruit first, her "desire shall be thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."[118] The poem runs on to postulate that "maybe the bible was the only book / published in english and we keep tricking ourselves over and over" (ranapiri, p. 87, lines 39-40), before directly referencing Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. These references, taken together, position Christianity as being the origin of hegemonic expectations of gender and sexuality generates the feelings of disconnection and discomfit in the narrator. Further, they implicate Christian values and beliefs as being pervasive and foundational to the fabric of colonial society, even in, what McBreen's text claims is, a secular nation. The poem goes on to explicitly disavow colonial Christian gender hegemony, with the third stanza drawing parallels between the gender binary and other binary oppositions, such as "subject and object," and "cynic and nihilist" (p. 88, lines 61-62). The use of these terms, coming from Western philosophical traditions, further demonstrate the narrator's belief that colonial Christianity is the basis of binary gender. The ultimate disavowal of this construct emphasises this belief in the final two lines of the stanza, which read "my gender is the way he said god is dead / with emphasis on the IS" (p. 88, lines 63-64).

The frustrations expressed within "To Get Out" around the inability to be true to one's own identity under society's restrictive expectations of colonial Christian gender performance has parallels in Anton Blank's "Jesus and Me."[119] Just as ranapiri's poem expresses a desire for sexual freedom and gender liberation, "Jesus and Me" seeks an escape from the heteronormative expectations of society. The normalisation of heterosexuality and prevalence of homophobia are both constructs of colonial Christian ideology. As examined above, the establishment of distinct binary gender roles within Christian scripture included the mandate that women be subservient to men. Further, later scripture, including the passage of Genesis 19 examined in Chapter 2, has been often interpreted to be a condemnation of homosexuality. Taking from Judith Butler's assertion that the material body is devoid of cultural meaning, and that gender itself is a social construction, the performance of masculine and feminine acts are encoded with meaning by society.[120] The construction of gender, sex, and sexuality are thus intrinsically enmeshed, with deviations from heterosexuality operating in effect as deviations from prescribed hegemonic gender roles. Within "Jesus and Me," the restrictive

[118] Gen. 2:23, 3:16, (KJV).
[119] Blank, "Jesus and Me," 22.
[120] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 900-911.

heteronormative parameters of colonial Christian gender hegemony are viewed as an aspect of New Zealand society that confine and restrict the freedom of a gay man to be himself.

The opening stanza of "Jesus and Me" presents the image of "[a]n altar, a wedding cake and matching tuxedos" (Blank, line 1), an ostensibly Christian wedding between two men, occuring at a Church altar, as being "[p]erfectly perfect perfection" (line 2). The tautological refrain of alliterated variations on 'perfect' emphasises the image as being idealised in quality, with the tri-fold repetition casting the event as sacred, implicitly referencing the Holy Trinity. However, this idealised wedding is subsequently characterised as being "[s]omewhere over there" (line 3), implicating that it is somewhere away from the narrative voice's current context. The following description of a man "[i]n Palmerston North" (line 5) who "drives over his little Messiah in the driveway" (line 6) geographically localises the poem, implicating the colonial Christian sensibilities of small town New Zealand as being that which confines the takatāpui individual.

References and images to Christ and Christianity are drawn on throughout the poem in order to reject these colonial Christian mores, with parallels drawn between the gay man and Christ, with the sixth stanza reading:

> Stigmata
> Me
> love, sacrifice, erotica and lust
> Tihei mauri ora!
> Let there be life! (lines 12-16).

This interweaving of religious imagery, the personal pronoun, and reference to life giving characterises the gay individual as being crucified for his sexuality, with the Christian ideals of love and sacrifice given as the reason for his condemnation. The pairing of "erotica and lust" with the values of love and sacrifice characterises the supposedly 'sinful' qualities of sexuality as being natural, valuable concepts. The subsequent sneeze of life, "[t]ihei mauri ora," which is a claim to the right to speak, has the dual function of also referencing resurrection. In casting the takatāpui individual in the role of Christ, the poem rejects the morals of colonial Christian gender hegemony that claims homosexuality is a sin.

This claim to the right to speak and the rejection of colonial Christian homophobia are both further emphasised by the anaphoric list of the eighth stanza. The first four lines of the octet are 'I' statements, claiming the right to speak and humanising the subject:

> I cry
> I bleed

I dream
I am naked (lines 21-24).

These lines speak to the vulnerability of the individual, and further implicate the parallels between Christ and the narrator. The subsequent four lines of the octet further reject the notion of an idealised masculinity, and the demonisation of homosexuality:

My body and psycho-socio-political imperfections exposed
Dysfunctional
Sinless
Perfect (lines 25-28).

This exposure of the individual's body and "imperfections" emphasises the vulnerability of the crucified figure, and explicitly renders homosexuality as being externally perceived as a "psycho-socio-political" dysfunction. The subsequent assertion that this individual is both perfect and without sin is a moment of liberation, in which the narrator casts off the burden of colonial Christian gender ideology. In casting the takatāpui individual in the role of Christ, the poem transforms rather than rejects the faith, likening his repudiation of colonial Christianity to the liberation that Christ continues to symbolise for many.

Where the disillusionment with colonial Christian gender hegemony expressed in both "Jesus and Me" and "To Get Out" is focused on how these constructs have been assimilated into societal expectations, the concerns expressed within "Home" are focused on an external group whose values uphold religious intolerance. The narrative spans several years in the mid-2000s, and the first event described upon Liz's return to New Zealand is the Destiny Church protest of the 2004 Civil Unions Bill. Participating in the counter protest, Liz feels a sense of community, as it "felt good to be with these people" (McBreen, 99). Initially the atmosphere is described as joyful, with "fairies, orange overalls and balloons, men in pink tutus — laughing, chanting, dancing" (99). This vibrant, colourful community is contrasted with the black-clad Destiny Church protestors, who are fewer in number and are characterised as looking "boring" and lacking "the moral high ground" (99). The mood shifts sharply "when the real Destiny protest" arrives, looking "like Nazis" and described as an "ocean of black" that overwhelms the "pool of colour" that makes up Liz and her fellow protestors (99). The use of the colour black in this passage is contrasted with the sense of camaraderie and community felt amongst the black-clad All Black supporters earlier in the text. Here black is worn by a community that excludes and marginalises Liz, with the colour symbolising an overwhelming, oppressive force. The colour black recurs throughout the text,

from the cord of the pounamu and the garb of the rugby supporters through to the black uniform of Destiny Church protestors and the black sky of the morning on Anzac day in a later passage.

The use of the colour black as emblematic of New Zealand nationalism has a longstanding history, originating from it being a preferred colour worn by early colonists as well as one of the few natural pigments Māori had access to for dyeing clothes and objects.[121] Wearing the colour has a range of symbolic associations, from the Western associations with mourning and grief, to the historic association with prestige due to early difficulties in its production. Within Māoritanga, the colour has associations with Te Kore, the void into which Papatūānuku and Ranginui were born, as well as with the art of tā moko, and early items of clothing associated with prestige, such as the kahu tōī.[122] Further, the colour is traditionally associated with the 'male element,' which is viewed as passive, with the colour red that is associated with the 'female element' being viewed as active, a reversal of Western gender associations regarding who gets the right to act and who must submit. As one of the few colours available to Māori pre-colonisation, the popularity of the colour carried over following the introduction of Western clothing. The choice to wear black by Destiny Church protestors thus has roots in tikanga Māori, though in the case of the 2004 protest these uniforms were emblazoned with the slogan 'enough is enough,' as an indication of their intolerance of homosexuality, and adherence to the rigid precepts of colonial Christian gender roles.[123]

The actions of Destiny Church demonstrate how the emergence of Māori specific forms of Christianity has, at times, included assimilation into colonial ideology. Upon the arrival of the "real" protest, the men at the front are described as first setting down a "wero," a challenge, followed by a haka (McBreen, 99). The comparison between these actions steeped in tikanga Māori and the description of these protestors "with their salute" looking like "Nazis" is immensely bleak (99). In using tikanga Māori to enforce an intolerant, and ultimately colonial, ideology, the Destiny Church protestors embody the ongoing conflict between religion and sexuality in the Māori community. This conflict is additionally touched on at the beginning of the passage, where it is stated that Liz's girlfriend Katy "wasn't allowed to protest," instead having to spend the day "at work being polite to her co-workers

[121] De Pont, "Why Do We Wear Black?," 13.
[122] Clark, "A Māori Perspective on the Wearing of Black," 42-45.
[123] Schrader, "Parades and Protest Marches." https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/21123/enough-is-enough-march

friends and family, all black-clad and anti-gay, who'd come down with Destiny Church" (99). The domination of Katy's workplace, the Ministry for Māori Development Te Puni Kōkiri, by Destiny Church supporters, and her being forbidden to protest, paint a clear picture of the prevalence of the homophobic beliefs at both a community and governmental level. Later, the counter-protest is pushed out of the way of the Destiny Church group by police, further indicting governmental bodies as being complacent, and perhaps even supportive, of Destiny Church's homophobic views.

Following a menacing interaction with a Destiny Church supporter, who "pressed up" against Liz, trying to take away her banner and telling her it is "a long way to fall," the text asks the rhetorical question "[w]here had they all come from?" (99). The description of this aggressive, sexually domineering behaviour by the man underlines the lack of safety felt by Liz as a queer Māori woman, and the rhetorical question is utilised to underscore the sense of confusion she has about both the material appearance of the numerous Destiny Church protestors, and the immaterial ideas and beliefs they had brought with them. Rhetorical questions are utilised throughout the text to open up the inner workings of the central character's mind, despite the use of second person narration. The following passage opens with "[a]fter a while you had to stop listening to the news," before listing a number of local events such as police gang-rape, National Front violence towards immigrants, and the Labour Party taking away "Maori [sic] ownership rights, in the name of public good" (99). The rhetorical question following this passage asks "[h]ad it always been like this?" (99), explicitly addressing the dissipation of Liz's national pride as she had "believed the stories of gender and racial equality, of this great little nation taking on the world" (99). The narration goes on to state that Liz has "woken to a nationalist nightmare that no one seemed to notice," and poses the question "[h]ow could you get through to them?" (99). These questions effectively emphasise the mounting sense of disconnection Liz has following her return from America.

Rhetorical questions are likewise used within Blank's "Jesus and Me" in order to express a sense of disconnection and disenfranchisement from the Aotearoa New Zealand community. As with both ranapiri and McBreen, the running concern of the individual's right to vocalise their identity and be free to exist outside of the parameters of colonial Christian gender hegemony is positioned in opposition to religious intolerance. The desire to escape permeates the poem, with the idea of freedom being elsewhere followed by the rhetorical "so what now?" (Blank, line 4). The feeling of frustration towards being displaced, and the desire for acceptance is carried through the Christ parallel of the final stanza:

See my hands
Look at my feet
I'm the One
Love me! Love me! Love me! Love me! (lines 30-33).

This characterisation of the takatāpui body as carrying the marks of stigmata, of being "the One," culminates in the final repeated exclamation demanding love. The individual is characterised as a Christ figure who is in pain, seeking acceptance and love from the very community that has rejected him. Prior to this demand for acceptance, the seventh stanza of the poem further explores the dilemma of whether or not to stay in a space that is not accepting, posing the question of "[w]hat is freedom?" (line 17), and asking "[i]s my departure premature?" (line 19). The act of leaving is presented here as being an act of "altruism" in order to maintain the "*brand*" of the community left behind (line 20). The frustration of disconnection and of being rejected by the community results in an internal dilemma, implicating the connection to land and community that has been disrupted by externally introduced social mores.

Likewise, the final use of a rhetorical question in "Home" is one that explicitly responds to externally introduced social mores in the form of racial microaggressions occurring at the 2007 Anzac Day dawn parade. The atmosphere of the parade is described as uncomfortable from the outset, with the opening gambit "Anzac day. It's cold as cold" (McBreen, 100), leading into a passage that describes the quiet as "unsettling," before the parade begins (100). The introduction of sound is likewise discomfiting, with a presumed cannon exploding and bagpipes that "tear through the stillness and lash at your ears" (100). The woman introducing the order of ceremony is described as having a "shrill voice" that "butchers Maori words of greeting" (100). Her use of Te Reo Māori, and the use of Te Reo Māori at the parade overall, is characterised as tokenistic, enacting a racial microaggression that further displaces the central character. The narrative voice asks "[d]id she really say that?" (100) in response to the information that Hayley Westenra would be singing the National Anthem in Te Reo Māori, with everyone else joining in for the English version. Having a Pākehā singer perform the Te Reo Māori anthem, with the expectation the crowd would only be comfortable singing the English, highlights the demographics of those in attendance and emphasises the tokenistic nod to Māori in this scene.

Liz, attending the parade in protest of New Zealand army's occupation of East Timor, proceeds to experience active aggression and racial microaggressions from the crowd "who came to hear nationalist rhetoric dressed up as a memorial to the dead" (100). She is

described as “so tense [she] can hardly breathe” and as having tears stinging her eyes as protestors around her are physically assaulted and arrested (100). A man hisses at her that she “has no right to be here” and she feels immense upset, an ultimate upheaval of her identity as she cannot relate to these people “all singing [her] national anthem together” (100). The final line of the story acts as a final blow to the sense of community and belonging introduced at the beginning of the narrative, with a man shouting at Liz’s back: “This is a great country. If you don’t like it, why don’t you fuck off?” (100).

This ultimate rejection of belonging, due to the pervasive dominance of colonial, nationalist rhetoric, underpins the feelings of anxiety and disconnection felt throughout the text. The sentiment that Liz, a queer Māori woman, ought to leave Aotearoa New Zealand, throws into stark relief who holds the right to community, safety, and land under the precepts of colonial capitalism. This idea is echoed in the title of essa may ranapiri’s poem, “Holding Rights To,”[124] a contemplation on who holds the rights to an individual’s body and identity. The titular phrase “Holding Rights To” evokes the critical concern of indigenous autonomy, linking the central concern of bodily autonomy to concerns regarding both land and resources. Within Te Ao Māori, where all things are interrelated and held in common, the question of holding authority over the human body is inextricably connected to the question of holding authority over land. Both the commodification of indigenous bodies and the commodification of Māori’s traditional lands were objectives of colonial capitalism, intrinsically at odds with the precepts of Te Ao Māori which viewed land itself having its own autonomy. Within tikanga Māori, individual autonomy, much like the autonomy of land, is characterised by a set of responsibilities to the individual’s relationships with their whānau, and whenua.

This question of relationality, of who and how the body relates to the world around it, is threaded throughout the poem. The poem opens talking about how “the politics of the body” (ranapiri, p. 71, line 1) as a gender non-conforming entity is impacted by “all involved in / the body’s permission to shift from / masculine to androgynous to feminised” (p. 71, lines 6-8). Biological essentialism is associated with “change” (p. 71, line 3), and an individual’s parents are reduced to “biological / characters” (p. 71, lines 3-4). Further, the individual’s

[124] ranapiri, “Holding Rights To,” 71-72.
n.b. As with Tibble’s “Tohunga,” ranapiri utilises the slash as a typographic symbol in this poem. To avoid confusion with line breaks, quotations of the text that include the slash as it appears in the original text will be in the form of block quotations. The slashes used here in run in quotations are indicative of line breaks.

relationship to these external bodies are manifested internally, with the poem constructing the external mother and father figures as components of the body, held within:

> the xy
> component of the offspring makes a
> sound: that they were truly a part of him
> / the xx component makes a sound: that it
> started inside her stomach — point at belly / (p. 71, lines 14-18).

This abstraction of the parental figures into mechanical components held within the body calls to mind Vaai's idea of Pacific relationality being conceived of as multiple beings or ideas being held within each other.[125] Like communality being in individuality, and vice versa, the relationships between the central figure and their parents is conceived of as the external bodies being held in the body of the offspring.

In addition to reducing parental figures to chromosomal markers, ranapiri objectifies the human body, referring to the body as "it" throughout the poem and utilising scientific language to examine the body's relationship to others. In a reversal of the common literary technique of personification of the land in Māori writing in English, the use of this language abstracts and depersonifies the body, characterising the body as an inanimate object without personhood. What little personhood that the body has is that of a central figure that is fragmented into personified functions of an objectified whole. The body itself is characterised as autonomous, separate from the mind and free of the bindings of social expectations, with the poem stating that the body "wakes up one morning with the / imagination of a thing less indoctrinated in / heteronormative social mores" (ranapiri, p. 71, lines 23-25). This idea of the body being ultimately free from the constraints of social expectation is further evoked in the assertion that "the / body does not need lessons on how to be / okay with sex" (p. 72, lines 33-35). In separating the body and mind, the poem effectively establishes an internal contradiction in which the body feels free to do as it wishes, yet the mind, as part of the body, feels the pressures of familial and social expectations of how the body ought to act and be perceived.

In trying to make sense of the contradictions held within the individual body, the poem explores not only the body's relationships with other external bodies, but also the relationship with its identity and history as a specifically indigenous, Māori body. In trying to navigate the gendered expectations of the familial bodies around, the body is characterised as

[125] Vaai, "Relational Hermeneutics," 23.

becoming increasingly distressed and caught in limbo. This distress gives way to anger, as the abstracted and depersonalised voice of the text indicates that the need to conform is conceptualised as a product of colonial Christian indoctrination. In a series of lines that implicate colonial Christianity in perpetuating intolerance and self-aggrandizement, the poem asserts that:

> the imperialist
> establishment of certain bodies as male
> and certain bodies as female / due to the
> imperialist establishment of the white-
> sleeved God / its love is many lovers add
> hate-is or hate-does to the myth of
> forgiveness / (p.72, lines 35-41).

Here the poem critiques the idea of Christianity being a faith associated with "love" and "forgiveness," whilst upholding ideologies that promote bigotry and violence towards difference. The repetition of the words "imperialist establishment" in these lines ties firmly together the idea of a gender binary and the colonial conception of God, implicating these two ideas as being established through imperialism in order to control and divide, to do away with the fluidity and relationality of precolonial Māori society. The lines stand out in their formulaic construction outside of flowing, stream of consciousness prose as they are rigid and fixed, much like the dualism that has been introduced through colonial thinking. This assertion underpins the idea that the mandate for the Māori body to conform to a binary gender is fundamentally at odds with the belief that an identity is constructed through a series of relationships to differently gendered bodies around, and through time.

The idea that the indigenous body carries with it the essence of all its ancestors is steeped in tikanga Māori, with non-takatāpui authors and takatāpui authors alike drawing on this relational belief and effectively disrupting the idea of a rigid, impermeable gender binary. From the evocation of the conflated "Rangipapa" in Tuwhare's "A Little Fall of Rain at Miti-miti," to the consolidation of the "male and female element" of the carved cross in Taylor's "Carving Up the Cross," it is clear that Te Ao Māori contains a longstanding epistemological understanding of gender outside that of Western binary. Te Ao Māori's lack of adherence to concept of rigidly defined binary gender is explicitly apparent in Robin Kora's 1985 poem "Suffrage,"[126] which opens with the line "I recognise the woman in me" (Kora, p. 147, line 1), before calling on the author's whakapapa to state:

[126] Kora, "Suffrage," 147-149.

My loins I inherit from my past,
my primordial past,
from a tupuna who visibly possessed
the lure of both … man and woman. (p. 147, lines 7-10).

This conceptualisation of a "tupuna who visibly possessed / the lure of both" being "primordial" implicates that the ancestor referred to is likely an atua, or God, rather than an intersex individual. However, regardless of the interpretation of this tupuna being human or otherwise, the lines underscore the idea that, as each individual embodies their ancestors, the indigenous body cannot be reduced to a physical manifestation of a fixed binary gender. Kora's ode to his "tender-gender half" (p. 148, line 48) poem is centred on his experiences as father and husband, honouring his wife's strength and mana as a "wahine toa" (p. 148, line 33), or warrior woman, as she grapples with the "agony of birth" (p.148, line 23). While the poem could be read as upholding essentialist and heteronormative ideas around gender in its separation of men and women, Kora draws on tikanga Māori to deconstruct these divisions. "Suffrage" goes on to state that the embodiment of both the male and female element "is the balance of me / passed in living memory through my grandmother" (pp. 148-149, lines 46-47), further underpinning this characterisation of ancestors being held within the body.

The closing lines of "Suffrage" state that "I cast my vote with the woman… / inside every body" (p. 149, lines 54-55), as a final acknowledgement of the tūpuna within, in order to make a call for gender equality. The emphatic rejection of individualist, Western ideas of an inherent gender binary throughout the poem is framed as a celebration of women's suffrage, and of their right to have their voices heard. Similarly, the right to speak is a central concern in the works of queer Māori writers. Just as "Home" is concerned with the right to exist, to speak out against intolerance, ranapiri's poems are each concerned with communicating the frustration experienced by takatāpui who are disenfranchised by colonial Christian society. The visual form of "Holding Rights To" evokes that of a tokotoko or rākau, with the poem appearing as a block of justified typography along one side of the page. This claim to the right to speak is emphasised in the final six lines of the poem, in which the takatāpui body viscerally rejects colonial Christian gender hegemony:

swallows / it spits up / power /
removes a finger from its mouth / turns to
the external paradigm of a world slowly
conceding its tight grip on the Boolean
of natural sex and gender / (ranapiri, "Holding Rights To," p.72, lines 53-57).

This characterisation of an external world, our society, "conceding its tight grip" on the construction of biological sex and gender that is "Boolean" maintains the throughline of scientific language that is used to talk about the body within the poem. Further, it acts as a rejection of the idea of true or natural sex and gender by positing these constructs as "Boolean," a mathematical logic that establishes a true or false binary.

In response to the image of a society relinquishing its grasp on this idea, the body lets out a "breath it held too long" (p. 72, line 58). This final line, with the spaces for breath visually demarcated, operates as a final claim to the right to speak, evoking the sneeze of life, tihei mauri ora. The evocation of the breath of life acts as a demand for recognition, staking a claim on the takatāpui individual's right to exist, to live, and to thrive in the world. The concern of displacement and the desire to belong is at the heart of takatāpui narratives, with the claim of agency acting as a direct resistance to the fundamentalist ideologies that are expressed by communities such as Destiny Church. The desire for the freedom and safety to express identity is likewise addressed within ranapiri's "To Get Out," in which the titular desire is concerned with the narrator using their voice to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Further, "Jesus and Me" makes an explicit claim to the right to speak, with the exclamation of "[t]ihei mauri ora!" (Blank, line 15) in the sixth stanza, and the stand alone line "I have a voice and I will articulate my truth!" (line 29) taking the space of the ninth stanza. This powerful declaration of agency draws on the spiritual and cultural underpinnings of mātauranga Māori in its assertion of autonomy and authority.

By calling in their claim to the right to speak, takatāpui authors take up the tokotoko in order to challenge the displacement that has been enacted by the implementation of colonial Christian gender hegemony. The experiences of displacement and Othering that have been perpetuated by imposed societal structures are examined through a contemporary lens that highlights how these oppressive impositions have disenfranchised queer Māori from their culture and communities. In their search for clarity, belonging, and acceptance, takatāpui authors draw on their connections to Te Ao Māori, building relational links between the divine and the mundane, the material and the immaterial, to firmly ground themselves in their connections to whenua and tūpuna. The very real disenfranchisement enacted by colonial Christianity is actively countered through the claim to mātauranga Māori, and calling on the individual's tūrangawaewae—their place to stand in the world.

5. Speaking to the Poupou: Concluding Remarks

The act of taking up the tokotoko is a powerful declaration of agency, staking a claim on both the right to speak and the right to exist. The colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand is an ongoing process that has dispossessed and disenfranchised Māori, who continue to be subjugated under the self-reproducing systems of colonialism. Colonial Christianity was utilised as a weapon of the State to strip Māori of their lands, language, and culture, and the repercussions of this violence are immense and ongoing. However, while the ideologies of colonial Christianity are firmly entrenched in the foundations of society, it has never fully eradicated the values of Te Ao Māori. In mapping Māori authorial responses to the imposition of a colonial Christian hegemony, the objective of this thesis has been to explore how mātauranga Māori and Māoritanga have been utilised to decolonise and deconstruct these trappings of repressive socially constructed and maintained ideologies. What has become clear in this exploration is that, whether rejecting, transforming, or transcending Christianity as a faith, Māori authors have consistently taken up the tokotoko to claim their right to speak, laying down a wero to the colonial capitalist ideals at the heart of the introduced religion. Through the analysis of different authorial engagements with colonial Christian gender hegemony, a number of recurring concepts from mātauranga Māori have been identified. The symbiotic relationships between people and the land, the sacred connections between the material and the immaterial, and the concept of an ongoing, simultaneous relationship with the ancestors being held within the body are particularly prolific. These ideas are inextricably linked to one another, as is the holistic nature of Te Ao Māori.

In speaking to the poupou, one can learn from the kōrero and the pūrākau that have been passed down from generation to generation. These sacred repositories of mātauranga Māori exist outside the realm of linear, chronological time. The proverb kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua, 'I walk backwards into the future with my eyes on my past,' is a relational call to both past and future, enfolding the present in a world in which multiple experiences and histories must come together to coexist. The holistic, relational connections between Māori and the whenua, and the corresponding importance of the material world in how Te Ao Māori conceives of the divine, is at the heart of these authors' works. The separation of the natural and spiritual world is an idea that has been perpetuated by Western ideology, exemplified in teachings of the Church and of academia. This separation, placing humans above the natural world, rather than in a symbiotic relationship with it, is consistently deconstructed in the works of Māori authors. The metaphysics of Te Ao Māori are those of a

relational hermeneutics, concerned with a singular, unified, and interconnected cosmos. As such, the material world is deeply significant in terms of how mātauranga Māori conceives of the divine, deconstructing the oppositional binary of the mundane and the sacred.

Likewise, this understanding of cosmic unity is one that goes beyond the social constructions of gender. Within Te Ao Māori there is both unity and diversity, and unique identities must be honoured for that unity to be realised. The conception of deeply ingrained spiritual connections between Māori, the whenua, the tūpuna, and the atua does not allow for the space for rigid and oppositional constructions of identity. Whenua and atua are beyond gender, tūpuna of multiple genders are held within the body, and the diversity of experience must be celebrated for all things to come together as a harmonious, fully realised whole. The reclamation of pre-colonial gender and sexual fluidity in the works of takatāpui authors, such as in ranapiri's "Holding Rights To," explicitly asserts their right to exist outside the bounds of a heteronormative Western gender binary. The evocation of 'tihei mauri ora' in these texts, both explicit, as in Blank's "Jesus and Me," and implicit, as in Taylor's "Carving up the Cross," stakes a claim on the right to speak truths that disavow the imposed structures of colonial Christian gender hegemony. In taking up the tokotoko, Māori writers ground themselves in mātauranga Māori, looking back on the past to inform a future in which diversity is celebrated and community is unified.

The rejection of hegemonic gender ideals and hierarchies has been a throughline in each of the texts examined in this thesis. This rejection comes from an understanding that hegemonic Māori masculinities and femininities in contemporary society are inherently racist and misogynistic constructions that were introduced by colonial Christianity to subjugate the indigenous population. For those Māori who adhere to the Christian faith, the formation of syncretic spiritual systems have often drawn on the pūrākau of mātauranga Māori to deconstruct the hierarchies of gender that have been set forth by colonial Christianity. Those syncretic faiths that are resistant to hegemonic gender constructs transform Christian ideology through the incorporation of a holistic worldview that is fluid, relational, and symbiotic. While the hierarchies of gender set forth by colonial Christianity are often dismissed in syncretic engagements with the faith, the new forms of the spirituality may still incorporate or adhere to the idea of a distinct gender binary. Further, syncretic faiths are not always resistant to the introduced colonial Christian constructs, as we can see in the belief systems of the fundamentalist Destiny Church.

However, the values espoused by colonial and fundamentalist Christian faiths are firmly rebuked in the examined texts in this thesis. As demonstrated in the poetry of Briar

Wood and J.C. Sturm, the separation of spiritual traditions and oppositional divisions can be disavowed through the idea of a holistic and complete universe, where all things are interrelated. Further, in engaging with biblical narratives through a Te Ao Māori lens, Māori authors reconcile conceptions of the immaterial and the divine with the material and the mundane. The whakairo adorning Taylor's cross is emblematic of a syncretic faith that merges the old and the new, adding complex and rich narratives that extend out beyond the teachings of colonial Christianity. The carved cross, itself a rākau of authority, is reconciled with the rākāu tokotoko, each operating as material objects that transcend the divide between the metaphysical and the physical. Both the space at the intersection of the cross and the reach of the rākau, from Papatūānuku up to Ranginui, offer the potential of material engagement with the immaterial. The tokotoko itself as the orator's staff can symbolise this synthesis, with the metaphysical concept of the breath of life, and claim to the right to speak, evoked in the physical staff.

There are pūrākau embedded within each of these rākau which further unify the spiritual world with the natural world. The word pūrākau itself contains 'rākau,' evoking the interconnected spiritual and cosmogonic narratives that are present in the natural world. It is no wonder, then, that Reverend Māori Marsden stated that it is through poetry that one must grasp culture: poetry, pūrākau, and oral traditions are embedded in both the material and immaterial facets of Te Ao Māori. In speaking to the poupou of the house, learning from traditional pūrākau, and taking up the tokotoko, contemporary Māori writers are able to ground themselves in Te Ao Māori, a world that offers up the tools to decolonise and deconstruct the oppressive systems of colonial society. Just as the world continues to grow and change, so too do human identities and engagements with ideas of faith and spirit. Through creative and holistic reconciliation of land, body and spirit, Māori writing in English can amplify the concept of a relational hermeneutics that may dismantle the restrictive systems and binary thinking that permeates society. In the articulation of their experiences, the honouring of mātauranga Māori, and the claims of agency, autonomy, and authority, contemporary Māori authors are contributing to an ongoing tradition of resistance. The role of the orator, of the poet and writer, can become that of the prophet, working towards emancipation and unification.

Appendices

Appendix A: “anglican prattle” (Rapatahana, 94)

anglican prattle

Vaughan Rapatahana

compelled to attend
this cross-high byre
every sacrosanct sunday,
lined up to listen to
a blubber & blither
of blustery bullshit
on repentance, remission,
omission & missions;

ultimate delivery
fed out as forage
for our souls
imploring redemption;
reserving, deserving
to be trucked upwards
via winged chariots
to pledged halls of fame.

clasping old hymnals
like they were electric,
pages of gibberish
faded in hope,
singing in lines
like synchronised swimmers
wolfing down wafers
& stagnant red wine.

listening to sermons
staining our sins,
an obloquy of ordure
from the lips of a jester
dressed across gender
bovine-eyed herds
smiling in lies

while we shook
shaking hands
of choleric clergy;
this pareidolia
of pawns, or peon
to the slaughter?

god, no need for this
deliberate evasion;
just lead us to pasture,
to seek our own succour,
we don't wish to be fed
such anglophile drivel,
we won't pray for glib penance,

which steers us
to
some sort of communion
with these white waves and ways.

94

Appendix B: “Tohunga” (Tibble)

"the world / is getting unbearably hot"

Visionary like my ancestors I / saw a sky of whales / a pale people / like my ancestors I / inhaled the bible / swallowed the rifle like / an 8 inch cock / whateva. / Like Donna Summer I swirled / in a floor length dress / said I love to love / I love to fuck / but just like my ancestors knew / to you I was a savage wild jasmine / a$$ out / blacked out / with dollar signs / feline like a bengal tiger and it’s true / that anyone on their hands and knees / is essentially a praying animal.

Radical like my ancestors I / saw the flower child / the wasted liberals / and my prehistoric / flare wearing prince / and like my ancestors I / kissed and kissed and kissed / and tasted / an entire lifetime of taking advantage and / being aware of it. / So at least / when my dress hits the floor / like molting bark / your eyes follow / and I can interpret / your fixation as shame. / Are you sorry? / And what does that say about me / if I think even a suggestion / of an apology is sexy? So like / my ancestors I / sculpt you from the dirt until you rise I / make you meet my eye / then suck you all up / with a slurp like a kina. / That’s Te Hei Mauri Ora. / Just like Papatuanuku / I breathe life / which is why my mother tongue spits praises despite / it’s history of whippings / I say

good on you babe. / You got what you wanted. / The juicy earth / the factoried women / the rivers / the mountains / all bowing for you. / I’m proud of you / the way you erected / monuments in your image / so foreign so / violently unimagined / just like my ancestors I / couldn’t even have even dreamed it. / Pou after pou / of grey and glass / cracking the sky and the sky / was full of whales. / Wow I say / good on you babe / then I spread / my hair all over the hotel pillow / because I love a winner. And you / hit the jackpot with me / with all us silly girls / for believing you were god / for as long as we did. / But now /

the atmosphere is betraying you / and you are reddening in places / where I can bare it. / A warrior / like my ancestors I survived / annihilation. And the awa / that run beneath my skin / have not been lapped dry / just yet / and you can see it all / the unpanned gold / the wild pounamu / the thrashing tuna / family jewels / you can never have / taonga / you can never taste / forbidden fruits / reserved for me / are you afraid again? / like you were of Eve? / the world / is getting unbearably hot / but so am I / and so is she.

Appendix C: “Kilmarten Glen” (Wood, 25-26)

“Don’t bring your voodoo here!”
the woman at the museum snarled
“The Christian group won’t use the hall
after you do your ceremonies.”
She was referring to karakia
for the flax weavers gathering—

women had come from all over
carrying patterns and plant material.
Wrong part of the world, I thought,
wrong islands, not even close.
Still, the comparison was flattering,
such as immrama or hejra would be.

The woman in the bookshop
glared as I looked nervously
through the layers of texts,
“Don’t mess up my display!”
If that’s Christianity,
they can keep it. It seems
some people are not as
charitable as they claim to be.
She promoted a local writer,
Christian, male, in the Columba
tradition—which I respected,
though I did not worship him.
She thawed a little when I
paid good money for his collection.

But I had mostly come to greet the stones,
to walk where the ancestors had walked,
to consider grandmother Phyllis,
to put a foot in the print at Dùn Ad,
to walk tenderly on Mòine Mhòr
towards the coasts and ports of Ireland,
to sit in Temple wood among bluebells
and smell the summer coming,
to draw on the ferocity of that Pictish boar,
to admire the jet necklace, to find
myself at some point on the spiral
all the way from Aotearoa, to form
the words the seas and lands have shaped.

Appendix D: “Whare Rama” (Wood, 62-64)

He karakia ki Ngāti Poneke.
He mihi ki ngā tūpuna.

Kupe’s waka’s early crossing
battling te wheke of Muturangi.

He kaukau. Hinepoupou—
patron guide to abused wives
swam the strait laced with rimurapa.

Vulnerable white driftwood trunks
loll in the hurtling surf. Pāua shell
flotsam mosaics the waterline.

It's Alistair Te Ariki Campbell country—
here the *Wahine* mast marks
where rescuers heaved the dead
and living ashore. Beyond Burdan's Gate,

past the point where kororā
cross the road at night and seals rest.

Guestwork in waking ambivalence—
between Wanganella weather,
daytripping on a sea soft as rito

and the most demanding passages,
out of the mouth of Māui's fish
the Roaring Forties haruru and howl

south to the towers of Mt Aoraki
pearled white like a karaka shell
or raro for the city's stirring port.

Āke ake ake—the land remains Māori
though the government paid up—
eventually, renamed the headland

Pencarrow—head of the valley,
high fort—after the sheltered valley
housing a Georgian mansion
with an act of mazy imagination
as if the steep cliffs and dangerous
shipping lanes are a far-fetched
likeness to the coast of Kernow.

How rocks seem like great ships
from a distance—carracks—
and how suddenly those ships
can become wrecked on rocks.

As phallic symbols go it's low
on the figurative register—
more beacon than gender sign
beckoning day trippers and visitors.

There was no mariner's church
guiding sailors home to the hill
to redeem a dreadful journey—
only the scrim of raw-boned hills
and a straggling settler town—
now simmering city lights—
a concatenation of attractions,

salute to all the working families
burning colza and paraffin lamps,
whose graft made sea lanes safer
and you too, Mary Jane Bennett,
first woman lighthouse keeper
living in a dugout storm-torn shack.

By eighteen hundred and fifty-eight
Aotearoa's revolving catoptric light,
revealed in the facets of a Fresnel lens
beamed for five miles out to sea
to haere mai, a statue streaming
in the breeze of immigrant dreams

sculpted from tons of glass and iron,
chess piece in the antarctic dark,
great sundial, thirty-seven foot
Jesus substitute, blinking signal—

a point of return in all weathers.

Appendix E: "Rangiātea" (Baker, 64)

We're in the Horowhenua.
I get upset about something.
You tell me to get out of the car.

We're on the front lawn on the wooden seat.
You use only your fingers to drive in the screw that's scratching my wrist.
We love the songs that have something to say about us.

We're in the Church. It's all around us.
The wind blows and I'm upset.
You wonder out loud

What's the minimum amount of broccoli
that would justify our cheese-sauce dinner.
You take a photo of me —

you get me to stand with my hand cupped
up in the air above my head.
When the photo comes there's the moon

a white ball in my hand.

Appendix F: "Whenua" (Baker, 73)

For Ariki Noel Riley, b. 26.9.2003

Some other year on this day
I paid forty-five thousand dinar
for Season Fruit and when it came
it was an apple on a plate.
A beautiful apple, though

red, on a yellow plate
it was thoroughly washed
crisp, in season, utterly
I walked beside the Adriatic
a sea without tides

stood on Glorietta Hill
eating local pears, radishes
Laughing Cow Cheese.
On the stationary train
Mario told me he would be a captain

that his country has six republics.
In the Bible my poppa gave me
this passage is marked in pencil
may the earth swarm with you
kia rea ki runga ki te whenua

now here it is, in this sac —
we hold it up, each has a turn

our ears sizzle, we make
pronouns with our mouths, it hangs
heavy as a beehive from our fingers.

Appendix G: “Good Friday” (Sturm, 53)

for Peter

Tawhirimatea
Claims the air tonight,
Blinds the outward eye
With needles of rain.
Tangaroa
Rides the full tide in,
Pounding the mind’s beaches
Incessantly with sound.

Now
Old altars will be overturned,
Judgemental gods forsaken,
Guilt, shame, sin
Crucifixion
Of the innocent self,
Cast out as devils.

The sensual dream
Reveals another truth,
Preaches a different redemption.
Dare to sail
Its archetypal seas,
Steering by Venus,
Your landfall at last
A truly selfless shore.

Appendix H: “A Fall of Rain at Miti-miti” (Tuwhare, 47)

Drifting on the wind, and through
the broken window of the long house
where you lie, incantatory chant
of surf breaking, and the Mass
and the mountain talking.

At your feet two candles puff the

stained faces of the *whanau*, the vigil
of the bright madonna. See, sand-whipped
the toy church does not flinch.

E moe, e te whaea: wahine rangimarie

Mountain, why do you loom over us like
that, hands on massive hips? Simply
by hooking your finger to the sea,
rain-squalls swoop like a hawk, suddenly.
Illumined speeches darken, fade to metallic
drum-taps on the roof.

Aanei nga roimata o Rangipapa

Flat, incomprehensible faces: lips moving
only to oratorical rhythms of the rain:

quiet please, I can't hear the words.

And the rain steadying: black sky leaning
against the long house. Sand, wind-sifted
eddying lazily across the beach.

And to a dark song lulling: *e te whaea, sleep.*

Appendix I: "Jesus and Me" (Blank, 22)

An altar, a wedding cake and matching tuxedos
Perfectly perfect perfection
Somewhere over there

Muscle and sinew stretch and contract, so what now?

In Palmerston North
a father drives over his little Messiah on the driveway
wife on the news for Him
I never miss a chance to have sex or appear on television

Cars talk to us now, they tell us The Way

Somewhere on a hill above a village
Christ hangs on a cross

Stigmata
Me
love, sacrifice, erotica and lust
Tihei mauri ora!
Let there be life!

What is freedom?
Where is Boeing taking me?
Is my departure premature?
What price altruism and *brand*?

I cry
I bleed
I dream
I am naked
My body and psycho-socio-politial imperfections exposed
Dysfunctional
Sinless
Perfect

I have a voice and I will articulate my truth!

See my hands
Look at my feet
I'm the One
Love me! Love me! Love me! Love me!

Appendix J: "Suffrage" (Kora, 147-149)

I recognise the woman in me.
And I welcome her with open arms,
arms that then enfold.

My chest is man,
succoured within from way back
by nipples I would look ridiculous without.
My loins I inherit from my past,
my primordial past,
from a tupuna who visibly possessed
the lure of both … man and woman.
And when I was called
in the fall of the standing coin
my manhood dropped
and I became the giver of life,

no more important than the receiver,
no less worthy than the mother.
When she felt the child move
my hands shook with anticipation.
When the sweat swamped her face
my lips sponged the waters,
my comfort wiped her brow…
or, at least, attempted to.
And, in the agony of birth,
in the lock between the rise and fall
the rushing of the forces
while the battle raged
with the giver and taker of life,
it was my woman's heart
that pumped with the empathy
and steady glow of support.
Mine eyes, my weary eyes,
paced the mountains and the valleys
of that wahine toa.
I saw the Maker stamp his mark
on the tortured face of passage,
I drowned in the desperate need of air
and gasped at the forced hurl of first breath…
I shared
in the peace and tranquillity of thanksgiving
and marvelled at the little things of life.

And what is left is my crown
combed to the side acknowledged
as my tender-gender half.
The side that would kiss his son on the lips
for as long as he will allow.
It is the balance of me
passed in living memory through my grandmother,
my channel, my stillness, my tukutuku
before and after the war.

I thus accept, as woman,
the power to vote
the power to veto,
and on this day
I cast my vote with the woman…
inside every body.

Holding Rights To

the politics of the body moving from one stage to another is precipitated by the request for change from close biological characters; the one that did the making followed by the one that did the leaving and the one that did the caring / all involved in the body's permission to shift from masculine to androgynous to feminised / it is happening quietly on the tip of the tongue the body taking turns to shuffle tit and teat and clit and beak to a further end / just touch the site where it no longer gets up as high in the morning / won't miss a thing / feel dreadful in the heat of family / the xy component of offspring genes makes a sound: that they were truly a part of him / the xx component makes a sound: that it started inside her stomach – point at belly / put white teeth between red lips / the body is fully condoned in this instant made accessible / made autonomous / an estranged contradiction within the politics of its choices / wakes up one morning with the imagination of a thing less indoctrinated in heteronormative social mores / already changed and utterly panicking / happens in the chest and flutters through pinches in the grey matter that secretly wants this *maybe i've grown used to boyhood too late*

71

it thinks to itself as if the thought will do anything to alter the course / describes a certain fuck-up to its lover who asks if *fucked up* was how it feels / it is quiet / the body does not need lessons on how to be okay with sex / the imperialist establishment of certain bodies as male and certain bodies as female / due to the imperialist establishment of the white-sleeved God / its love is many lovers add hate-is or hate-does to the myth of forgiveness / social wrong does a social turn / the body is trying its best to survive under certain historically predated conditions / the precedent is two / revisionists tying norms to a tower of spikes / God pricked / it thinks about the months ahead / it thinks about the different ways things show up on the body / it is a static holding breath before the plunge / its blood pressure is no reason to fret / melting down to a thought how wonderful it could all be fucking different / it swallows / it spits up / power / removes a finger from its mouth / turns to the external paradigm of world slowly conceding its tight grip on the Boolean of natural sex and gender / and lets out breath it held too long

To Get Out

i didnt get through the article about the octopus i couldn't shake the thought of the legs a green tear drop for kupe to slay muturangi's pet falls through the wet suckers and ghastly slippage of flesh the way the cardboard sucked itself to the ground but didn't actually do any sucking it was soft and thin it was raining i read a poem in the rain and was caught in a thought of: look at that person look at that *man* *in a dress* in bare feet in the rain and cold next to the mcdonald's they must be reading the poem on the wall i wonder if they think of it afterwards the connection between us as animals to other things as animals is an interesting thing to ponder on but when did i exactly know that i was not a boy when did that question pop up i felt out of place but projection can do anything it wants to memory i couldn't remember my brother rubbing my arse until year thirteen baptised in year twelve or was it year eleven dye hair red but not a red phenotype on the strands but a red like the stuff that leaves veins and i don't know how to feel about talking to people and i don't know what i want from people and i don't know what i want from writing as a person am i really a thing in the world the debate was useless no one is open-minded how do we sway how do we slide from man to woman how do you calculate an amount how does one regret it with sighs or expensive cheeses and the inclination to whack the side of the head and not doing it because they promised and my father promised and broke those promises and not wanting to be my father's *son* in any way the whole thing will wrap up soon entropy is gendered violence and i am a neoliberal hot take when the clicks are running dry and i can't dare a future can't dare to imagine a future because it is always fighting it is always biting and the ing in poetry is such a disgusted syllable hangs hangs hangs and never stops

86

wriggling i want to sit with you in a bright room and read words from a page out loud and slowly because then we can sit in the spaces between the words there is free dom there in quotation marks i'm listening to a song on repeat about the garden of eden there is a joke in there somewhere not quite ready to laugh after the earthquake killed a whole class of people in mexico and more so i couldn't click on the article why couldn't i click on the article i could listen to bougie fucks talk for two hours about nothing politicians close to power just want to be in power kids sleeping in cars just want to be warm maybe the bible was the only book published in english and we keep tricking ourselves over and over and barthes is taking a big shit on the origin of species no winning nothing is winning the knife says there is only loss the knife doesn't have a say in what is lost come tomorrow all this over grown will overly load

a gown to groan
in
there was tentacle porn in that one film we both watched
something something full circle
i can't draw a circle
with a pen
on paper without
it going jagged
and how i am lying is hurting my neck and i can feel the springs
the ing hides inside the season
and becomes a kind of salt in the throat or tinge in the fingers
which are the things doing the talking here
via apparatus the brain is naturally dying
a system as a way of functioning
inside a rock

what parts of gender are fixed
subject and object being two possible categories
cynic and nihilist
my gender is the way he said god is dead
with emphasis on the IS

saw a wide-brimmed hat with a point / on the ground / walking up the kelburn hill the other day / suitable for a halloween costume / all the saints are dead aren't they? / i picked it up and shook it a bit leaves and dirt clinging to the point / i ended up leaving it there on the footpath / would we be burnt or drowned do you think?

i

am mostly sad
hi mostly bad jokes

i think that was all i needed to get out

at this point i feel a bit like i overdid it

lol

Bibliography

Primary Texts

Baker, Hinemoana. “Rangiātea.” In *mātuhi needle*, 64. Wellington, New Zealand: Perceval Press and Victoria University Press. 2004.
——— “Whenua.” In *mātuhi needle*, 73.

Blank, Anton. “Jesus and Me.” In *Ora Nui, Special Edition: A Collection of Māori and Aboriginal Literature,* edited by Anton Blank and Kerry Reed-Gilbert, 22. Auckland, New Zealand: Anton Blank Ltd. 2014.

Ihimaera, Witi. “Hine-Tītama—Ask the Posts of the House.” In Ihimaera and Hereaka, *Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers*. 55-91.

Kora, Robin. “Suffrage.” In *Puna Wai Kōrero: An Anthology of Māori Poetry in English*, 147-149. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2014.

McBreen, Kim. “Home.” In Blank and Reed-Gilbert, *Ora Nui 2*, 97-100.

ranapiri, essa may ranapiri. “To Get Out.” In *ransack*, 86-89. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 2019.
——— “Holding Rights To.” In *ransack*, 71-72.

Rapatahana, Vaughan. “anglican prattle.” In *Manifesto Aotearoa: 101 Political Poems*, edited by Philip Temple and Emma Neale, 94. Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press. 20176.

Sturm, J.C. “Good Friday.” In *Dedications*, 53. Wellington, New Zealand: Steele Roberts. 1996.

Taylor, Apirana. “Carving up the Cross.” In *Ki te Ao: New Stories,* 119-126. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books. 1990.

Tibble, Tayi.“Tohunga.” *Literary Hub*. September 18, 2019. https://lithub.com/tohunga-a-poem-by-tayi-tibble/

Tuwhare, Hone. “A Little Fall of Rain at Miti-miti.” In *Selected Poems*, 47. Dunedin, New Zealand: John McIndoe Limited. 1980.

Wood, Briar. “Whare Rama.” In *Rāwāhi*, 62-64. Auckland, New Zealand: Anahera Press. 2017.
———“Kilmarten Glen,” in *Rāwāhi,* 25-26.

Secondary Texts

Aspin, Clive, and Hutchings, Jessica. "Reclaiming the Past to Inform the Future: Contemporary Views of Maori Sexuality." In *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9, no. 4 (2007): 415-27.

Aspin, Clive. “Hōkakatanga – Māori sexualities - Early Māori sexuality.” *Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. 5 May 2011, reviewed & revised 22 January 2019. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/object/31696/carved-amo

Barlow, Cleve. *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Māori Culture*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press. 2018.

Battista, Jon Lois. “Me He Korokoro Kōmako: A Māori Aesthetic in Māori Writing in English.” PhD diss., University of Auckland. 2004.

Butler, Judith . “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.” In *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 900-911. Carlton, Australia: Blackwell Publishing. 2004.

Cadogan, Tui. “A Three-Way Relationship: God, Land People A Maori Woman Reflects.” In *Land and Place He Whenua, He Wahi: Spiritualities from Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Helen Bergin and Susan Smith, 27-43. Auckland, New Zealand: Accent Publications. 2004.

Cannon, Katie G. *Katie's Canon : Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1995.

Clark, Chanel. “A Māori Perspective on the Wearing of Black.” Chapter 2 in *Black in Fashion: Wearing the Colour Black in New Zealand*.

Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books. 1986.

De Pont, Doris, ed. *Black in Fashion: Wearing the Colour Black in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books. 2012.

——— “Why do we wear black? An exploration of its history and context.” Chapter 1 in De Pont, *Black in Fashion: Wearing the Colour Black in New Zealand*.

Ellingson, Terry Jay. *The Myth of the Noble Savage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Erai, Michelle. "Civilizing Images: The Visual Interpellation of Maori Women." *Amerasia Journal* 37, no. 3 (2011): 76-89.

Forster, Margaret. "Restoring the Feminine of Indigenous Environmental Thought." *Genealogy (Basel)* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1-13.

Goucher, Candice, and Walton, Linda. *World History: Journeys from Past to Present*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012.

Grace, Patricia. *Potiki*. Auckland, N.Z.; New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books, 1986.

Haami, Bradford. "Ngārara – reptiles - Guardians or enemies?" *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. 24 September 2007. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ngarara-reptiles/page-3

Hakopa, Hauiti. "Pūrākau: the Sacred Geographies of Belonging." PhD diss., Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi. 2019.

Hau'ofa, Epeli. "Our Sea of Islands." *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 148-61.

Susan Healy, "Christianity and the Doctrine of Discovery." In *Listening to People of the Land: Christianity, Colonisation and the Path to Redemption*, edited by Susan Healy. Auckland, New Zealand: Pax Christi. 2019.

Hokowhitu, Brendan. "Tackling Māori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport." *The Contemporary Pacific* 16, no. 2 (2004): 259-84.

Ihimaera, Witi and Whiti Hereaka, eds. *Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers*. Auckland, New Zealamd: Penguin Books. 2019.

Keane, Basil. "Pounamu – Jade or Greenstone." *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. 12 June 2006. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/pounamu-jade-or-greenstone/p

Kerekere, Elizabeth. "Part of the Whānau: The Emergence of Takatāpui Identity." PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington. 2017.

Leomala, Albert. "Kros/Cross." In *Lali: A Pacific Anthology*, edited by Albert Wendt, 120-121. Auckland, New Zealand: Longman Paul Ltd. 1980.

Low, Katherine B. "The Sexual Abuse of Lot's Daughters: Reconceptualizing Kinship for the Sake of Our Daughters." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 2 (2010): 37-54.

Tina Makereti, "He Taonga Te Reo: How ngā Kupu Māori contribute to New Zealand Writing in English." In *Tell You What: Great New Zealand Nonfiction, 2015*, edited

by G. Joslisa and S. Andrew, 115-234. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press. 2015.

Marie, Dannette, David M. Fergusson, and Joseph M. Boden. “Ethnic Identity and Intimate Partner Violence in a New Zealand Birth Cohort.” *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Issue 33, March 2008: 126-145.

Mark, Glenis Tabetha, and Lyons, Antonia C. "Maori Healers' Views on Wellbeing: The Importance of Mind, Body, Spirit, Family and Land." *Social Science & Medicine (1982)* 70, no. 11 (2010): 756-764.

Marsden, Daphne. *Dishonoured and Unheard: Christian Women and Domestic Violence*. Auckland, New Zealand: Archer Press. 2018.

Marsden, Māori. “God, Man and Universe: A Māori View.” In *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*, edited by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, 2-23. Masterton, New Zealand: The Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden. 2003.

Mead, Hirini Moko. *Tikanga Maori Living by Maori Values.* Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers. 2003.

——— *Te Toi Whakario [i.e. Whakairo]: the Art of Maori Carving*. Auckland, New Zealand: Reed Methuen. 1986.

Mikaere, Ani. *Colonising Myths--Māori Realities He Rukuruku Whakaaro*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers. 2011.

Miles, Robert and Malcolm Brown. *Racism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 2003.

Morrison, Hugh, Lachy Paterson, Brett Knowles, and Murray Rae, eds. *Mana Māori and Christianity*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers. 2012.

“New research and reports about violence affecting LGBTTQIA+ people.” *New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse*. 26 January 2021. https://nzfvc.org.nz/news/new-research-and-reports-about-violence-affecting-lgbttqia-people

Newman, Keith. “Rātana, the Prophet: Mā te wā - the Sign of the Broken Watch.” In Morrison et al., *Mana Māori and Christianity*, 243-263.

Ngata, Tina. “The Right to Conquer and Claim: Captain Cook and the Doctrine Of Discovery.”*The Spinoff*. 3 October 2019. https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/03-10-2019/the-right-to-conquer-and-claim-captain-cook-and-the-doctrine-of-discovery

Ormsby, James F. “James Ormsby Decodes his Tokotoko Form.” In Ihimaera and Hereaka, *Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Authors*, 9.

Patterson, John. *Exploring Māori Values*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press. 1992.

Poata-Smith, Evan. “The Political Economy Of Maori Protest Politics 1968-1995: A Marxist Analysis Of The Roots Of Maori Oppression And The Politics Of Resistance.” PhD diss., University of Otago, 2001.

Pomare, Maui. “The Adventure of Hinepoupou.” In *Legends of the Maori (Volume 2)*, edited by James Cowan, 150-151. Auckland, New Zealand: Southern Reprints. 1989.

Robert Pouwhare, “Kai hea kai hea te pū o te mate? Reclaiming the Power of Pūrākau.” In *Te Kaharoa, Special Edition, Ka Haka - Empowering Performance: Māori and Indigenous Performance Studies Symposiu*m, vol. 9 (2016): 1-19.

Rae, Murray. “Introduction.” In Morrison et al., *Mana Māori and Christianity*, vii-xiv.

Reid, John, Matthew Rout, Te Maire Tau, and Cherryl Smith. *The Colonising Environment: An Aetiology Of The Trauma Of Settler Colonisation And Land Alienation.* Christchurch, New Zealand: UC Ngai Tahu Research Centre. 2017.

Reid, John, Karyn Taylor-Moore, and Golda Varona. "Towards A Social-Structural Model For Understanding Current Disparities In Maori Health And Well-Being". *Journal Of Loss And Trauma* 19, no. 6 (2014): 514-536.

Salmond, Anne. *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and Europeans, 1642-1772*. Auckland, New Zealand: Viking. 1991.

Sanders, Katherine. "‘Beyond Human Ownership’? Property, Power and Legal Personality for Nature in Aotearoa New Zealand." *Journal of Environmental Law* 30, no. 2 (2018): 207-34.

Schrader, Ben. “Parades and Protest Marches - Protest Marches, 1980s to 2000s.” *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. 11 March 2010. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/21123/enough-is-enough-march

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Sharing Her Word Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998.

Somerville, Alice Te Punga. *Once Were Pacific*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Spahr, Juliana. "Connected Disconnection and Localized Globalism in Pacific Multilingual Literature." *Boundary 2* 31, no. 3 (2004): 75-100.

Tamaira, A. Marata. "From Full Dusk to Full Tusk: Reimagining the "Dusky Maiden" through the Visual Arts." *The Contemporary Pacific* 22, no. 1 (2010): 1-35.

Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2012.

———"Māori Women: Discourse Projects and Mana Wahine." Chapter 3 in *Women and Education in Aotearoa 2.* Eds. Sue Middleton and Alison Jones. Bridget Williams Books: Wellington. 1992.

Vaai, Upolu Lūma, "Relational Hermeneutics: A Return to the Relationality of the Pacific Itulagi as a Lens for Understanding and Interpreting Life." Chapter 1 in *Relational Hermeneutics : Decolonising the Mindset and the Pacific Itulagi*, edited by Upolu Lūma Vaai. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific Press. 2017.

Walker, Ranginui. "The Relevance Of Maori Myth And Tradition." In *Te Ao Hurihuri: Aspects Of Maoritanga*, edited by Michael King. Auckland: Penguin, 2011.

Wendt, Albert. "Towards A New Oceania." In *Mana Review* 1, no. 1 (1976): 49-60.