

# Tangata ngākau

Māori Boys and Masculinity in the Writing of Bruce

Stewart, Witi Ihimaera, and Whiti Hereaka.

by

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## Abstract

This thesis surveys a selection of writing by Bruce Stewart, Witi Ihimaera, and Whiti Hereaka, and considers how these texts represent varying modes of masculinity available to and expressed by Māori boys and young men. Whilst the three authors present starkly different characters, all of these characters challenge pre-existing claims about Māori men and masculinity propagated by earlier, predominantly Pākehā writers.

The first chapter focuses on the collection *Tama and Other Stories* by Bruce Stewart (1989). Many of the characters in this collection feel pressured to be tough and stoic, but I argue that such pressures are shown to come largely from Pākehā father figures. The modes of masculinity that the boys either portray or wish to portray are much less focused on stoicism, aggression, and physicality than what they see from their fathers. I suggest that Stewart sees instruction in tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori as useful if not essential for young Māori men to escape the pressure of oppressive colonial narratives about Māori masculinity.

The second chapter discusses Witi Ihimaera's novel *Bulibasha* (1994). In contrast to Stewart's stories, *Bulibasha* presents a young boy largely isolated from Pākehā society, but I argue that this does not mean that he is free from the influence of Pākehā masculinity. The novel presents many different expressions of masculinity but only those that are influenced by colonial narratives and which reinforce Pākehā hegemony seem to prosper. Such colonial narratives and influences are arguably less visible than they are in *Tama and Other Stories*, but this does not make them any less insidious nor damaging to the men in *Bulibasha*. I suggest that spaces where Pākehā masculinity is less dominant, men are shown to be less stoic, domineering, and oppressive. Likewise, characters who appear to be more immersed in te ao Māori also seem to promote a greater sense of balance and equity between men and women.

The final chapter looks at the novel *Bugs* by Whiti Hereaka (2013). The influence of Pākehā societal norms and narratives on Māori masculinity is shown to be more acute in the setting of this text than in the mid-20th century setting of *Tama and Other Stories* and *Bulibasha*. Characters in Stewart's writing are able to construct their own decolonised spaces where Māori masculinity can be expressed, whilst Ihimaera's characters struggle to avoid colonial influences even in a predominantly Māori community. By contrast, Hereaka shows characters who feel the full effect of urbanisation and the inherent marginalisation of te ao Māori. For characters in the urban 21st century setting of *Bugs*, connection to te ao Māori and the ability to access knowledge of tikanga Māori is severely restricted. Whilst Stewart's and Ihimaera's characters had access to different visions of Māori masculinity, and varying access to te ao Māori, characters in *Bugs* are more isolated. I argue that because of this, their ability to reject Pākehā narratives is more limited, and after rejecting the influence of Pākehā masculinity it is not always obvious what alternatives are available.

Throughout this thesis deference is given to critics who write from a decolonising and kaupapa Māori perspective. In particular, the works of Brendan Hokowhitu on Māori masculinities, Ani Mikaere on gender in Māori society, Linda Tuhiwai Smith on decolonizing methodologies, Elizabeth Kerekere on sexuality, gender, and Māori, and Belinda Borell on cultural identity and urban Māori, inform the reading and analysis of each of the texts.

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## Introduction

Whiti Hereaka suggests that “a story ... is a dangerous thing for the reader; to allow yourself to open your mind and your heart to creatures who need *you* to survive, who need *you* to live” (“Prologue” 27, emphasis in the original). Throughout much of the history of Aotearoa New Zealand the stories, lives, and experiences of Māori<sup>1</sup> men have not been met with an open heart nor an open mind. While the Māori men and characters (and the vision of masculinity they represented) needed the person hearing their story to help them survive, it was in the vested interest of many settlers and colonists to not allow the survival of such stories. Since the arrival of settlers and colonists the stories of Māori men have been reworked by Pākehā to contrive a narrative about Māori masculinity that had little basis in reality in the years prior. It would be dangerous for colonists to hear Māori stories with an open mind because it would undermine the cultural and racial myths and hierarchies that colonial society were built around. Through this thesis, I aim to analyse Māori stories by Māori authors to see what it is they see and understand about the experience of Māori masculinity for young boys in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### *Social, cultural, and historical contexts*

In an examination of discourses regarding Māori and gender, Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts that “oppression by race is not, on the surface, gender-specific. It does, however, have many different way of defining the roles to be played out by men and those to be played out by women” (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 48). Through the process of colonisation, Pākehā were determined to see particular gender traits in Māori communities, and where they could not see these traits they instead imposed rigid gender roles on Māori men and women. This means that

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured to use diacritical marks consistent with those used in Moorfield’s Māori Dictionary. The exception to this is when words in original source materials did not have diacritical marks, in which case I have instead sought to copy the words verbatim.

after centuries of propagation of colonial narratives about Māori boys and masculinity, the discourses that have come to dominate are often not fair representations of how Māori did, and in many cases still do, see and understand Māori masculinity. Māori boys and young men have to endure such pressures and expectations, as well as the other more common hurdles of adolescence. Ferrall and Jackson suggest that historical and sociological accounts of adolescence in nineteenth and twentieth century British society are generally characterised by the delinquency of youth. However, “the literature of the period presents a golden age of adolescence that offers an idealised alternative” (13). By stark contrast, literature with young Māori protagonists seems to lack this same degree of idealism about what it means to be a young Māori man, especially within Pākehā-dominated spaces. There are exceptions, of course, such as Alastair Airey’s *The Boys of Puhawai* (1960), stories about the day-to-day adventures of three young boys which in style and substance are not drastically different to some of the Victorian literature studied by Ferrall and Jackson. But much of the literature written by Māori about Māori boys in the later part of the twentieth century presents adolescence not as an idealised golden age, nor are the protagonists invariably portrayed as “braver, stronger...as well as more idealistic than the adults” around them (Ferrall and Jackson 13). Writers Witi Ihimaera, Bruce Stewart, and Whiti Hereaka portray boys who are fragile, frustrated, and struggling with the dominant Pākehā expectations of masculinity and manhood being thrust upon them.

Literature published in the second half of the twentieth century that shows young men growing up and finding their place in the world, such as *Montana 1948* (1993) or *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), seems to track away from idealised presentations of adolescence prevalent in the earlier part of the century. For this reason, it could simply be that Māori literature such as *Tama and Other Stories* (1989) by Bruce Stewart, *Bulibasha* (1994) by Witi Ihimaera, and *Bugs* (2013) by Whiti Hereaka can simply be located as part of a broad trend towards

verisimilitude in juvenile literature. However, while David in *Montana 1948* and Holden in *Catcher in the Rye* both become miserable as they long for a nostalgic vision of boyhood, for Stewart's Tama and Ihimaera's Himiona such a nostalgic vision of childhood is lacking, and indeed much of their struggle is rooted in a search for a more secure identity and future. It is not at all the case that the search for a more secure identity and future is something unique to young Māori men in literature. Indeed, much has been said about the insecurity and discomfort that many New Zealanders had about their own identity by the twentieth century (Belich, *Paradise Reforged* 549). Pākehā were not immune to this despite, or because of the fact that British settlers had reproduced their own culture with "considerable success" (16). There exists a body of Pākehā New Zealand literature which demonstrates a marked shift away from earlier idealistic and playful representations of boyhood. Novels such as *Sydney Bridge Upside Down* (1968) and *End of the Golden Weather* (1962) present a vision of Pākehā boyhood that is far from glamour and spirited adventure.

Is it fair, therefore, to look at the works from Stewart, Ihimaera, and Hereaka and examine what they say about Māori experience of boyhood and adolescence, as opposed to what they say about a New Zealand experience more broadly? It would be absurd to hold them as representative of *the* Māori culture or *the* Māori boyhood experience, just as no serious researcher would hold such a small collection of writing as representative of *the* Pākehā experience. All three authors present a starkly different view of childhood, views that are perhaps as reflective of when they are set, when the author was born, and when they were published, as they are reflective of a Māori experience of adolescence. The characters in each text have different experiences of boyhood; some grow up with some material comfort, others in poverty, some with positive role models, others surrounded by destructive and toxic masculinity. However, what is significant is that the characters in all three texts identify, to varying degrees, as Māori. In Pākehā-dominated spaces these characters are degraded (whether



through explicit or systemic racism) and made to feel like an other. Accordingly, these characters are not only contending with what it means to come of age and leave boyhood behind, as so many adolescent characters are. They are contending with these same challenges while also navigating whether, and to what extent, the society around them will allow them to grow up or succeed as Māori men, complete with all the things that being a Māori man means to each of them.

Hokowhitu posits that there was no pan-Māori identity pre-1840, therefore “Māori men only came to think of themselves as Māori through the Pākehā gaze” (“The Death of Koro Paka” 119). The characters in each of the texts examined in this thesis identify themselves as Māori, which, according to Hokowhitu’s interpretation, means that they are self-identifying with a label that has been co-opted by Pākehā at various stages to classify, constrict, and guide notions of what Māori were and could be. The very concept of what it meant to be a Māori man came to be influenced by Pākehā views, while at the same time many Māori views of manhood and masculinity became diluted, lost, or subverted through the process of colonisation (120). Pākehā settlers curated an image of an ‘ideal’ and ‘noble’ Māori man who was a warrior, courageous, enduring, and accepting of authority (121). The invention and curation of these codes of Māori masculinity were used as part of the nation-building process by settlers to define what citizens should be, and simultaneously as justification for ‘civilising’ missions which sought to paint Māori as more unrestrained in their violence than Europeans (117). Even though the notion of Māori as inherently warrior-like (or even the notion of being ‘Māori’ at all) is something that has been curated by Pākehā throughout centuries of colonisation, it is still a notion readily accepted by some as self-evident in the twenty-first century, including some literary critics. Alistair Fox suggests that, whilst Pākehā New Zealand men derive and understand their masculinity through a legacy of restrained puritanism (*The Ship of Dreams* 18), Māori identity and masculinity instead “spring from the legacy of the Māori warrior

culture” (19). Such a view seems inherently problematic and restrictive because it assumes both that there exists a unified, shared Māori experience and legacy, and that there can be any clear ‘truth’ to what defines Māori masculinity. Perhaps a more helpful exercise, which this thesis seeks to do, would instead be to strip back and examine reductionist views about Māori masculinity while applying kaupapa Māori perspectives from critical discourses to the three texts.<sup>2</sup> Hokowhitu talks of looking for the “untruths” that exist in the dominant discourse around Māori masculinity, and challenging the credibility and usefulness of such concepts (“The Death of Koro Paka” 134). Although Indigenous literature is seen by some to revalidate traditional settler assumptions about the colonised man, it may be a more helpful undertaking to examine the extent and manner in which these same texts criticise, reject, and move beyond stereotypes. In doing so, it becomes necessary to see the way Māori literature is influenced by, and a response to, colonisation, rather than attempting to prove the extent to which ‘traditional’ Māori culture provides Fox’s “legacy of the Māori warrior culture.”

### *Masculinity in non-Māori Indigenous literature*

Again, it would be foolish to suggest that there is a universal truth to all Māori literature, or Indigenous literature more broadly, aside from the indigeneity of the characters and author. Even then, this could be a contentious point, as Ihimaera has said about his story *The Whale Rider* that ““it matters and it doesn’t matter that it’s in a Māori setting”” (quoted in Matthews 21). However, one detail that seems relatively common, if not universal, is that young Indigenous characters are often on the cusp of two spaces, and two worlds. On the one hand they, like non-Indigenous adolescent characters, are between adolescence and adulthood.

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<sup>2</sup> As a Pākehā person writing about this topic, I acknowledge the limitations of my perspective on what these issues mean to Māori writers and communities, particularly regarding kaupapa Māori. While I cannot claim to write this thesis from a kaupapa Māori perspective, I endeavour to give deference to those critics who do write from a kaupapa Māori perspective.

However, it can also be that the characters are between an Indigenous world, and a white colonised society; between a 'traditional' world, and a world of European 'enlightenment' (Hokowhitu, "The Death of Koro Paka" 132). Such ideas are explored in Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), where Indigenous Indian characters that come to identify strongly with the English culture are said to be "pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away" (Roy 51). Even if the move to align oneself with the culture of the colonisers is done for pragmatic and utilitarian reasons, it is still portrayed as something that causes irreparable harm to one's own sense of cultural identity. By contrast, Spokane-Coeur d'Alene author Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (2009) seems to suggest that assimilation to aspects of settler society can give a person a stronger sense of belonging to all aspects of their society, and not necessarily at the expense of losing connection and belonging to any other part. The character of Junior has an epiphany when:

I realized that, sure, I was a Spokane Indian. I belonged to that tribe. But I also belonged to the tribe of American immigrants. And to the tribe of basketball players. And to the tribe of bookworms. And the tribe of cartoonists. And the tribe of chronic masturbators. And the tribe of teenage boys. And the tribe of small-town kids. And the tribe of Pacific Northwesterners. And the tribe of tortilla chips-and-salsa lovers. And the tribe of poverty. And the tribe of funeral-goers. And the tribe of beloved sons. And the tribe of boys who really missed their best friends. It was a huge realization. And that's when I knew that I was going to be okay. (218)

Between Alexie's and Roy's texts there exists a stark difference between how characters perceive the assimilation of white settler culture, and whether such assimilation is necessarily damaging or corrupting to an Indigenous person's sense of their own culture. However, the

similarity for both, and indeed for the characters in *Tama*, *Bulibasha*, and *Bugs*, is that a tension exists about the relative compatibility and possible coexistence of Indigenous and white settler culture (both in a broader societal sense, and also on a personal level). For most of these characters, to a varying degree, they consider that adopting aspects and ways of white culture can be ‘beneficial’ in advancing their position and opportunities in the dominant white society, but that this almost certainly means losing or giving up something about themselves and their indigeneity. For Junior it means having to leave behind the reservation and his wider community if he is to be ‘successful’. Such a tension around cultural assimilation makes characters in Māori literature, and Indigenous literature more broadly, starkly different to the characters in white settler fiction because they are generally not being forced to contend with cultural assimilation and community belonging on such a drastic and palpable level. For this reason, settler and Pākehā fiction arguably portray adolescence and coming of age as a far more individual, introspective, and possibly even selfish experience than much Indigenous fiction. Characters in Indigenous literature have similar introspective experiences of adolescence, but they also must contend with the strong expectations from their community and family that can be divergent to the expectations they receive from themselves or other parts of society.

### *Existing criticism*

Patrick Evans suggests that Ihimaera, Stewart, and other authors such as Alan Duff and Heretaunga Pat Baker are representative of a mode of writing that is a “performance of anger... [that] continues a conversation with the dominant culture not so much from outside as from inside, as a part of that dominant culture” (22). He goes on to write that, in the case of Ihimaera and Duff in particular, aspects of their writing function as “a critique of Maoridom rather than of Pākehā” (23). Such a reading of these texts and authors that sees them as self-critical and

conversing from a position within the dominant culture is not something I wish to pursue throughout this thesis. Rather, I look to the principles of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonising methodologies, Ani Mikaere's examination of gender in Māori society prior to colonisation, and Brendan Hokowhitu's proposition that we consider what untruths permeate the discussion and criticism of Māori stories. In doing so, I am able to examine these works as acts of writing that challenge the legitimacy of cultural assumptions. It is my supposition that *Tama*, *Bulibasha*, and *Bugs*, like so much postcolonial literature, provide either implicit or explicit critiques of colonisation and, in these cases, its effects on Māori communities and culture. An investigation of how these texts subvert and question expectations and assumptions offers a far richer opportunity for discussion than looking at the ways in which the texts are "a critique of Maoridom."

It is significant to note at this stage that all three texts offer a view of violent and aggressive masculinity, but that such violence and aggression often comes from Pākehā men, or from Māori men who are somewhat detached from te ao Māori and immersed in Pākehā culture. I argue that in all three texts, violence is coded as a trait of Pākehā masculinity. This is not at all to remove the agency from Māori characters and attempt to explain violent behaviour as stemming from Pākehā culture, but it is striking that the authors do not seek to explicitly associate violence with Māori masculinity. There are already a number of critical voices which discuss the connections between Māori masculinity, violence, and the 'warrior culture' (Fox, *The Ship of Dreams*; Heim), and Māori authors such as Duff whose work seemingly affirms a connection between contemporary Māori masculinity and a traditional warrior culture (Prentice). Accordingly, it is not my intention to reaffirm these views by reading Ihimaera's work as inherently critical of Māori.

In her doctoral research, Tina Makereti discusses how prevailing notions and assumptions about Māori culture can be deconstructed and previously existing notions can be

reclaimed through the act of writing by Māori authors. While Makereti was writing about Patricia Grace and Kim Scott, her observations that their texts “open the way for the development/creation of new stories of identity” and show characters who “transcend the limitations imposed by colonialism” (*Stories are the Centre* 14) can also be applied to the works of Ihimaera, Stewart, and Hereaka. Accordingly, Makereti’s theory about how Māori authors use their writing in the construction or reclamation of culture that transcends colonialism gives a clear framework by which to read *Tama*, *Bulibasha*, and *Bugs*. In doing so, it becomes possible to reject reductionist readings of the texts, and instead to see the ways in which these narratives subtly or explicitly reject settler assumptions, prevailing attitudes, and begin, in some small ways, to reclaim notions of what Māori adolescence and masculinity can be.

While there is a growing body of research about Māori fiction, there exists only a relatively narrow field of research about *Tama*, *Bulibasha*, and *Bugs*. On *Bulibasha*, there are ecological lensed readings (Dominy), research that looks at the novel as something of a neo-Western where Māori are coded as “Indians” (Te Punga Somerville), about the representations of indigeneity in *Bulibasha* and other Ihimaera works (Kennedy), and about the place of sport and Māori masculinity in novels such as *Bulibasha* (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity”). There is other criticism that looks at *Mahana*, the film adaptation of *Bulibasha*, including Alistair Fox’s chapter on the film that examines intergenerational challenges to patriarchal order and “cultural transition” (*Coming-of-Age Cinema* 213) that is represented in the film. Fox does talk at some length about the sometimes stark differences between novel and film, and so accordingly any such criticism of *Mahana* has only some degree of relevance to the novel itself. On the other two texts there is even less written. Judith Dale writes, albeit briefly, about racial oppression as shown in Stewart’s writing, whilst Otto Heim writes at some length about portrayals of violence and ethnicity in *Tama and Other Stories* (and also in

Ihimaera's other works, excepting *Bulibasha*). While there is limited criticism on Hereaka's works, especially her plays, there does not appear to be any published criticism that focuses on *Bugs* in particular.

In my first chapter, on *Tama and Other Stories*, I examine how young men in Stewart's stories are reflective of what one of his characters refers to as *tangata ngākau*. They are compassionate, empathetic, and thoughtful, but these traits are either ignored by the Pākehā around them, or they are attacked because such traits are seen as decidedly un-masculine and undesirable. These characters generally find greater acceptance of their masculinity in Māori spaces and, in turn, they are able to be immersed in the teachings of *te ao Māori*. Pākehā men expect and demand a very rigid, stoic, and physical expression of masculinity of these Māori boys, and 'success' in the Pākehā world can only come about if they acquiesce to these demands. However, Stewart portrays *te ao Māori* as not only encouraging of *tāngata ngākau*, but also as a remedy to the exclusivity, repression, and conformity of Pākehā masculinity.

The second chapter focuses on *Bulibasha*, particularly on the way in which different modes of Māori masculinity are represented within a majority Māori space. While Tamihana, the patriarch in the novel, is violent, repressive, and authoritarian, he is unique within the community of the story. The other men have freer expressions of masculinity the further they are from Tamihana. Other characters are shown as being immersed in *te ao Māori*, and in Māori institutions, whereas Tamihana's masculinity is very much aligned with and coded as Pākehā. I argue that even in a majority Māori community, Pākehā hegemony is nearly unavoidable. Himiona, the protagonist, begins to be able to shed the influence of Pākehā masculinity from himself and his home, but I suggest it is only possible because his whole *whānau* are able to work together to restore the balance and equity that Tamihana disrupted.

The final chapter examines *Bugs* and its portrayal of a boy, Jez, who is significantly more isolated from te ao Māori and visions of Māori masculinity than the characters in the first two texts. Despite the fact that he exists and operates in a society that is less aggressively, or at least less visibly repressive towards Māori culture, his isolation presents arguably even greater barriers than those faced by other characters. His only examples of what it means to be a Māori man come from sporadic contact with the whānau of his friend, or, worryingly, from Pākehā teachers and authority figures who have rigid and depreciative attitudes towards Māori men. As a result, Jez is perhaps the character most desperate to express his vision of Māori masculinity, but he is tragically the one who is most at the mercy of Pākehā narratives about Māori men which seek to limit who he can be, or how successful he can become.



## Chapter One: Mad Bulls and Tāngata Ngākau in the Writing of Bruce Stewart

Throughout Bruce Stewart's *Tama and Other Stories* (1989), the reader is often presented with two competing visions of a person, an event, or a place. The young men in Stewart's stories are, I argue, navigating the spaces between two worlds, trying to find a place where they, and their masculinity, make the most sense. I begin this chapter with an examination of the disruptiveness of Pākehā masculinity on Māori boys and their communities. While each of the boys in these texts is content with who they are as an individual, the exclusivity of Pākehā norms leads them to feel a growing sense of inadequacy. The chapter goes on to discuss how Māori mother-figures within the text are chiefly responsible for the inculcation of mātauranga Māori in the young male characters throughout the stories. I suggest that these women are usually working against, and in response to, overbearing and controlling Pākehā men, and that their actions help to instil a restored sense of balance between genders, and a less strictly defined sense of masculinity. The chapter ends with an examination of what expressions of Māori masculinity can look like for the young men in the text when they are free of some of the more repressive influences of Pākehā masculinity and gender roles. While Stewart is preoccupied with dichotomies and dualities in the lives of these characters, I argue that what he is most concerned with is examining how young boys can navigate the spaces in between.

### *Pākehā masculinity as a disruptive influence on Māori masculinity*

In the opening of the short story *Boy*, the young narrator observes that “my dad could do almost anything” (109). The observation presents a significant dichotomy that underlies many of the stories in this collection: Māori boys in Stewart's stories might admire and look

up to the men in their lives and the visions of masculinity they convey, while also being aware of the shortcomings of these same men. Boy, the eponymous narrator, aggrandizes his father by assuming he can do almost anything but, ironically, his father's capabilities are severely restricted in their scope and confined to flat, archetypical codes of masculinity. Immediately after this observation, Boy goes on to explain that his father could "muster sheep or cattle," "buil[d] a tractor shed by himself," and "[break] a young horse" but, significantly, "he never spoke much... he always seemed silent. Even sad" (110). Boy is simultaneously aware of and admires his father's strengths, especially those which are archetypically masculine, while as he ages he is increasingly aware of his father's shortcomings and how these shortcomings impact on him. In this way, Boy represents an experience that is typical of many Māori adolescent characters, not just in the other Stewart stories but in *Bulibasha* and *Bugs* as well: their idealised vision of masculinity and adulthood is constructed and defined as a response to the very traits and archetypes they grow to despise. However, the same could be said of non-Māori boys in other texts. For this reason, it is significant that the boys in these texts, while examining their idealised vision of masculinity, assert or uphold their own understanding and expression of Māoritanga as part of this vision. To put this another way, Māoritanga is not coded as something incongruous with their idealised visions of masculinity (even if these visions are not wholly defined by Māoritanga per se). Even as these boys cast aside undesirable aspects of adulthood and masculinity (in the same way that non-Māori characters do) one thing that remains constant is their awareness and upholding of their own sense of Māoritanga. It is important to note that in the case of Boy in this story, his father is Pākehā, so it is not to be assumed that Stewart is contrasting a traditional Māori masculinity with a new progressive view. Rather, Stewart uses characters like Boy to reject some undesirable modes of masculinity while beginning to construct a vision of Māori masculinity that they want.

Alistair Fox suggests that such a challenge to undesirable patriarchal traits in Māori stories “reflects a cultural transition (or, perhaps more accurately, an ‘evolution’)” (*Coming-of-Age Cinema* 213). While this is arguably true in some texts, it seems necessary to make a clear distinction between Western patriarchal masculinity, and te ao Māori; they may intersect at points, but they are not inherently the same. For this reason, when a character like Boy is repulsed by aggressive masculinity, it does not follow that he is participating in the ‘evolution’ of Māori culture.<sup>3</sup> The idea that a particularly sagacious Māori child can or should be a modernising force that pushes te ao Māori toward European enlightenment values is problematic in itself (Hokowhitu, “The Death of Koro Paka” 131). It presupposes that oppressive patriarchy is embedded in te ao Māori and, by implication, that a Māori boy can only correct oppressive patriarchal beliefs by shedding aspects of tikanga Māori. In turn, this could be seen as a pretext to enforce cultural assimilation under the guise of evolution. Stewart does not present Boy as a character rejecting tradition and enacting cultural change. In fact, at the beginning of the story, when he is younger, Boy identifies strongly with his Pākehā father, refusing to believe he is Māori – “I’m not. Dad’s not” (111). The quiet, aggressive masculinity of his father is seemingly coded as Pākehā. However, through Boy’s encounters with his Māori family on his mother’s side, Stewart presents a different vision of masculinity that is more intimate, accepting, and expressive. Upon meeting his mother’s whānau Boy observes that:

The men pressed their noses to mine. Hugging me. I’d never met these people. Yet they were sharing my lonely grief... Uncle Rangi spoke in Maori to Mum. He placed a greenstone tiki in the coffin... Mum’s people sang in Maori. Dad’s people shuffled.

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<sup>3</sup>At another point, Fox talks about Paieka in *Whale Rider* trying to stop her whānau from smoking as another sign of Māori children being a force for change and modernisation (Fox, *Coming-of-Age Cinema* 154). It is important to note that in this example, as with many other examples of modernising Māori children, the thing being condemned (tobacco) is a Pākehā import.

Uncle Rangī put his arm over my shoulders. Felt strong, warm. Like sunshine. (117-118)

This is not a boy rejecting tikanga Māori and participating in cultural evolution; he finds the most comfort and solace in the actions and words of his Māori whānau. Their hongī, embraces, and waiata are contrasted to the awkward shuffling and (again) sad silence of his father. It is significant that not only are the Māori men in his whānau less aggressive, cruel, and abusive than his father, but that the only things in the story that are presented as specifically Māori practices (hongī, waiata, tangihanga) are coded as consoling and comforting experiences. They are certainly not portrayed as beliefs and practices that Boy (or Stewart) sees as needing to change, modernise, or evolve. Indeed, the physical closeness and emotional expressiveness of Boy's Māori family is juxtaposed to the aloof silence and cruel violence of Pākehā men in his family and of boys at his school. Tikanga Māori is thus presented as something of an antidote to, not a cause of, oppressive patriarchy.

After all, Boy does not receive an education in te ao Māori from some immovable, tyrannical Māori patriarch seeking to maintain tradition. Rather, he receives this education from his mother, and she does so exactly at the time that she sees Boy begin to be broken by his father's cruelty - "broken, like the young horse I once saw" (117). Her teachings seem to be specifically targeted at combatting the destructive influence of his father, further emphasising the restorative influences of tikanga Māori on Boy. She seems, therefore, in stark contrast to the example given by Fanon of the woman of colour married to a domineering white man who, realising the "futility" of trying to "blacken" her world, decides "in her own body and in her own mind, to bleach it" (34). Not only do the attempts at educating Boy in tikanga Māori persist in spite of his father's belligerence and aggression, but indeed his mother seems committed to such lessons *because* of the way that his father behaves. The story is even structured around mirrored paragraphs of Boy's father, father's family, or Pākehā peers doing

something cruel, then his mother talking with him about tikanga Māori and Māoritanga. Immediately after the passage in which his father complains that the “trouble is that Boy wears his heart on his sleeve,” we then see Boy’s mother take him into a glade where they hug a “magic rimu” and talk about the importance of “Mother Earth [Papatūānuku] and Father Sky [Ranginui]” (113). Far from seeming defeated by the domineering cruelty of her husband, she seems emboldened; his cruelty necessitates her restorative actions. As his instruction goes on, Boy reiterates several times that “there were so many things to learn” (114), indicating how daunting it is for him to continue this immersion in te ao Māori, however it is exactly this immersion that means he “started doing well” (114) despite the multitude of pressures upon him.

Such pressures put on Boy by his father include, but are not limited to, the pressure to be more stoic (“trouble is that Boy wears his heart on his sleeve” [113]), more aggressive (“be cruel back. Punch them between the eyes” [110]), quieter (“you make more noise than a pig” [115]) and harder-working (“Dad said I was lazy” [112]). Acting in the way his father wants him to earns him praise, as he is told by his friend’s Pākehā mother that he’s “just like one of us” (112). Such pressures only come from his Pākehā family and friends; Boy receives no pressure from his Māori whānau to be stoic, aggressive, and quiet. Compare this to Ty Kawika Tengan’s assertion that the purpose of the education of Indigenous (Hawaiian) boys by white settlers was to create men who were “disciplined, and not lazy...physically powerful” (35). Some, like Boy, may struggle with the pressure to act in a way discordant with their own personality, while other Māori boys (and, indeed, other boys of any background) may be quite at ease being stoic, aggressive, and disciplined. Not inconsequentially, at the time Stewart was writing *Tama*, it was some of these very traits that might have afforded a Māori boy mana in the Pākehā world in a way that may not otherwise be easily afforded (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 260). Accordingly, these traits are not somehow antithetical to Māoritanga,

as some Māori boys with their own agency may see these traits as desirable, and something to be proud of.

Significant, however, is the fact that Boy feels the pressure to embody these traits from the Pākehā people in his life. To *be* Pākehā, to be “just like one of us”, is to meet these expectations that are put on him; to be Māori is (to Boy) something much less clearly defined. It is something that he at first fights against (“I’m not [Māori]. Dad’s not” [111]), but eventually it becomes a “truth [he] hungers” for (115). As discussed above, it is a necessary task to look for the “untruths” about Māori masculinity, not some inherent truth (Hokowhitu, “The Death of Koro Paka” 134). Boy is an intriguing example because, once the “untruths” are stripped away, and we see his ongoing rejections of his father’s expectations, what remains is someone unsure about who he wants to be. Even at school, the sphere of life where he seems the most successful, he lacks a sense of self-assuredness, forcing himself to vomit before a prize-giving where he was to receive awards, choosing instead to lie in a pool of his own vomit (116). While this particular story ends before we see Boy gain a clearer understanding of his sense of self, we do see him get closer towards accepting a sense of his own Māoritanga. This is done in correlation with (although not solely caused by) his rejection of Pākehā expectations that would make him “one of us.” Accordingly, Boy’s experience could be extrapolated out to examine how Māori adolescent characters’ construction or discovery of their own sense of masculinity and self is inextricably linked to their ability (or inability) to strip away the expectations of Pākehā society about what they ‘should’ be and what they are ‘allowed’ to be.

In the short story *Mangu*, that character of Tama is raised by a Pākehā father (Frank) who is not dissimilar to the father in *Boy*. Both value physicality and displays of strength (“introductions were almost like wrestling matches” [24]), hard work (“poor bastards, never done a day’s work in their lives” [24]), and a primal desire to break, tame, or defeat beasts (“now as far as trophy hunting, I can teach you everything” [33]). The boys in *Mangu* and *Boy*

both consider that their own father “could do almost anything” (25, 109), but in both instances the line conveys a sense of narrative irony. For Tama, the growing realisation of his father’s deficiencies and undesirable characteristics causes him to concede that he “never liked my father much – it was the way he treated my mum” (25). It is intriguing that the genesis of Tama’s dislike toward his father is not necessarily connected to any inherent dislike of his aggressive and stoic masculinity. Instead, his dislike is connected to his father’s extreme rejection of anything that seems Māori:

“Look woman, see this is a Pakeha house, have a good look, clean white paint... You know what our visitors will think – I’ll tell you. A dirty Maori house, that’s what they’ll think... like those [at the pā]. I wouldn’t put my pigs in them.”

“There are pigs in them – you married one.”

In a rage he started ripping out the fence like a mad bull. (25)

It could be that Tama’s dislike is based solely around his disgust with the aggressive, petulant, domineering behaviour his mother is subjected to, but it is significant as well that the behaviour seems particularly targeted at stopping her from seeming Māori. Because of this, his father’s version of masculinity (stoic, aggressive, strong, hard-working) becomes inextricably linked to a desire to suppress anything connected to te ao Māori. His father opines that “we used to get on good with the Maoris [sic]” (33), presumably back when Māori children were punished in school for speaking te reo Māori (Calman) and when Te Tiriti o Waitangi was seen by the chief justice of New Zealand as a ““simple nullity”” (Hannan and Bassett). Even if Tama were happy to adopt the other characteristics that his father insists make a good man, the fact would remain that he would never be good enough so long as he remained Māori in any perceptible way. This presents Tama with a dilemma: what is the point in aspiring to his father’s model of masculinity if he will always fall short? It seems likely as well that someone in Tama’s position may well

consider that he will not only fall short of his father's expectations, but also the expectations of other Pākehā too. Even if he models all of the characteristics that his father or other Pākehā try to instil in him, the best that he might hope for is to be, in the words of another character, "like one of us" (112), the operative word here being "like" - a mere imitation. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that even as his father is in the midst of a rant about Māori, Tama has already begun to divert his attention to another role model who presents a wholly different vision of masculinity: his Koro, who loves hunting, but who also "talks to the rivers – to the bush – to the birds" (34). Stewart shows that a boy like Tama who has a positive alternative model of masculinity in his life is able to navigate between different spaces, expressing and testing different visions of masculinity.

Otto Heim sees Frank and Koro as symbolic of conflict between Māori and Pākehā more broadly, particularly in regard to respective attitudes towards nature and land (180). Frank's attitude is one grounded in "conflict, war, and conquest" (Heim does not go as far to claim that this is "*the* Pākehā attitude" or even "*a* Pākehā attitude"), whereas Koro's attitude, he suggests, is "the traditional Maori attitude to the land" (181). This is an obviously problematic view because, as stated earlier, Māori as a pan-tribal cohesive label only came into prominence as a response to Pākehā attempts to label and classify (Hokowhitu, "The Death of Koro Paka" 119) so any attempt to identify precisely what defines "the traditional Māori attitude" ignores the possibility and likelihood of heterogeneous Māori society and culture before Pākehā arrived. As well, it is troublesome that critics like Heim seem more comfortable and willing to label "traditional" Māori attitudes than they are to do the same with "traditional" Pākehā attitudes. Of course one might find similarities in the cultural practices of most Māori or even most Polynesians (just as one might find similarities in the cultural practices of most Europeans). It does seem, however, that European researchers have been quick to look at Indigenous cultures through lenses that confirm long-held stereotypes (Belich, *Making Peoples*



19-22) in a way that they are far less willing to do towards white cultures. Heim himself laments the fact that Stewart's "grotesque" portrayal of Pākehā in *Tama and Other Stories* "present a distorted picture of Pakeha" (180) presumably because he (Heim) does not wish for Pākehā to be seen and read as a homogenous group.

Indeed, it is unhelpful to declare that Frank and Koro are representative of Pākehā and Māori respectively. What Stewart does show is one version of masculinity that is exclusive and hostile to others ("look it's all to do with breeding...don't know what this country's coming to – we used to get on good with the Maoris [sic]" [33]) and one that is accepting and fosters belonging ("he always made a big fuss over his mokos. When I was young his giant cuddles had me struggling for air" [27]). For Tama, this is significant because his Koro and whānau offer him a sense of belonging in spite of, or because of the fact "you got two people inside of you" (38). Even though Tama is both Māori and Pākehā he only feels wholly accepted when he is with his mother's whānau. When he is "with my Pakeha relations or when I was at college with my Pakeha mates I felt ashamed of my Koro and my Maori relations...I'd never really worked out why", whereas when he is with his whānau during the rabbit hunt "it also seemed natural for me to be in the Maori team" (31). Frank shows Tama that he can only be accepted if he fits into a very narrow frame of what it means to be a Europeanised man, and even then it might not be good enough because a part of him will always be Māori. Koro shows Tama that he can be accepted without condition; this offers him the freedom to learn his Koro's values while still retaining his own individuality.

As Tama grows closer to his Koro he senses the incongruity between Frank's and Koro's respective attitude towards land, nature, and hunting. He worries that Koro is not "keen on me hunting Mangu [the stag]" (35) but, despite this, he still expresses a willingness to guide Tama into the bush, "just as my [own] Koro took me back". Even though trophy hunting is something that Koro takes no pleasure in, he does not shame and scorn Tama for doing so.

Again, Tama understands that his Koro affords him a degree of acceptance that he will never get from Frank. Even as Tama gets ready to conquer the bush (“it is a war for me” [36]), he is reminded that he had learned from his Koro that “the river was ‘whanau’, the birds were ‘whanau’, the wind was ‘whanau’” (37). While his Koro helps to enable, or at least does not stop his attempted conquest of nature, Tama becomes increasingly aware of the fact that such conquest may well feel or seem like conquest of his very whānau. Heim suggests that Tama’s hunting of Mangu is symbolic of a ceremonial process in which he will kill off the Pākehā part of himself, ridding himself of one of the “two people” inside of him. This is presumably because Koro refers to the stags as “tauwi” (38), reasoning that he “cannot feel for them as I do my own” (his own being the river, birds, wind, and trees which are all “whanau”). Koro goes on to compare the ‘tauwi’ creatures to Pākehā who, like the deer, “gobbles up everything” (39). However, the inverse of Heim’s claim seems just as likely; if Tama continues to follow his father’s example (by hunting Mangu and conquering nature) then he must accept that this could eventually necessitate killing off the very things that make up his whānau and, ultimately, his Māoritanga. After all, even though tauwi creatures like the deer “gobble up everything,” Koro has no desire to kill and defeat them. It is Frank who longs to kill, dominate, and consume, asserting his belief in the primal “law above all laws” which he says is the “survival of the fittest” (25). If Koro is correct, and Frank wants to “gobble up everything,” then by extension it will never be enough to kill and conquer only the stags: other creatures (the birds and trees) will surely follow. The same trees that Koro refers to as whānau are only important to Frank insomuch as they “are worth a fortune” (36). Tama is inculcated with both the idea that nature is to be conquered and profited from, and the idea that it embodies whanaungatanga.

Even the different manner in which Koro and Tama eat breakfast is telling; whereas Koro “cherish[es],” Tama “wolf[s] down” his food evoking primal, vicious, and bestial images of desire and consumption (37). His desire to hunt and consume would lead him to become like

his father - “a real man”- measuring his greatness as a man in regard the greatness of the beasts he kills (25). Koro teaches Tama that there are two ways of thinking: “tangata raho<sup>4</sup>...cock thinking” and “tangata ngakau...upper body thinking – the heart, the head” (45). The type of masculinity embodied by Frank is tangata raho: primal, instinctive, and competitive. Koro’s masculinity is tangata ngākau: affectionate, mindful, and heartfelt. Even just the use of te reo Māori to explain these concepts is significant, and helps to prove why this is not, as Heim suggests, representative of conflict between Māori and Pākehā. Koro says that “in Maori there are two ways of thinking,” (45) acknowledging that these ways of thinking, these modes of masculinity, exist within te ao Māori – they are not simply the Pākehā and the Māori way of thinking. However, it is implied by Koro that the most desirable way of thinking and being is tangata ngākau, explaining that tekoteko, “those carvings of ours, moko, the head, the upper body, is at least one third of the carving” (45). It is perhaps ironic then that Frank is horrified that a punga fence will make his house look like a “dirty Maori house [the pā]” (25), when it is the pā itself that is adorned with tekoteko that celebrate tangata ngākau. Even as he starts ripping out the fence “like a mad bull” he is proving his own commitment to tangata raho. Tama worries that a compromise between these two modes of masculinity is necessary, and even his mother tells him that ““with Koro’s way our people are always losing out”” (45). However, it is Tama’s single minded obsession with killing Mangu that brings about his own near-demise. As he lays injured on the forest floor it is only because his Koro protects him, holding him while “wailing and crying” (48), that Tama has any chance of being saved. Indeed, it is precisely Koro being affectionate, protective, and wise that will save Tama, not the gun that he thinks will help him to “win in a fight” (46), not being the strongest or fittest, not tangata raho.

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<sup>4</sup> Moorfield defines “raho”, not raho as relating to genitals, so it is not entirely clear whether or not this is an editing error or an alternative spelling.

*Māori mothers and the fostering of mātauranga Māori*

At the beginning of each of the short stories in *Tama and Other Stories* is a brief poetic pono (truth), the very first of which (before the story *Dear Mum*) reads:

The most powerful force known  
 is the creative  
 It is the love between  
 the opposites  
 They need each other  
 one is not greater than the other  
 Tenakorua [sic] Te Ranginui the skyfather  
 and the mother of us all  
 Papatuanuku. (9)

Thus, one of the core themes of Stewart's collection is established: the duality and equality of masculine and feminine forces in mātauranga Māori. It is therefore appropriate to examine what impact women in these stories, mothers in particular, have on Māori boys and their concepts of masculinity and Māoritanga. But to what extent are the women in the stories able to have influence over their sons? The pono above asserts that "one is not greater than the other" (masculine and feminine, mother and father, Te Ranginui and Papatuanuku), which would seem to suggest the essentiality of love, balance, and cooperation between the masculine and feminine in te ao Māori. However, Stewart's stories are characterised by rampant sexism and oppression of women by men. Is Stewart's assertion that such sexism and oppression is incompatible with mātauranga Māori as expressed in this pono? It seems likely, as it is always Pākehā men in these stories who oppress Māori women, and suppress mana wāhine, so it is therefore they who are incongruous with a worldview that expects balance between the

masculine and the feminine. Ani Mikaere agrees that this balance between men and women was integral to pre-colonial Māori society, asserting that “the principle of balance, vital to the well-being of the whole community, ensured that both the male and the female roles were valued and respected” (68). Obviously there are a number of reasons why the Māori women in these stories would want to inculcate their children with mātauranga Māori, but one significant aspect appears to be the desire to help restore the principle of balance for future generations.

In some ways, the relationships of Māori women with Pākehā men in these stories is symbolic of the process of colonisation more broadly. Mikaere goes on to say that “Mana wahine and mana tāne must operate side by side, the equilibrium restored... if this is not achieved Māori whānau will become no more than brown mirror-images of Pākehā families. Māori cultural integrity will be lost, assimilation by the coloniser complete” (138). The balance between men and women, masculine and feminine, is not only necessary from a sense of justice and equity, but so that mātauranga Māori can survive uncorrupted. Accordingly, if the Māori boys in Stewart’s stories rely solely on Pākehā (colonisers) as a model for masculinity, they risk being assimilated completely into the coloniser’s culture.

The way in which Koro (in *Mangu*) explicitly tries to teach Tama about te ao Māori has been discussed above; Tama’s mother’s attempts are much more furtive. When Tama asks his mother if she married his father because “it’s something to do with my father’s grandfather stealing Māori land” (36), she seems to tacitly agree. This, along with the fact that Koro says that the whānau’s claim for the land “will be settled” (30), despite already having failed in court, implies that the reason for their marriage is presumably so that Tama can inherit the land back on behalf of the whānau. While this could be misinterpreted as some sort of revenge against Frank the motivations are almost certainly not so straightforward. Rangimarie Rose Pere says that Māori attitudes towards the land are complex: “the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the Māori was linked up to this land that she or he belonged to, and related to...

the affinity was, and still is, recognised between the placenta and the land has bound up with it survival, belonging, and a fierce pride of identity and worth” (18-19). Accordingly, Tama’s mother’s attempts at reclaiming the whānau’s land is, in all likelihood, linked inextricably to wellbeing, survival, belonging, identity, and worth. Combined with Koro’s assertions that the river, wind, birds, and trees are all “whanau” (37), Tama is instilled with the sense that the land means a great deal more to his mother than he perhaps previously knew, and that she would go through a great deal in an attempt to reclaim it. It suggests that despite his father’s overbearing aggression, his mother is not simply a passive and submissive actor in the relationship. She seems to be manipulating Frank by using his own vanity against him (“it was almost as if she was one of the trophies” [23]). It is significant because it shows Tama that there exists the possibility of rebellion and resistance against his father’s tyranny, and therefore against cultural assimilation.

At one point Tama questions how she can fight against Frank without a gun, to which she replies that “I have a much stronger weapon than a rifle” (46). It could be that Tama’s mother is referring to her mind, inasmuch as she is smarter and more cunning than Frank and will ‘defeat’ him because she is several steps ahead of him at any given point. This is an entirely reasonable reading, and completely aligns with Tama’s own assertion that “she was easily a match for my father” (25). However, another reading is that her strength is in her sexuality, something which has resonance in Māori stories, especially those which predate colonisation. The imagery of sexual intercourse in early Māori stories does not carry the same connotations of female passivity and acquiescence that have come to dominate Western heteronormative discourses. Te Rangi Hīroa suggests instead that in Māori stories, “it is the female organ that figuratively kills its male antagonist” (510), which suggests a worldview in which women are not understood to be passive participants who are acted upon by men. Mikaere notes the many early Māori stories that “provid[e] a vivid example of the effectiveness of female sexuality to

bring about a desired result” (47). A distinction should be made, however, between the women in these stories and femme fatale characters in the Western literary tradition; whereas the women in these stories seem empowered by their sexuality, and not necessarily at the expense of men, femme fatales pose a threat to men, and perhaps even cause their downfall. In the case of Tama’s mother there is not necessarily any suggestion that she will cause Frank’s downfall per se, although at the same time she is not necessarily ‘empowered’ in the most positive, liberated, and self-assured sense of the word.

One might question whether it matters if Tama’s mother’s “weapon” is her mind or her sexuality if the important result either way is that she is a “match” for Frank. Indeed, there are many Māori stories in which women are powerful precisely because they outwit men (the stories of Māui and his kuia provide prototypical examples [Mikaere 32-36]). However, while stories about women outwitting men are not unheard of in the Western literary tradition, Western (male) authors seem far more prudish, even scared of female sexuality. In the Māori tradition female sexuality is instead shown to be powerful, not a cause of shame. In a pātere attributed to Erenora Taratoa she “sources her mana, not just in her whakapapa, but also in the power of her female sexual being” (Mikaere 54). Accordingly, Tama is exposed to ideas that are rooted deeply in mātauranga Māori: a woman’s sexuality is something empowering, not something shameful; men are not more powerful than women, and equilibrium is necessary for social stability; men who deny and underestimate female sexuality do so at their own peril (49). Accordingly, a version of masculinity that respects the power of women, and respects the balance between the masculine and feminine, is not only coded as Māori, but also shown to be necessary for the collective good of all Māori. The version of masculinity exemplified by Frank is coded as intrinsically Pākehā, and shown to be a drive to conquer women, conquer Māori, and conquer nature.

In the story *Boy*, the eponymous character's mother is much more explicit in how she educates him about te ao Māori. The lessons she imparts are almost entirely focussed on the natural world. When asked what the most important thing in the world is she replies that it is "Mother Earth and Father Sky. Without them nothing could live" (113). As stated above, Pere asserts that connection to land was inextricably linked to wellbeing, pride, identity, and worth (18-19) so it is hardly surprising that Boy's mother hopes to foster an understanding and appreciation for the importance of the whenua. Mikaere suggests that with the increasing urbanisation of Māori "the tapu connections, established through whakapapa to their wider iwi network, back to the atua and to the natural environment, became all but meaningless" (92). Accordingly, losing connection to the land is analogous to losing connection to whakapapa, atua, and iwi. As with *Mangu*, Stewart presents one view of the world in which respect for nature is paramount ("trees are people" [113]; "I began to see a little of what my mother meant about the Earth Mother looking after us" [114-115]), while the Pākehā worldview of his father is about consuming and conquering ("Mum cried when he cut down the giant totara by the cow bail. 'Don't be silly woman,' he said. 'Before my ol' man cleared the land, the place was covered in them.'" [109]; "I stood behind a lonely fence while he broke a young horse" [110]). Boy is made to see that the destructive, all-conquering masculinity of his father will inevitably be the thing that destroys not only land, but also identity and connection to whakapapa and iwi, leading every closer to cultural assimilation. It is hardly surprising that on the death of his mother, remembering that she once pointed to the Tararua ranges and said "my people lived there" (115), Boy runs away to the mountains, towards his ancestral land and all that is encompasses for him.

*Construction of masculinity away from Pākehā influences*



The final stories in the collection raise a number of questions about a Māori boy escaping the influence of Pākehā masculinity: does Boy need to leave his oppressive father's house if he is to continue his education in mātauranga Māori; why does he feel compelled to head towards his ancestral home in the mountains; and what does Māori masculinity mean for Boy in a bicultural society? Stories earlier in the collection make it clear that Stewart is concerned by what cultural assimilation could mean for Māori men in the future. In the opening story *Dear Mum*, the narrator is compelled by his father to “go to the Pakeha schools, to their university and learn their law... [so that] you could get the land back for our people” (13). However, after becoming a successful lawyer in Wellington he reflects that “I’ve been sucked in. Mixed up with all the others – Irish, Scots, English. We’re all mixed up. Water for dilution. More churning, and poured in a mould to set hard. Funny I never noticed how dead concrete looks” (13-14). The image of Māori culture being diluted until it becomes something hard set and dead looking is a confronting image to begin. While some Pākehā writers like Glenn Colquhoun seem optimistic about biculturalism leading to a shared sense of identity (“The art of walking upright here / is the art of using both feet. / One is for holding on. / One is for letting go” [“The Art of Walking Upright” lines 35-38]) Stewart is clearly concerned that the risk of cultural assimilation runs high. The concern is highlighted again in the same story when Wairua, who is communing with the narrator, shows him a Pākehā man who drives a Māori mother away from her children. As he does so, he says:

Once a tui left her nest  
 to gather kai for her babies  
 dog she met  
 “I your friend,” dog said  
 dog played with tui  
 then became tired of her  
 gobbled her up. (19)

The images of dilution and gobbling up suggest Stewart's concern that Māori culture may be overwhelmed, either by creeping and insidious dilution, or by aggressive and overt destruction. The collection is framed, therefore, by the question of what can be done to assert Māoritanga in the face of cultural assimilation. In *The Confirmation*, a mid-collection story, Stewart describes two brothers, Tama and Hone, who "both in their different ways are seekers" (65). They are side by side as they bear witness to the oppressiveness of Pākehā institutions; police evicting and violently attacking Māori "street kids" (68), an academic who lectures uncritically about researchers who say that Māori are a "lower race" who are lacking in "intellectual ability" (69), and a bishop who chooses on Tama's confirmation day to preach about the curse of Ham and the "black races" (75). Hone, his brother, is subjugated by these systems of authority, pleading with Tama to stay quiet and placid in the face of inequity, insisting that "the only way we can beat them is to...get into [their] position" (72). However, in *Dear Mum* Stewart makes clear the problems inherent in trying to immerse oneself into Pākehā institutions of power. Indeed, Tama imagines that people like Hone who accept such a lot in life are analogous to those who are given "scraps [on] the ground...[and] gobble them up" (74). Tama's solution, in an act of seeming desperation, is to run away from his home and city to the birds and the river (76). The story seems to express Stewart's frustration that the options for Māori boys are either to become repressed into silence and obsequiousness or to quite literally abandon Pākehā society altogether. However, in the final stories of this collection he seeks to examine what possibilities exist in the space between submission to Pākehā masculinity and abandonment of Pākehā cities.

The story arc of Boy/Tama (he is generally referred to by the Māori "Tama" rather than the English "Boy" once he leaves home) over the final four stories of the collection (*Boy, Tama, Tapu Hau a Tane, Patu Wairua*) goes some way to addressing the problem of cultural assimilation and suggests one way that Māori boys might be able to reject Pākehā masculinity.

When Tama runs away from his Pākehā father's house after the death of his mother he runs to the mountains where his mother said her whānau had once lived. He reflects that "since Mum had told me about them, it was as if there was something there, I don't know what it was – the snow, the bush, the bigness, it was all that, and more...much more" (124). It is interesting in some ways that he chooses to run to the mountains where it is unlikely he will find any living whānau, as opposed to the homes of his whānau in Wellington. It is not altogether surprising considering that Tama thinks "it's true, you know, what Mum told me, if you watch really hard, and if you want to, the earth can tell you things" (121). It seems, therefore, that for Boy, connection to one's ancestral lands is hugely significant in his efforts to connect to te ao Māori. The fact that the narrator in *Dear Mum* notices the dilution of culture after moving away from his village to Wellington seems to support this idea. If, as Pere suggests, "the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the Māori was linked up to this land that she or he belonged to, and related to" (18-19), it seems likely that Tama's act of running towards the land of his tīpuna should be read as him seeking that spiritual wellbeing and pride that he lacks under the oppressive control of his father. Importantly, just as the narrator in *Dear Mum* begins to feel diluted in Wellington even as he fights for his iwi's rights, Tama begins to feel more assured the longer he is in the mountains. When he was still living in his father's house he feels he did not understand his mother's lessons and that he "was slow to learn" (115), but after he has spent a great deal of time in the mountains he realises that "everywhere life was vigorous and I was part of it. I could understand it all, somehow. I was starting to fill right up, right up to overflowing" (136). Just being present in the land of his tīpuna leaves him feeling a sense of hauora that was previously lacking or diminished. It is at this point that he meets his koroua Tane Wairua who "train[s]" (153) Tama in mātauranga Māori.

After a gap of some months or years Tama returns as a young man to intercede in a conflict between his whānau in Porirua and government agencies who are upset that they are

building a marae on Housing Corporation land. At this point he seems in many ways to be the idealised pinnacle of Māori masculinity in Stewart's stories. His uncle Rangi recognises that Tama is "a special person" (148). He wears a korowai, carries a taiaha and mere, and speaks fluent reo Māori, leading Rangi to think "it was as if someone had come back from another age" (148-149). It should not be assumed that there is something anachronistic about Tama at this point, but that such a vision of Māori masculinity had become so repressed that it seems anachronistic, perhaps especially so for city-dwellers. Tama's glorious arrival emboldens his young teina Patu who asserts to the government agencies that "the Maori law for occupation of land is ahi ka...therefore this is our land" (149).

When Tama is chosen as the champion to defeat the Māori policeman Jim Corbett in one-on-one combat he does so in a way that avoids and tires Corbett so that he is "fighting himself" (151), the implication of which is that a Māori man who fights alongside Pākehā against Māori interests is simply fighting against himself. As well, because Māori collectivism meant that "there was a collective, rather than an individuated...responsibility" (Jackson 28) it could be read that Corbett is not just fighting himself, but against some sense of responsibility or obligation to the whānau and iwi. It is significant to note here that despite the fact that "white fears of black men's violence have a long history" (Connell 75) in colonial discourses (something oft-reflected in discussions about Māori men as warriors and fighters), Tama does not initiate this altercation, nor does he ever strike or touch Corbett during their fight. The aggression and violence in this story is coded as something distinctly Pākehā, something being done by Pākehā authorities towards children. Tama, meanwhile, seemingly does have the understanding that compromising his Māoritanga to appease Pākehā men in authority (his father, the police, his teachers) means he is only fighting himself.

In the face of this mana tāne, this vision of Māori masculinity, Patua and the other Māori boys on the marae are inspired and determine that "We're all going to Te Kete Aonui

[sic]<sup>5</sup> to be with our koroua, Tane Wairua – and Tama. Please don't try to stop us because we'll go at any rate. We are going because there is no life for us out here. And we want to be trained by our koroua, like Tama" (153). Thus, as the collection ends, Stewart presents at least one ideal model of Māori masculinity, and sets out one way through which it can be attained: Māori boys must be given access to te kete aronui<sup>6</sup>, they need instruction in mātauranga Māori (whether from someone like Tama's mother or a koroua like Tane Wairua), and they need to leave the city because "there is no life for us out here." Crucially, however, it is not that the idea of mātauranga Māori is incompatible with city life – quite the opposite. Before Tama arrives in Porirua we see Patu and the other boys attempt to build a marae for themselves in Porirua which would perhaps give them the same sense of hauora that Tama gains from Te Kete Aronui. Indeed, it is the very fact that Pākehā systems of authority and power (Housing Corporation, Porirua City Council, and the police) quite literally bulldoze through their marae, and through their sense of community, that they feel (or know) that Pākehā power structures are incompatible with the vision of Māoritanga and kaupapa Māori embodied by Tama. To put it another way, it is not Patu who rejects the city, but the city that rejects Patu, and if he stays and assimilates in the face of overwhelming pressure he risks becoming like the narrator in *Dear Mum*: overwhelmed by a sense of dilution, of feeling hard set, and of deadness. When Stewart began building Tapu Te Ranga Marae in 1974, a marae he imagined as a place to belong for disempowered and discontented urban Māori, he did so in Wellington city. This is unsurprising in the sense that young Māori who were drawn to urban centres for work were often the most disconnected from their whānau and marae. It is worth noting that while Tama and Patu leave the city and head to a marae in the mountains because "there is no life for us

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<sup>5</sup> Five pages earlier the Mārae in the mountains that Tama has come from is referred to as "Te Kete Aronui" (148), so presumably the line on 153 should read the same.

<sup>6</sup> Both the name of the marae in the story (the implication is that they need a physical marae to go to), but also in the abstract sense refers to the basket of knowledge of aroha, peace, arts, and crafts (Moorfield).

out here,” in Stewart’s own life he did not abandon the city, choosing to carve out space in the city for Māori to belong even as oppressive power structures threatened to disempower them.

Stewart does not explicitly state why Pākehā power structures are so seemingly incompatible the marae-based life that Patu and Tama seek to live. Nor, for that matter, does he state why Frank in *Mangu* is so aggressively resistant of anything that would make his family look or seem Māori, why Tama’s father makes him feel ashamed to be Māori, or why the city-dwelling narrator in *Dear Mum* is made to feel diluted. Mikaere suggests that “it was clear right from the outset that Māori collectivism was at odds with the settler ethic of individualism... the disruption of Māori social organisation was no mere by-product of colonisation, but an integral part of the process” (101). Accordingly, expressions of one’s Māoritanga are crushed, rejected, and repelled in these stories precisely because they are antithetical to the process of colonisation. Those promoting a British-style, English speaking, individualistic, patriarchal society are threatened by expressions of kaupapa Māori because it may well undermine that which they are trying to build. The bulldozing of Patu’s marae by the Housing Corporation is not simply a mere land-use squabble: it is a deliberate attempt to rebuff the collectivism and communal ownership that marae represent. The destruction by Frank of the punga fence is not simply a debate about household aesthetic choices: it is an act designed to assert patriarchal dominance over the household by rejecting expression of culture. The fact that the lawyer in *Dear Mum* feels diluted is not simply an expression of ennui: he has been swallowed up by a legal system that puts more emphasis on British common law than on tikanga Māori. What Stewart offers through his stories is not a condemnation of biculturalism, but rather a reminder that biculturalism is meaningless and unsustainable if one culture persists in trying to push the other towards the margins. This applies as well to how one culture might marginalise the masculinity of the other. As Brendan Hokowhitu says “masculinity, as a tactic of power, serves to bolster the position of the dominant group. Colonial representations of the

indigenous masculine Other were strategic tactics that upheld the desires, aspirations and policy of the coloniser” (“Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 185). Through his stories, Stewart offers a vision of Māori masculinity that prioritises kaupapa Māori by consciously challenging the aspirations of the coloniser. He is not, however, prescriptive or didactic about how this vision must be achieved. Earlier in the collection, the pono preceding *Boy* talks about the importance of finding one’s path. Although there are “many paths to the top of the mountain” what must be found is “YOUR path... [for] YOUR full blooming” (107). Although Stewart is focussed on the dichotomies and imbalances in the lives of his characters, he insists that there is no one path to a space where masculinity is restored and upheld for all tāne or tama.

## Chapter Two: Controlling the Narratives of Māori Masculinity in *Bulibasha*

Witi Ihimaera's *Bulibasha* is not, I argue, a story about 'traditional' Māori patriarchy. Instead, it is a story about what happens when dominant narratives about masculinity and gender are usurped and utilised by the very people they are designed to oppress. It is also a story about how a boy, and his whānau, are able to challenge and undermine these narratives for the betterment of the community. I begin this chapter by discussing how the influence of Pākehā masculinity in a community where Pākehā are very much in the minority is still strong, and still able to create a sense of division and exclusivity. The chapter goes on to look at the ways in which Pākehā hegemony proliferates narratives and discourses about what type of Māori masculinity is both advantageous and 'correct.' However, such narratives are also utilised and co-opted by Māori men in this story for utilitarian purposes. The chapter analyses the role that Māori women (as well as the Māori men who present an alternative to violent patriarchy) play in the novel, particularly in regard to the ways in which they embody a more equitable, collectivist, and empathetic worldview that is so at odds with the story's eponymous patriarch. I discuss how much of this equity, collectivism, and empathy is on display in the many tournaments and competitions throughout the story. Competitions which celebrate physicality seem to be mostly endorsed by a select few men, whereas tournaments which celebrate the strengths of everyone, no matter how they express their masculinity (or femininity) are shown to be uplifting for the whole community. The chapter finishes with an examination of the intersections between sexuality and masculinity, with a particular focus on the ways in which a freer, more open attitude towards sexuality is coded as something with a clear place within the framework of te ao Māori.

*The influence on Pākehā masculinity on Māori boys*



In the prologue to *Bulibasha* the narrator, Himiona/Simeon prefaces the conflict with his grandfather Tamihana/Bulibasha by declaring that “I was twelve then and still obedient” (5). Much of the novel centres on Himiona’s rebellion against Tamihana and his authoritarian rule over the Mahana whānau. However, Himiona’s acts of rebellion and disobedience, like those of so many adolescent boys, are not simply directed at one person. Early in the novel he says that to him, “most hated of all [was] Patutahi School” (12). Despite the fact he is in bitter conflict with Tamihana, and also with the entire Poata whānau, the “most hated” thing in his world is the local school. He elaborates that this is because:

Miss Dalrymple caned us out of our culture and gave us lines if we spoke in Maori. She was not unkind; some belief in Christianity and British Empire made her assume she knew what we wanted. The irony was that although our teachers were our superiors, they were a minority among us. Perhaps this explains the zeal with which they imposed their beliefs. Convert the Maori before they rebel. (12-13)

Himiona is aware at a reasonably young age about not only *how* those in positions of power can oppress those under them (“convert the Maori”), but also *why* they do so (“before they rebel”). He even gives oppressors the benefit of the doubt, saying that his teacher was “not unkind” and that she “assume[d] she knew what we wanted.” Accordingly, Himiona is introduced early on as a sagacious young man who recognises that those in power act in ways to suppress rebellion and maintain power, while doing so in a paternalistic manner. His thinking aligns with that of Foucault, who asked “if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?” (36). Himiona’s response to repressive power is subversiveness, and thus the way he chooses to act and present himself is often as a direct contradiction to the rules and demands of his teachers, Tamihana, and other figures of authority.

The oppressive wielding of power is equally applicable to both the Pākehā minority in his community and to his grandfather Tamihana. The actions and beliefs which are coded as Pākehā (belief in Christianity and the British Empire, speaking English, perhaps even corporal punishment) are things that Himiona believes are only meant to ‘convert’ Māori and, accordingly, lead him to hate school. It is not unreasonable to suggest that because Himiona is so subversive, he would become sceptical of the things used by Pākehā to ‘convert’ Māori. He certainly lacks the same zeal Tamihana has for Christianity, his own “secret catechism” (49) being a snide recitation of Tamihana’s life and deeds. Accordingly, much of Himiona’s story can be seen as his struggle to resist being a ‘converted’ Māori and to assert his own individuality and sense of Māoritanga.

Later in the novel Himiona goes on a school trip to Gisborne where they visit a courthouse and he is startled to see the conclusion of Pākehā paternalism and zealotry. In the courthouse he is struck by the fact that the majority of cases brought before the court are by Pākehā, against Māori (189) but that those Māori before the court:

were passive in their acceptance of the law and of te rori Pakeha. The Pakeha’s place was to be punisher, and the Maori’s place to be punished. There was a sense of implacability about the process, as if *they* were always right and *we* were always wrong. Why didn’t we fight back? We didn’t know how. (188)

His contempt for colonial paternalism is affirmed, and his worries proven in a startling way: the Māori who are before the court seem to have been ‘converted’ and incapable of rebellion. He is disgusted by the judge who he sees put “people on display, like deers’ antlers” (187). In this way, the Pākehā judge, although granted the legitimacy and authority of the bench, is not so different to the Pākehā father in Stewart’s *Mangu*: he seeks to conquer while making trophy displays of his supremacy and power. Himiona is disgusted by the adversarial and

oppressive nature by which Pākehā men like this judge, or indeed his teachers, assert their power over others all the while claiming to do so for their own good. When Himiona thinks that “*they* were always right and *we* were always wrong” it is clear that he feels there are seemingly impossible standards put upon Māori. As with the young boy in *Mangu*, and Tama in *Boy*, Himiona tacitly acknowledges that he will always be found wanting by the Pākehā who would hope to convert him. Because “Maori masculinity is often defined in opposition to Pakeha masculinity” (Hokowhitu, “Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 198), no matter how hard Himiona may try to ‘convert’ and assimilate there will always be those that cast him as an Other, leaving him feeling always in the wrong.

Compounding the sense that Pākehā are trying to convert him, that he is always wrong, and that because he was different he “w[as] treated like shit” (49), he sees that his Pākehā friend is allowed far greater freedom to express his masculinity than he ever is. Geordie, the son of a farmer who the Mahanas are shearing for, is “fey”, “languid” (102) and described by Haromi as a “brainbox” and “sissy” (103). Himiona is angry that “in those days you could be a sissy just by liking a picture by a famous artist or classical music or ballet dancing,” and he is envious, or at least admiring, of Geordie because he had the “courage of daring to be different” (103). Himiona’s masculinity is far more restricted than Geordie’s; he is constantly reminded that “reading books isn’t going to help you put meat on the table” (56), that he needs “a haircut [because]...he’s starting to look like a girl” (21), and that it’s “not right” that Geordie rested his arm on Himiona’s shoulder (126). This final transgression was so outrageous to Tamihana that he attacked Himiona’s hair and head with scissors until he was bleeding, calling him “whakahihi” and “porangi” (127). The implication is clear: whereas a Pākehā boy has relative freedom to be a fey brainbox with a “mass of blond curls” (102), Himiona feels the contempt of Tamihana, his father (Joshua), and Haromi for being too smart, long-haired, and affectionate. While the majority of pressure Himiona

feels comes from his own whānau, this needs to be seen in the context of why colonisation would lead someone like Tamihana to have such rigid ideas of what men can be. As

Hokowhitu states:

Sardonically, many representations of Maori masculinity, now regarded as traditional Maori culture, were merely qualities of colonial masculinity. In the hope of saving their iwi from near extinction, many Maori men were forced to assume those masculine qualities that would abet their integration into the dominant Pakeha culture... The consumption of Pakeha masculinity by Maori men served to assimilate Maori men into the violent, physical, stoical, rugged and rugby oriented mainstream masculine world that has pervaded New Zealand society for most of its colonial history. (“Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 194)

He goes on to suggest that, in more recent times, Pākehā men have allowed themselves greater freedom to move beyond the codes of rugged colonial masculinity, but that “lacking the fluidity of Pākehā masculinity, the Māori man provides the antitype of the evolving new Pākehā man...he is still the savage as opposed to the cultivated and evolving new man” (197). Because Tamihana “relied on his physical strength to get him through life, to till his land and, more important, to secure cash work from the Pakeha farmers in the district” (42), it is not difficult to understand why he sees strength and physicality as so significant for the survival of his whānau. Likewise, Tamihana knows that at the time in which the novel is set, the “prospects for young Maori men living in rural areas were not promising...[and] all around him [he] could see the results of Maori poverty” (46). No doubt the severity through which he tries to inculcate a sense of strong, rugged, physicality in Himiona is because he

sees it as analogous to success and survival.<sup>9</sup> However, this is cold comfort to Himiona who can see that Pākehā boys have greater freedom and opportunity than he does, and thus feels little gratitude towards his grandfather. For Himiona, he feels like he can only succeed if he is aspirational, rather than taking on the limited opportunities presented in Waituhi, opining “there is nothing worse for a young boy with the whole world before him than to be faced with cows’ udders every morning” (17). The bookish, intelligent, and affectionate Geordie can still be “prosperous” (103), but it seems to Himiona that this is only because he is Pākehā. Both Himiona and Tamihana can see that Māori men in Waituhi who are successful are successful in physical feats, such as rugby and shearing. The difference is that Tamihana determines that one should find success where success can be found, whereas Himiona wants to subvert the status quo so that he too may have the “courage of daring to be different” (103). When he realises that his father and grandfather are telling him that “I had my place and I should stay in it. Mine the dusty road, Geordie’s the tar seal” (103-104), his response is not to concede that he has his place for evermore. Importantly, nor is his response that he simply wants Geordie’s place; he understands the dangers of being converted and assimilated into a paternalistic Pākehā culture. His response: “To Hell with the lot of them” (104).

*Māori masculinity and the pervasiveness of Pākehā hegemony*

Early in the novel, Himiona gives his assessment of what life was like for him and his whānau where they lived: “Pakeha were in power here...that was the preordained order of things. The whole township of Patutahi proclaimed Pakeha status in that no-dust zone.

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<sup>9</sup>During the time period in which the novel is set, Māori men were drastically overrepresented in manual labour industries: “Unlike Pākehā men, who enjoyed a normal spread throughout occupational strata, by 1965, ‘nearly 90 percent of Maori men [were] employed as farmers, foresters, laborers, transport operators, factory workers, or in other skilled and unskilled occupations’ (Watson 1967, 6)” (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 268).

Pakeha were served first at the hotel. Pakeha imposed their language on all the signs. Pakeha were always boss” (12). Such assertions give context to the institutionalised racism prevalent throughout the novel. Arguably, they also give significant context to how one might read the character of Tamihana. While Pākehā are in power in Patutahi, Tamihana is, with one exception which will be covered later in this chapter, in power in Waituhi (“Riripeti was the only one Grandfather Tamihana acknowledged to be above him” [14]). Just as the Pākehā power seems “preordained,” so too does Tamihana’s power and position seem fated. Himiona notes that “there are some souls, like Grandfather Tamihana, whom God signs contracts with before they are born” (39), which accounts for his strength, prowess, and blessings. Notably, the religious implications of preordination and the contract with God suggest that both Pākehā men and Tamihana explain their position of privilege as coming from divine providence. While “Pakeha imposed their language on all the signs,” Tamihana is a master of controlling language in his own way; despite being wholly averse to reading and education, he is able to impose his language, and the narrative of his life, upon those around him to such an extent that they seem unable to question his supremacy and greatness. At even the most literal level, Tamihana, like the Pākehā, is served first (“Grandfather picked up his fork. The sign to eat” [35]). Tamihana is a patriarch very much in the model of the Pākehā around him, so it may lead one to question whether Tamihana’s masculinity is coded as Pākehā throughout the novel. There are two conclusions at which one may arrive. The first is that Tamihana has been assimilated into Pākehā culture and has begun to internalise certain Pākehā traits and beliefs. The second is that Tamihana has not necessarily internalised these traits and beliefs, but that he acts in a utilitarian way, doing the things that will allow him to be the most successful in a Pākehā hegemonic society. Arguably his motivations matter little because either way he is still subject to the pressures put upon him by colonial narratives. The

most significant thing for the purposes of this thesis is examining the effect that traits of Pākehā masculinity have on Tamihana, Himiona, and the rest of the whānau.

Tamihana's intense religious devotion (or at least his devotion to the institution and authority that imbues him such power and prestige) is obvious throughout the novel, and is said to be inextricably connected to his success. The American-accented 'angel' "from Kansas City or Salt Lake" (43) who Tamihana encounters early in his life tells him that God "has blessed you with great strength and sporting prowess...He wants you to use your strength to be a living witness and testament unto all your people that God lives" (43-44). Again, the notion that Tamihana's power and success is preordained by God is an integral part of his life story. He is even cast as an Abrahamic paterfamilias ("You will be blessed, as Abraham was blessed...and so will your children and your children's children for ever" [45]), further cementing his place as the blessed patriarch for his whānau. His family is structured around him, with social events, work, church, and even relationships all under his control. This is, arguably, the antithesis of how pre-colonisation Māori society was organised, as "the overriding principle [of tikanga Māori] was that of maintaining balance: balance between communities and their environment; balance between the people and their atua; balance between iwi, hapu, and whānau; balance between the members of communities" (Mikaere 70). This destruction of hapū structures and pushing Māori towards the Pākehā model of the patriarchal nuclear family (103) arguably leads to "brown mirror-images of Pākehā families" (Mikaere 138). Indeed, the whānau, at least as far as Tamihana seeks to shape it, appears to embody Biblical patriarchy more than it embodies kaupapa Māori. One such example is reflected in how domestic violence and spousal abuse is treated within the Mormon faith to which the Mahana family belongs, compared to how it is treated in a tikanga Māori context. The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints does not prescribe reasons under which divorce ("unsealing") may happen, and indeed says that "every effort should be

made to keep these covenants and preserve marriage” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Divorce). By comparison, in tikanga Māori a “cause for divorce and compensation was where a man physically mistreated his spouse. This was regarded as a serious offence, not only against her but also against her whānau, for which the offender’s whānau would be held accountable” (Mikaere 59). This is of course complicated by the fact that, presumably, no one in the Mahana whānau knew the extent of the abuse that Ramona was subject to. However, the fact that Ramona had been isolated from her own whānau, and the fact that she knew that their church would not offer her the chance of divorce only serves to further show the extent to which the Biblical patriarchal model was further isolating her and disrupting the whānau’s connection to tikanga Māori.

Tamihana seems to rely on circular reasoning for structuring the whānau in this way: the whānau is successful because he is patriarch, and the whānau’s success affirms his place as patriarch. However, as Himiona begins to notice throughout the novel, the success that the whānau (and Tamihana) have is very limited in scope. Himiona, reflecting upon the whānau trophy room, notes that Tamihana:

...so inculcated his sons and daughters with the drive for physical and sporting excellence that, as they grew, they began winning prizes for him. That too is part of his physical triumph. His physical achievement lives on in us. Did I say us? In this holy of holies, it is strength rather than intelligence which is worshipped. You will find no trophies of mine here, though there may be a couple of certificates for being third in class stuck away in a drawer. This room makes it clear: I am no use whatsoever to Grandfather. (39-40)

Tamihana may well be blessed, but as Himiona realises this blessing seems only to extend to physical prowess. As discussed earlier, Tamihana knew “prospects for young Maori men



living in rural areas were not promising” (46), and his obsession with strength and physicality no doubt stems from this reality. However, the fact that the ‘angel’ notes that Tamihana has been blessed specifically with “strength and sporting prowess” (43), and the fact he “relied on his physical strength to get him through life” (42) shows something quite insidious happening. The construction of a Māori masculinity based around physical prowess “was needed at this time [early 20<sup>th</sup> century] to placate those in the Pakeha public unwilling to accept their new found compatriots and, furthermore, to assimilate Maori men through acceptable physical and warrior-like roles” (Hokowhitu, “Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 186). Men like Tamihana were afforded a certain degree of success in physical roles in part because it affirmed colonial narratives that sought to show Māori as less developed than Europeans, only capable of success in physical labour, and in turn gave justification for paternalistic Pākehā systems of power. Himiona struggles with the notion that he might only ever achieve success as a result of his physicality, partly because he knows he does not measure up to his grandfather’s standards of strength (“I am no use whatsoever to Grandfather” [40]), but also because he is actually successful academically. Importantly, this is not Himiona expressing his frustration at Māori masculinity and tikanga Māori. We know this because, when he wins the award for being second in his class, he acknowledges that:

I was being embarrassing. Becoming more Pakeha and less Maori somehow, because being Maori meant being dumb, always coming last and not caring about it because everybody else was dumb or last too. Or, as Grandfather would say, becoming whakahihi. Too big for my boots. Not staying in my place. (69)

As discussed above, it is in fact Tamihana whose traits and behaviour are coded throughout the novel as Pākehā. Perhaps, in a moment of despair and frustration, after a lifetime of being mocked and ridiculed by his grandfather, Himiona is convinced that “being Maori meant being dumb.” However, the irony in this excerpt is clear: the attitude of “staying in my place”

in a Pākehā hegemonic society can only lead to further cultural assimilation and to “becoming more Pakeha.” Tamihana stays in his place, doing the only work that will earn him money from the Pākehā who “were always boss.” In this moment Himiona can see that his grandfather is complicit in a system where Māori will always come last.

Himiona’s reflection in this moment must not be read as a condemnation of Māori cultural attitudes towards educational success (he comments on the fact that the women in his family, his grandmother, mother, aunts, and sisters, are all there supporting him in this moment), nor as an indication that he exists to inspire some sort of Māori cultural revolution. He certainly is an agent for change in the novel, but his problem is clearly with one particular person, not with tikanga Māori. Chris Prentice notes that “Māori writers have invoked the figure of the special child, often tragically marked by colonial history and charged with the burden of effecting through their suffering a cultural healing of their community” (67), and Himiona is certainly a figure in this same mould. Important, however, is the idea that these provocateur characters like Himiona are part of “a cultural healing” not, as Fox suggests, an evolution. This moment in the text must be read then in the context of what can happen when men like Tamihana fall victim to the pressures of Pākehā hegemony. They, and their whānau, begin to internalise and believe the oppressive narratives constructed to keep them ‘in their place’; that they are dumb, do not care, always come last, and are foolishly embarrassing if they reject these narratives.

As much as Tamihana is the victim of narratives that seek to restrict and oppress Māori men like himself, he is himself a master of constructing narratives that restrict and oppress his whānau and others around him. During the whānau meetings at Tamihana’s house a familiar routine of reciting his life story takes place:

Uncle Matiu was meticulous in setting out the history. In so doing he was saying, We must never forget even the smallest detail, for it has its role in maintaining our memory. This is what those monthly meetings were about – ensuring that we did not lose our memory, for otherwise we would also lose the understanding that in the beginning there has been only a dream. (23)

Of course, history and memory in this case should be read as Tamihana’s version of history, and his distortion of memory. The scene of this storytelling seems like a perverted whakapapa, restricted only to the works and deeds of Tamihana. In te ao Māori one might be expected to learn the genealogy and actions of their tīpuna, but this whakapapa that talks exclusively about one living man seems to be an odd corruption of a traditional practice. For one thing, it seems to suggest a substantial disconnect between the modern Mahana whānau and their tīpuna. Such a disconnect, according to Ani Mikaere, is far reaching, because the loss of contact with hapū, iwi, and ancestral land also meant that “the tapu connections, established through whakapapa to their wider iwi network, back to the atua and to the natural environment, became all but meaningless” (92). While the loss of ancestral connections is, in all likelihood, caused by the disruptive influences of colonisation, this does provide another example of ways in which Tamihana seems deeply assimilated into Pākehā society. Tina Makereti, talking about how Māori storytelling is affected by colonisation, suggests that “culture is always in flux, and colonisation—and the ongoing process of colonisation—shapes, limits, distorts and shifts how we know and tell our own stories” (“Māori Writing” 62). The same certainly seems to be true of Tamihana in the way he tells (or lets others tell) his own story. However, again, one might wonder about his motivation in doing so. He may simply have been affected by Pākehā hegemony to the point that he has begun to see his own story as a triumph of individualism; he is a self-made success (although Apirana Ngata does receive acknowledgment in the story for financing and supporting Tamihana) so accordingly

he is the only one deserving of praise and adoration for making what was “only a dream” into reality. Alternatively, his construction of narrative could be far more deliberate and insidious.

Pākehā institutions of power were and continue to be ruthlessly efficient in controlling narratives by suppressing Indigenous language, writing and re-writing Indigenous stories, and constructing an image of Indigenous men as strong yet primitive, all in an attempt to disempower and conquer. The purpose of “colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha 101). For Māori, this ‘degeneracy’ was linked to their supposed lack of intellect and brute strength; Pākehā could ostensibly use the process of colonisation to make these attributes productive on the battlefield or rugby field (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 269). Such narratives persist today in readings that would suggest, for example, that Tamihana has an “ancient instinct for battle” that is expressed through the “ritualised warfare” of rugby (Fox, *The Ship of Dreams* 157).

It seems likely that Tamihana is just as efficient in constructing and controlling his narrative with the sole purpose of disempowering his whānau, making them completely deferential and wholly dependent on him. One need only look to the first time Himiona hears his grandfather’s story without Tamihana present. He is surprised when “Aunt Ruth began to tell a story about the family...But this was a story I had not heard before, telling the reason why the Mahana and Poata families were always fighting. It had nothing to do with religion at all” (80). When the story is told in Tamihana’s house it is done almost entirely by his sons, with only minor interruptions and additions by the women of the whānau, and certainly no additions by Ramona herself. Clearly the narrative of Tamihana’s life is explicitly patriarchal; he is the centre of the story, his sons are the inheritors of his success and story, and his wife and daughters are mere footnotes on the page of his tale. It is interesting then that Ruth feels

free to tell her own version of the story when they are away from the glare of Tamihana. Obviously, Tamihana has such tight control over the narrative that certain truths can only be uttered away from his presence. This of course means that some, like Himiona, could grow up never knowing the truth about Tamihana, believing only what he wants them to believe. The tale that Ruth tells has nothing to do with religious disputes and instead explains the dispute between Tamihana and Rupeni Poata as a fight over a woman (Ramona). The truth of the dispute seems innocuous enough, and certainly Himiona seems reasonably intrigued by the story. So for what purpose would Tamihana construct his narrative in this way? Apart from the fact it takes some of the gleam away from his divine blessings and religious righteousness, the story about Ramona is far too close to the terrible truth that he kidnapped and raped Ramona rather than ‘winning’ her from Rupeni. It would be fallacious to suggest that Pākehā men have been the only people in history to control the narratives that they construct for themselves. It does seem, however, that in this novel those who have the greatest power to control narratives are those who benefit from an imbalance of power, which effectively is Pākehā and Tamihana. To put this another way, in colonial or postcolonial contexts usually the only people that have traditionally been able to maintain effective power are either the colonisers or those who, to varying degrees, assimilate with and support the colonisers. Tamihana is a representation of what power could be offered through assimilation to a Māori man in his position, but also what that assimilation could cost. In his discussion of narrative and Indigenous cultures Thomas King asks whether narratives “reflect the world as it truly is,” or whether we see the world way we do because of the narratives we accept and consume (26). For Tamihana, his power is manifested in and as narrative; he is powerful because his life story affirms that he is, and he can control his life story because he is powerful. Likewise, he finds success as a Māori man who is disciplined, stoic, and physical because colonial narratives say that is what ‘good’ Māori masculinity looks like, and he is

disciplined, stoic, and physical because he knows it is a precondition for his success in a Pākehā-dominated environment.

*Māori masculinity away from the influence of Pākehā masculinity.*

Early in the novel Himiona is effectively taught by his whānau to recognise that Tamihana is the antithesis of his arch-rival Rupeni Poata. Whereas Tamihana is described as possessing preternatural physical blessings, Rupeni is “dumpy and ugly” (51). Tamihana is tall and imposing, while Rupeni is “*real* short arse” (51). Even as Rupeni returns from the War and sees his former fiancée with his former best friend, Tamihana is ostensibly humble and contrite, but Rupeni is bitter and vengeful. Himiona hears that his grandfather only wished to “welcome our hero” (96) and in response Rupeni vowed “undying vengeance” and “enmity between you and yours...and me and mine” (96-97). While Himiona sees both men in a drastically different light by the end of the novel, throughout the whole novel he recognises them as opposites. Interestingly, he is taught for most of his life to understand that the divide between the two men was originally caused by Tamihana converting the people of Waituhi from Ringatū to Mormonism, while Rupeni and the rest of Hukareka remained Ringatū (45). Before he knows anything about their competition over Ramona, sport, or shearing territory, he knows that Rupeni remains devoted to Ringatū. It is a faith that is Māori-led, meets in marae, and was founded by a man (Te Kooti) who fought against the aggressive encroachment of Pākehā colonisation. Despite the fact that Ringatū is based on Christian texts and traditions, it developed to be staunchly independent and outside the influence of Pākehā-led churches (Gibson 92). In contrast, Tamihana belongs to a church whose leadership is in America, that meets in chapels, and he was converted to this faith by a blonde American “angel.” During the mid-twentieth century, when the novel is set, the

Mormon Church actively marginalised Māoritanga and promoted assimilation (Barber and Gilgen 213). At the time it also banned Black men from holding the priesthood, something to which Tamihana, when confronted by the fact, merely replies “so?” (165). It seems evident from this early moment in the novel that Rupeni should be seen as less encumbered by the influence of Pākehā hegemony than Tamihana. The effects of Pākehā hegemonic masculinity on Tamihana are, as discussed above, arguably obvious to both Himiona and to the reader right from the early stages of the novel; it takes the duration of the story for Himiona to see how Rupeni is less encumbered, and to understand how he presents a starkly different mode of Māori masculinity.

Himiona’s understanding of Rupeni Poata is skewed greatly by a number of distortions and outright lies that have been fed to him throughout his life. He thinks that Rupeni married Maata, his wife who is “of high rank,” only because “he knew how to get ahead” in life (51). Ironically, Tamihana’s narratives lead his whānau to believe that it is Rupeni who controls his family members through “his evil and manipulative nature” (52) and that it is Rupeni who treated Ramona like he would “own” her in marriage (83).<sup>12</sup> However, increasingly Himiona begins to understand some of the truths about Rupeni. He understands that Maata “brought her own mana and glory to Hukareka” (52), which seems in some ways to tacitly acknowledge the “principle of balance” between men and women in te ao Māori (Mikaere 68). By contrast, Ramona is often depicted as voiceless, powerless, and insignificant because, according to Tamihana, “that’s all your mother Ramona is...[a] bitch” (134). The Poatas are lovingly “devoted to their father” (52), whereas the Mahanas are fearfully “obedient” (62), “subservient” and “deferential” (20) to Tamihana.

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<sup>12</sup> During an argument between Tamihana and Himiona, it is in fact Tamihana that asserts that “I own *her*...she belongs to me” (134).

The first time that Himiona has any personal interaction with Rupeni helps to shatter the misconceptions that he had about him. As he is in the midst of a scuffle with two of the Poata boys he is knocked to the ground but as he falls, Rupeni, who is fortuitously close by, catches him and stops him falling (167). Just the previous day Tamihana had jabbed at Himiona while telling him that, if he does not stop challenging him, he ““is going to lose”” (165); shortly afterwards Rupeni shows a degree of support and protection that Tamihana has never given Himiona. This is further reinforced when Himiona effectively wins a rugby game for the Mahanas against the Poatas. Tamihana has only scorn and condemnation, saying that taking the field was ““a stupid thing to do”” (174), while Rupeni offers him a smile and a ““well done”” (174).

The next time he encounters Rupeni is on the school trip to the Gisborne courthouse. Rupeni, along with his whānau, is there to offer support for his grandson who is appearing before the court. Here, a significant juxtaposition arises between Tamihana and Rupeni; whereas Tamihana is conspicuously absent from his grandson’s prize-giving (70), something that should be cause for great pride and celebration, Rupeni is present at court to support his grandson in a moment of shame and anguish. Notably, there are also several other whānau present in court to support their whanaunga. Himiona notices that ““at each sentencing the defendant bowed his head and nodded as if all this was to be expected. His family group did the same”” (188). Clearly the bowed heads are at least partially because of the sense of weary resignation that these whānau feel about a court system that seems to clinically and mercilessly condemn Māori men. However, the fact that these whānau are present en masse during the court process is significant. Moana Jackson says that a sense of collective responsibility in te ao Māori comes about because ““individuals were inextricably linked by whakapapa to their whanau and iwi, so were their actions the unavoidable responsibility of the wider group”” (28). Rupeni’s presence, along with the rest of the whānau, should be seen



as symbolic of such inextricable whānau connections and a sense of collective responsibility, which juxtaposes him to the self-aggrandizing individualism of Tamihana. While Tamihana does say that “family always comes first” (34), it is very apparent that Tamihana is the family, and the family is Tamihana. If they come first it is only because they have done something that reflects well on him, on his leadership, and on his control of the whānau.

At the end of the court session Himiona is given the chance by his teacher to thank the judge, but instead lambasts the whole process:

“How can I thank you for all the Maori people you have jailed or sentenced for one crime or another? All those names in your book, do you know that I am related to all of them? Or that I know them? Sir, what is more, I know them as good people, not as names that you bang your hammer at or put in prison or make pay huge fines... If I thank you, what am I saying to my relations? My aunts, uncles and cousins who have appeared before you this month? That they deserved it? They didn't... Therefore, Your Honour, I will *not* thank you.” (189).

After bearing witness to Himiona's speech, Rupeni meets him outside, telling him “ka pai tena korero... ka pai. Kia kaha e tama” before embracing him for a hongi (190). The moment is significant not just in the fact that it shows Himiona as closer and more aligned to Rupeni than he is to his own grandfather. His speech also indicates he, like Rupeni, feels the inextricable links of whānau and so is compelled to support them in a way that Tamihana never does. The fact that Rupeni acknowledges and supports him in te reo Māori is meaningful too considering that the extent of Māori spoken to him by his own grandfather seems limited to repetitions of “whakahihi.” The actions of Rupeni up until this point in the novel clearly shows that he is, like Koro in *Mangu*, representative of a mode of Māori masculinity that is accepting of others, heavily interconnected with whānau, and respectful of

women and their mana. The moment with Himiona outside the courthouse suggests something else that this type of masculinity offers; in the face of an oppressive Pākehā power structure that seems to marginalise and punish Māori men (the court), Māori men are connected by something stronger than what divides them. Himiona has gone his whole life believing that the Poatas are unyielding and merciless enemies, and yet he is able to realise a shared connection with Rupeni over the desire to protect and support whānau who are being systemically oppressed and punished by the systems and instruments of colonisation. One might reasonably assert that Tamihana, who is so encumbered by Pākehā hegemony, sexism, and individualism, seems increasingly incapable of supporting his whānau and iwi because he is so driven by his incessant competition and fighting with whānau nearest to his own. By contrast, Rupeni is clearly far less interested and worried about any feud and conflict between the whānau. Instead, he cares more about the bonds of his whānau and community than he does about being the most successful, wealthy, and powerful man in his village. It is worth noting as well that the reason that Himiona is being celebrated and supported by Rupeni at this point is precisely because of his ability to think, reason, and speak (“ka pai tena korero”). He has become so accustomed to his grandfather only celebrating physical prowess (and indeed hearing that Rupeni only cared about the same) that to be celebrated by another Māori man for his intelligence and eloquence rather than his physicality is meaningful. Barlow asserts that true expression of power and identity through comes through language (114), not through shows of physical strength. Just as Koro in *Mangu* proclaims the primacy of tāngata ngākau, Rupeni shows Himiona that the wisdom of his whaikōrero is what deserves his tautoko.

When Tamihana passes away, and the Mahana whānau host the tangihanga at Rongopai marae, Himiona is shocked to see Rupeni arrive with the rest of the Poata whānau. Despite earlier hints that Rupeni may not be as callous and vengeful as first thought, Himiona

is “alert for any offence, any slight against our grandfather” (267). Instead, Rupeni goes on to deliver a eulogy that Zebediah Whatu (one of the Mahanas closest allies) refers to as “the greatest compliment, the greatest homage to Bulibasha” (268):

“I’m glad you’re dead... You hear me? I’m glad you’re lying there in your coffin. The sooner we get you buried the better... All of Hukareka rejoices that you’re dead... I rejoice. Now that you are gone there is space for us. You cast too big a shadow, Bulibasha. Take it with you and leave us the sun.” (267-268)

While Rupeni’s *whaikōrero* is jarring at first, it arguably fits appropriately within the *tikanga* that might be expected at a *tangihanga*. By addressing Tamihana, and beseeching him to “leave us,” it may be that Rupeni is talking to Tamihana in a manner that respects the presence of his *wairua* during the *tangihanga* (Sullivan 56), and perhaps even is part of the process of *tuku i te wairua* (“freeing the spirit”) (53). However, it is still true that Rupeni could follow *tikanga* while also disparaging Tamihana; while *whānau* would conduct *tangihanga* in such a way to protect and uplift the *mana* of the deceased, the deliberate degradation of a deceased person’s *mana* by their adversaries was equally possible (Sullivan 66). As it is, Rupeni’s sentiment that Tamihana is “above us all” (251) and casts “too big a shadow” (268) expresses a degree of awe and respect for Tamihana. Whether this respect is genuinely felt is questionable, but the fact it is professed publicly is what matters. This is in stark contrast to the version of Rupeni that Himiona hears about years earlier who ostensibly vowed “undying vengeance” (96), and who would surely want to use the *tangihanga* as an opportunity for attacking Tamihana further. The charitable way that Rupeni eulogises Tamihana is not *the* way that a Māori man might deal with enmity and the death of a rival. However, colonial narratives about vengeance in Māori society (and indeed most Indigenous societies) have tended to exaggerate the extent to which Māori men would use violence (especially anthropophagy) to dishonour and degrade their enemies. This was done to

“savagise” Māori violence, in contrast to valorised settler violence, (Bevan-Smith 28) and justify paternalistic settler societies (253). Rupeni’s behaviour here is not necessarily the most (or least) ‘proper’ and tika, but it is arguably behaviour least aligned with colonial discourses which expect Māori men to be violently and passionately vengeful.

By the time Rupeni resumes his seat Himiona considers that he is “glowing...like a proud statue” (268). His pride and mana are very much intact in spite of, or because of the fact that he is magnanimous. At first Himiona is not wholly sure how to interpret the eulogy, but Zebediah helps him to understand how the Rupeni’s whaikōrero is not only the greatest homage to Tamihana, but perhaps also the most empowering thing for Rupeni himself. Immediately following the tangihanga Himiona describes the reading of Tamihana’s will, and the notable admission of any inheritance for Joshua, Hūria, or Himiona. Accordingly, one of the two patriarchs is shown at this stage to be forgiving, and is glorious in his forgiveness. The other is shown to hold grudges and contempt towards his own son, even in death, because of perceived slights. Far from being glorious, he dies with “rot inside” (259) and only “the illusion of substance” (263). Tamihana’s death shows that his life of bitter resentment and violent tyranny leaves his legacy diminished and corrupted; by contrast, Rupeni’s grace, restraint, and respect means that his mana is untarnished.

After the tangihanga Ramona tells the whānau about how, unbeknownst to them, she never wished to be with Tamihana, never actually married him, and wishes now to be reunited with her true love, Rupeni. Ramona says that Rupeni wishes to be with her too, as indeed he always did, but that ““he will abide by [the whānau’s] decision”” (278) about whether or not it is to be allowed. Whereas Tamihana always dictated exactly what the whānau could do, Rupeni respects the whānau so much that he would let their perceived embarrassment and shock stop him from being with the women he has loved his whole life. Patriarchal hierarchies and individualistic decision-making were concepts introduced by

Pākehā settlers (Hokowhitu, “Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 195), so the fact that Rupeni does not unilaterally impose his will on the whānau should be seen at least partially as him respecting tikanga in a way that Tamihana never did. Likewise, Rupeni refused Tamihana’s offer to ‘buy’ Ramona from him. Mikaere asserts that pre-colonial Māori narratives stress the sexual autonomy of women as well as their power choose relationships (53); for Rupeni to consent to ‘purchasing’ his beloved, he would clearly be negating any autonomy that Ramona rightly has. When the decision is made that they can be together, Rupeni arrives at the house but waits outside until Ramona comes to him. In contrast to Tamihana, the “fierce man whom she did not know [who] snatch[ed] her away” (285), Rupeni remains quite passive. If an insult against an individual “would automatically be regarded as directed against his or her entire whānau” (Mikaere 55) then Tamihana’s abduction and rape of Ramona was an attack on the mana of Ramona and her whole whānau. By contrast, Rupeni is very cautious not to infringe on the mana of the Mahanas by entering their home, and is respectful of Ramona’s power to come to him if and when she pleases.

These moments are significant for Himiona and his development because it is arguably the point in the novel in which he is most cooperative with Rupeni and most aligned with his worldview. As they are preparing to leave the Mahana house “Rupeni made a sweeping sign for me alone... He bowed low. His eyes were twinkling, as if he knew I had dealt in chicanery” (286). Just as the two share a moment of mutual respect, however, Rupeni calls Himiona the “true heir of the great Bulibasha” (286). It is ironic that the moment in the novel in which Himiona is arguably the most like Rupeni, he is acknowledged as Tamihana’s heir.<sup>14</sup> While Himiona obviously inherits some things from Tamihana, throughout the course of the novel we see him being the best version of himself (which is to say, the version least

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that in the epilogue Himiona says that Rupeni chose a young woman (Poppy) as his own heir who takes leadership of the Poata clan (289), something which would have been unthinkable to Tamihana.

like Tamihana) at times when he is being celebrated and respected by Rupeni (after the rugby game, after the court visit, and now as Ramona is able to leave the Mahana house).

Significantly, these times in which he is celebrated by Rupeni are times in which he most rejects the influences of Pākehā hegemony and patriarchy and that so encumber Tamihana. This is not to say that Himiona maintains any degree of reverence for Rupeni. Indeed, spending all of his life feeling like the Poatas were his nemeses would not be something that was overcome quickly. However, the model of masculinity that Rupeni exemplified seems to have echoes in the actions and decisions that Himiona makes in his later life. When the Poata and Mahana whānau grapple with the decision as to where they bury Ramona, Himiona only steps in when “I saw the family waiting for me to say something” (290). He makes decisions not to impose on others, but because they look to him for guidance. Even as he considers the fact that it was Tamihana who “marked me to be his successor” (289) and thus “put my feet on a difficult path” (291), the way that he copes with difficult decisions within the whānau shows a respect for collectivist decision making and for the mana of others that seems learned far more from Rupeni than from Tamihana himself.

#### *The influence of wāhine toa on Māori men*

During his school prize-giving, from which Tamihana was conspicuously absent, Himiona has a moment of clarity about the influence of mana wāhine not only in his own life, but in the lives of all Māori:

only the women of the homestead were at the break-up – Grandmother, my three aunts, Mum and my sisters. There were very few men at all in the hall, and certainly not Grandfather Tamihana. He said that school prizegivings were like flower shows. Let the women attend; the men had better things to do. I didn’t mind. It was the active

support of women – the showing up, standing up and eventually petitioning for changes in the Maori language and culture – which would, in future, change all our lives. (69-70)

The change that Himiona refers to – revitalisation of culture and language through initiatives such as *kōhanga reo* – suggests the power of Māori women to restore, revitalise, and protect aspects of Māoritanga, which makes it all the more tragic that their voices would be silenced by men like Tamihana. It is in some ways unsurprising that none of the men of the Mahana whānau dare to attend the prize-giving when their own model for masculinity is so contemptuous and scathing towards education and can dismiss it as something that “the women attend.” However, it is significant the strongest support that Himiona receives for his educational success, and evidently for things related to Māoritanga and *te reo Māori*, comes from the women in his life. This does present something of a dilemma for a boy like Himiona, at least initially. If education, culture, and language are coded as feminine, at the same level as flower shows, then how can a young man embrace these things without seeming like he is not a ‘real man’ at all?<sup>15</sup> For Himiona, his response is to embrace education (at the behest of his mother, who is ashamed of her own lack of education), while also embracing his Māoritanga and his own sense of masculinity. To do so, he must resist Tamihana’s edicts about what makes a man, as well as embracing the beliefs and actions of the *wāhine toa* in his life.

Throughout the course of the novel all of the Mahana whānau struggle under the patriarchal tyranny of Tamihana. Himiona, with the naïve audacity of youth, finds himself wondering why no one else rebels against Tamihana like he does, and questions “what was it about Grandfather that made them so respectful and obedient?” (62). It is, however, the

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that in Ihimaera’s own life, it was his own grandfather that put such emphasis on education and pressured him to attend college when he was sceptical (Ihimaera, *Native Son* 13).

wāhine toa of the whānau who are first shown to be resistant to Tamihana's rules and hierarchy. It was only Himiona's great aunt Riripeti who Tamihana acknowledged as being above him (14); a significant reason for his acknowledgement of her power is because she was one of the few who did not convert to Mormonism along with him. Her resistance to his attempts at conversion show that she is not so easily controlled. It also means that she is not subject to the power and authority that he derives from his status within the church. It was Himiona's grandmother Ramona who was the first to defend him against Tamihana's tirades, telling him to "leave the boy alone" (38), and the first to overtly criticize Tamihana, labelling him a "coward" for his hesitance to visit a friend in hospital (64). It is not until years later that the men of the whānau demonstrate the same strength to resist Tamihana after his attempts to dictate who should enter the Golden Fleece finals (227). Himiona begins to appreciate the acts of rebellion and disobedience, both subtle and overt, that wāhine toa commit against Tamihana. These acts of rebellion are significant because they further empower Himiona to reject Tamihana's patriarchal masculinity. Despite this, when Himiona is instructed by Tamihana to do a task in the kitchen he is outraged because it was "as if I was a woman. As if I was useless" (59). Despite being surrounded by wāhine toa, Himiona's first association with women (at least early in the novel) is uselessness. After being raised by a grandfather who justifies violence against his wife by claiming "I own her... She belongs to me" (134), it is not altogether surprising that Himiona absorbs at least some of the misogynistic beliefs and expectations of women's subservience, silence, and uselessness.

However, as he grows older he begins to shake off the influence of his grandfather's misogyny and is able to recognise the mana of the women in his whānau. This is in part because the relationship that his own parents model is so much more equal, respectful, and loving than the relationship between Tamihana and Ramona. Himiona observes at multiple



points throughout the novel the interaction between his parents whenever his father earns any money:

Then he took his first pay packet of the season from the shirt pocket closest to his heart. “He koha o taku aroha ki a koe,” he said to Mum. “Please accept this gift of love.” Trembling, our mother picked it up. “Tena koe mo to awhina aroha ki ahau,” she answered. “I accept this gift of love.” (63)

While it is a relatively minor, perhaps even basic expectation that a couple might share with one another, the manner in which his father shares the money is significant. By gifting all the money to Hūria, Joshua gives a degree of power and independence that would be so completely foreign in Tamihana’s relationship with Ramona. The very structure of the nuclear family modelled by Tamihana is disruptive and dangerous for wāhine because it both enables and manifests the violence against women. As Mikaere asserts, “the forcing of Māori women away from their whānau and into the Pākehā model of the nuclear family left them vulnerable in a host of ways. They became dependent on their husbands as breadwinners, while they became increasingly isolated as caregivers at home” (103). Joshua ritualistically giving the money to his wife is symbolic of his desire to have an equal partner, not a dependent slave. Ramona is even more vulnerable because she is isolated from her own whānau, and any remedies and protection they could provide her. Hayley Marama Cavino suggests that “relational displacement and disconnection” – the isolation of Māori women away from iwi and hapū – provide the “conditions that are the precursor for growing rape and gendered abuses in contemporary whānau life” (102). Indeed, it is the very fact that Tamihana kidnapped Ramona and kept her away from her iwi that allowed him to control her in the way that he did. By contrast, the reciprocity and power sharing between Hūria and Joshua are what allows her the financial freedom to pay off debts at the general store, meaning she “was no longer a slave” (254).

Just as the mothers in *Mangu* and *Tama* model aspects of kaupapa Māori that are otherwise absent from their sons' lives, so too do the actions of the wāhine toa in the Mahana whānau instil an understanding of kaupapa Māori that Tamihana could not, or would not offer Himiona. Perhaps most importantly, the women of the whānau help to show Himiona that flexible gender roles are possible within te ao Māori (even if, as discussed earlier, such flexibility was much more readily available to Pākehā men like Geordie). As Elizabeth Kerekere asserts, the very notion of mana wāhine “challenges the stereotypes of gender roles and what it means to be a ‘real woman’ or a ‘real man’ in Māori society” (18); the deconstruction of rigid binaries provides every person with more freedom of expression, even ‘real men’ like Tamihana. If Himiona continued through life believing that femininity is synonymous with uselessness, sissiness, and silence, he not only condemns the women around him to a life of oppression, but also condemns himself to a life of self-loathing whenever he feels like he is not ‘man enough.’ It also means that, by rejecting the principles of balance, he is pulled further away from mātauranga Māori.

It is in the area of work that women in the whānau most often take on roles as leaders and decision makers, despite Tamihana enforcing strict patriarchal gender roles at home. Although Uncle Hone is ostensibly the leader of the Mahana Four shearing gang, he gives the utmost deference to Aunt Molly, “trotting [to her] as meekly as a lamb” (93) when she calls him. He also tells her “‘I don’t know how you put up with us, year in and year out. Goodness knows we can’t manage without you’” (93). This dynamic is a complete reversal of how the whānau are in the presence of Tamihana: “Subservient. Meek and mild. Everybody stooped, developing sore backs all of a sudden. Deferential” (20). Away from the presence of their patriarch the whānau’s response is not to simply find another; roles and power are shared in a more egalitarian way. Work in the shearing sheds is not gendered to the same extent it is in Tamihana’s house, as Himiona remembers “as a baby, watching from the wool and having

my nappies changed by whoever was nearest” (91). Even Glory, the youngest in the shearing sheds, and a girl, is given her choice of paid position in the gang over Peewee and Mackie because she was deemed to have earned the role (89). It is at these moments, while the whānau are working seamlessly together, that no person is considered useless and power is shared around, that it occurs to Himiona that “shearing kept the Mahana clan together [because it] replicated the dynamics of an iwi. As long as it survived, we needed no other support system” (104). It is not the Pākehā-style patriarchal nuclear family structure enforced by Tamihana that reminds him of iwi dynamics, but rather the mahi tahi of the shearing shed. Because members of an iwi “were all part of the collective; it was therefore collective responsibility to see that their respective roles were valued and protected” (Mikaere 54). What Himiona sees modelled in the shearing shed is a dynamic where women’s leadership, work, and mana is respected, and where a person’s value is not contingent on the extent to which they act like a ‘real man’ or ‘real woman’.

As he begins to reject Tamihana’s misogyny and contempt for women’s work, Himiona becomes proud of the wāhine toa in his life and the support they give one another. During the scrub cutting with Ramona, Hūria, and Glory, Himiona describes how “we established a rhythm which somehow heightened my sense to all that was happening: moments of beauty and humour as we worked together, epiphanies of illumination” (181). When they next see Tamihana he learns that Himiona’s father was at home while the women worked and is scornful of him: ““So your wife has to go out and work for you eh, Joshua?...I suppose Huria wears the pants in the family now?”” (182). By this stage, however, Himiona has had enough experience to know how much better mahi tahi allows himself and the women in his whānau to be. Indeed, it is at this same moment that Joshua “started to rebel” against Tamihana; Himiona and his father both see what collectivism and the “dynamics of

an iwi” can mean to them all, male and female, and it makes Tamihana’s patriarchal authoritarianism increasingly repugnant.

After the death of Tamihana some of the collectivist dynamics that he repressed come to the fore. When Ramona first professes that she wishes to return to Rupeni, “the man whom I have loved all my life” (272), she pledges to only do so if the whānau let her go. In the ensuing deliberations, despite being told by Tamihana that he is to “make the decision” (279), Himiona insists that everyone in the whānau, male and female, has the opportunity to debate and vote on the matter. The fact that Ramona only wishes to leave if she has the permission of the whānau, and the fact that Himiona tries to build consensus despite being told that he is to make the decision are yet more signs of how the whānau comes to terms with collectivist life in the absence of their patriarch. Whereas Tamihana had been the one to dictate how and when marriages would take place (even demanding years of work from Pani in exchange for Miriam’s hand in marriage [195]), the whānau revert to shared decision-making regarding Ramona and her plea to join Rupeni. In te ao Māori the fact that the “wider community had both a stake and a say in whether the marriage would take place... illustrates the relational nature of individual rights in the context of the rights of the collective” (Jones 130). The Mahanas spent their lives being conditioned to believe that the mana of Tamihana was equivalent to the mana of the whole whānau, and that the mana of others in the whānau only mattered to the extent that it affected him. They struggle to put aside feelings about how his mana would have been impacted if Ramona was to leave, but seemingly find it easy to disregard how the mana of Ramona was affected by Tamihana raping her and attempting to sell her to Rupeni because, as Maaka points out, “that was *then*” (278). Eventually Himiona feels compelled to secretly change the result of the vote to let Ramona leave, but this is only after it becomes apparent that the whānau are still encumbered by the need to protect Tamihana’s legacy at any cost. In the face of this, changing the vote is the only way Himiona

can see of giving Ramona “a fair chance” (281). He even considers that rigging the vote meant that “I could play people as if they were toys. There was not so much difference, after all, between me and my grandfather, the Bulibasha” (283). The difference is, of course, that whereas everything that Tamihana ever did was so bolster his own reputation, legacy, and mana, Himiona only did what he did because he saw the need for the whānau to support Ramona and to remedy the many injuries and insults to her mana committed by Tamihana.

*Different visions of sexuality and masculinity.*

While Himiona worries that he is not so different to his grandfather, it is clear he will never be as similar to Tamihana as his cousin Mohi is. Mohi is strong, athletic, and deferential to authority, all the things that Tamihana sees as making a useful, real man. However his most notable quality, at least in Himiona’s mind, appears to be his virility and sexuality; he is described by at various points as the “Stud Who Walks” (16) and “the sex machine” (255). Himiona admits to being envious of Mohi and his “easy familiarity” with Tamihana (37), and he no doubt looks to him as the model of the sort of man he needs to be to earn Tamihana’s approval. While he probably realises that he will never be as strong and athletic as Mohi, and he certainly does not want to be as deferential as him, Himiona seems desperate to prove himself as heterosexually virile as his cousin; it is the only thing within his control that might impress Tamihana. Even then, his attempts to prove himself seem self-sabotaging; the only girl that he seems to have any specific desire for is Polly, Rupeni’s granddaughter, which means she is off-limits unless he wishes to incur the wrath of Tamihana. When he eventually finds himself near Polly his efforts to woo her are desperate and clumsy: “Full of bravery I pulled her to me and kissed her... She pushed me away and slapped me hard” (229). His attempt at romancing Polly, while poor, seems reminiscent of

the way that his father embraced his mother when she returned from days of scrub cutting. Himiona describes how “he pulled her from her horse. He kissed her with so much passion that she blushed” (182). It may well be that Himiona’s attempted kiss was his effort to emulate the sexuality and romance modelled by the men around him, but in his eager desperation fails to find a willing partner.

In fact, with the notable exception of Ramona who is abducted and held against her will by Tamihana, *Bulibasha* often shows women in control of romantic and sexual encounters. Haromi at one point lets one date go (quite literally dropping him to the ground) when a new group of admirers arrive to marvel at her new dress (120), and later rejects another date with a slap because he was only “after one thing” (218). Haromi’s mother, Sarah, “kick[ed] Uncle Jack out of her bed” (62) while still staying married to him (the implication seems to be that this was caused by her embarrassment and dissatisfaction with his drinking, something prohibited by the church). Rupeni, despite his love and longing for Ramona, waited until she contacted him after the death of Tamihana (227) and waited outside her house until she was ready to come and embrace him (285). It seems in many ways that Māori women within the novel (Haromi, Poppy, Hūria, Sarah) are self-empowered in many aspects of their lives, including sexuality and romance. Mikaere discusses how pre-colonial Māori stories showed that Māori women had “a deep-rooted awareness of their sexual strength and an assumption that they were certainly no less, and possibly more, powerful than the male objects of their desire” (53). By contrast, Himiona notices that the story of Tamihana snatching up and ‘rescuing’ Ramona on her wedding day has a distinct similarity to the Scottish tale of Lochinvar:

Lochinvar, a young Scottish stud, was in love with Ellen, a girl forced to marry another man. So what did Lochinvar do? He rode his horse to the wedding and

snatched her up from the altar and they escaped to live happily ever after. It was the same story as Grandmother Ramona's abduction on her wedding day (142).

After the arrival of Pākehā settlers and the imposition of British gender norms, Māori women lost “control of their own bodies and sexuality [as they] were pushed into the domestic/private domain” (Kerekere 16). Accordingly, the sexuality modelled by Tamihana when he says that “‘Whenever I want her [Ramona] I will have her. That’s the law. She belongs to me’” (134), should be seen as something wholly unaccepted in te ao Māori. Indeed, when Tamihana talks about the “law” in the quote above he is not wrong in the sense that spousal rape was only made illegal in New Zealand in 1983, long after the events of the book. It is interesting to note, however, that he relies on laws that have come from British norms and values rather than tikanga Māori.

In a similar way, the homophobia and heteronormativity which are rampant throughout the novel should be seen as having their foundations in British cultural norms and laws. According to Elizabeth Kerekere:

When Aotearoa inherited the British legal system in 1858, Māori inherited the sexism and homophobia that came with it. The identity terms of ‘heterosexual’ (normal) and ‘homosexual’ (abnormal/illegal) were introduced in the late 1880s. This only served to pathologise... something which had been an accepted part of traditional Māori society. (14)

While there have been Pākehā writers who deny the existence or acceptance of homosexuality or gender non-conformity in pre-colonial Māori society (Gluckman), such claims were based on “the dearth of reports from British colonising missionaries, and the omission of such terms from early editions of nineteenth century missionary dictionaries of te reo” (121). In the same way that settlers had reconstructed Māori narratives to impose British

gender norms on Māori society, so too did they omit and ignore accounts of homosexuality and takatāpui in an attempt to repress them. However, just as Māori men had gained acceptance and privilege in colonial society by accepting British gender roles, so too might they gain acceptance and privilege by accepting a pathologized view of takatāpui. Given enough time, “the power of the dominant discourse [is able] to create the reality it represents” (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 262), meaning settler ideas about Māori sexuality could become, for many Māori, accepted truths. For this reason, when that Himiona points out that any “inference to homosexuality was anathema to Maori men” (167), he is not altogether wrong, but it does need to be seen in the context of a society that had absorbed British laws and Christian morals regarding homosexuality and gender non-conformity. Interestingly, the only other time in the novel that something is described as anathema is when Himiona describes alcohol and tobacco as anathema to the church. However, several upstanding Mormon characters, including Mohi and Jack, are drinkers. Himiona wonders whether Tamihana’s professions of shock and outrage about drinking is because he is “concerned only for his own reputation” (256). It is interesting that prohibitions against both homosexuality and alcohol come from Pākehā authorities (British legal code and Mormon doctrine). It is also interesting that both drinking and homosexuality no doubt occurred within the community but that these things were tacitly accepted so long as people were discreet enough to not embarrass someone else’s reputation. Jack and Mohi’s drinking was only problematic, for example, when people saw Jack coming out of the pub (72), or when Mohi was described in the newspaper as having been drinking before driving (256).

None of this negates the fact that homophobia, whatever the origin or cause, would be incredibly destructive and hurtful to takatāpui. When Himiona describes the homophobic abuse directed at his takatāpui cousins (Chantelle, Cindy, and Donna) by Tamihana he notes that “Maori homophobia had always been the worst part of their lives” (211). Not only do



they have to deal with the same racism that other Māori do, and the gender norms that are so much more restrictive for Māori than they are for Pākehā (Hokowhitu, “Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism”), but they then also have to deal with their own whānau oppressing them further. The acceptance and inclusiveness Himiona shows towards Chantelle, Cindy, and Donna indicates that he in no way shares the view of homosexuality as anathema. At the most basic level it suggests that Himiona, as someone who is “treated like shit” because he is different (49), feels a sense of solidarity with others who don’t fit into heteronormative gender roles. For Himiona, who was “waywar[d]” (289) from the church, and who feels so disturbed by what he sees in the Pākehā-ruled legal system (188), his acceptance of his cousins may also be seen on some level as a tacit rejection of Mormon church doctrine and Pākehā laws. His need to accept and love whānau, no matter their gender or sexuality, is far greater than his need to accept Pākehā norms and morals regarding takatāpui. He sees that upholding tikanga for the betterment of his whānau will sometimes (or often) mean working against and overcoming unjust rules and systems in a Pākehā dominated world.

*Sports, competitions, and tournaments.*

Despite the fact that Himiona helps to provide a moment of acceptance and inclusiveness for his takatāpui cousins, the moment arguably only happens because of their successes and achievements in the sporting arena. Whereas the crowd watching the “Waituhi Rebels” play hockey initially heckle and laugh at Donna, Chantelle, and Cindy (213), the mood soon turns to “admiration” when the three of them lead a spirited fightback to save the team from defeat (215). Donna in particular earns the approval of the whole crowd after she defends herself from Alexander Poata’s attack with a knee to the groin: “it was the kind of strength that people on the sidelines understood – even Grandfather Tamihana” (214). The

mood of the scene is jubilant; Himiona and all the other ‘rebels’ in the community have not only found a way to stand proud but also to be celebrated and admired for their success. However, there is something insidious about the fact that they are only able to receive this praise and admiration by making a display of their physicality, strength, and aggression on the hockey field. This is especially true considering the fact that the Waituhi Rebels team is made up exclusively of men who have, in various ways, been at the bottom of their respective social hierarchies (Himiona, Andrew, Pani, and Joshua), and women who have been excluded from the women’s teams because they are not biological females (Cindy, Chantelle, and Donna). The fact that they can only prove themselves worthy of admiration in this way speaks volumes about the limited opportunities for success available to young Māori in this community, but also that joining together in a show of mahi tahi and solidarity can help them overcome these limited opportunities. In the same way that dominant narratives asserted that Māori men were most successful in physical roles such as farmers or soldiers, so too did they assert that Māori men were naturally adept at physical sports. For many Māori men “sport was one of the few spheres where [they] could achieve success and compete with Pākehā men on an ‘even playing field’ and, accordingly, could gain mana in the Pākehā world” (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 260). However, Hokowhitu labels this an example of “positive racism” because it was yet another way to “channel tāne into the physical realm” (262). While Cindy, Chantelle, and Donna might receive praise and admiration for their success in the sporting arena, the subtext is that they belong in men’s spaces despite being trans women. Even then their success is contingent on them being strong, physical, and aggressive. Such a view means that the only time an individual within the community might be supported to succeed is in the sporting arena, but also that the only people that are role models of success will be sportspeople; those, like Himiona, who are capable in other spheres are dismissed and ignored.

Himiona wonders, however, if men like Apirana Ngata organised tournaments for reasons other than celebrating feats of athleticism:

Sport was just [Ngata's] excuse to get Maori together. Once that happened, the protocols of ceremonial gatherings took place and, before you knew it, a hui was happening... the old people talked and talked and talked... They would lie in the meeting house way after everyone else was asleep, discussing and debating matters affecting the history of the Maori. (204)

It is certainly the case that behind the four tournaments represented in *Bulibasha* (rugby, hockey, Golden Fleece, and kapa haka) other issues are at play, issues that run deeper than simply satiating the “ancient instinct for battle” (Fox, *The Ship of Dreams* 157). During the Golden Fleece tournament special attention is paid by the media and judges to the fact that the Mahana four gang is the only group in the tournament made up solely of family members. To Himiona the tournament seems to be about whānau bonds and mahi tahi more than it is about winning and proving their strength as shearers. As Mahana four finish their work during the final of the competition, convinced they have lost, he is overwhelmed: “We were all sweating and crying like mad and couldn't tell what was sweat and what was tear. Then we just held each other so tightly so that no cold wind could come between us. Ever” (248). During the rugby tournament Himiona sneaks on the field to replace an ill player despite being woefully outmatched by the older and bigger opposition. His willingness to help the whānau in their time of need, even when he seemed much too young and small to be of any value, earns him recognition from his supposed enemy, Rupeni, as well as the support of his father in the face of Tamihana's scorn. Despite having almost no chance of earning his own glory on the pitch, Himiona joins the game to prove that he would do anything for his whānau no matter the risk to his own pride and safety – exactly the opposite of what Tamihana would

do. At the end of the kapa haka tournament the family take part in Himiona is again overwhelmed:

This was a moment that the Maori heart lived for – when music, words and action blended in perfection and brought the past surging like a sea into the present. My heart caught in my throat in recognition and thankfulness that I owed my life to those intrepid vikings [sic] of the South Pacific. (160-161)

During all of the tournaments in the novel *Himiona* and the rest of the whānau seem far less preoccupied than Tamihana with winning and glory, and instead use the events as ‘an excuse to get together’. What is at stake is supporting and uplifting whānau, celebrating one another’s strengths, and even building bonds with supposed enemies such as Rupeni. However, despite the kapa haka performance being “a moment that the Maori heart lived for”, it is the competition Tamihana and the men of the whānau seem to be least involved with or concerned about. Sarah is the one that takes charge of the whānau, Ruth organises new costumes, and seemingly the only man involved as more than just a participant is Himona who ‘composes’ the music for their performance (actually just the tune of ‘See You Later Alligator’). It is interesting that the time when “Grandfather Tamihana attains apotheosis” (251) is during a celebration of an industry that, according to the judge of the competition, marks the “beginning of Pakeha history” in New Zealand (248). Meanwhile, the event that the “Maori heart lives for” seems to be coded as something distinctly feminine. Even if the men of the whānau are active participants there appears to be none of the prestige and opportunities for success in kapa haka as there are in rugby, hockey, and shearing. Sport may be just an excuse to get Māori together, but if Māori men are only able to achieve success in the spheres of physicality and athleticism, insidious colonial stereotypes about Māori potential will remain. As Brendan Hokowhitu asserts, “it is through Māori men’s own culture that they will find what it truly means to be a Māori man, freed of the dominant

construct, and permeated instead with humility, intelligence, creativity, love, and compassion” (“Tackling Māori Masculinity” 277). Indeed, the very existence of this novel helps to shift the narrative away from such restrictive views on Māori men’s potential. Ihimaera’s writing, and indeed Stewart and Hereaka’s writing also, is transgressive because they are using a Pākehā medium (novels and written stories) to combat the tropes that have been inflicted on Māori men for centuries. These stories are both commentary on the intelligence, creativity, and love of Māori male characters, and also the very evidence itself of these same traits put into practice as writing.

## Chapter Three: Endurance of Māori Masculinity in Pākehā Cities in Whiti

### Hereaka's *Bugs*

*Bugs* presents a vision of a young Māori man who has starkly different opportunities to express his masculinity than the characters discussed earlier, but who is located within a continuation of the same pressures that afflicted the boys in those twentieth-century settings. An environment that is completely dominated by Pākehā power and influence inevitably compels boys to accept dominant narratives about masculinity, or to understand one's own masculinity as a rejection of these narratives. This chapter argues that rejecting these dominant narratives, without a clear sense of alternatives, does not allow for one to confidently understand or assert one's own sense of masculinity. I suggest that the character of Jez both longs for a Māori space where he can be confident in his own sense of masculinity as a Māori man, but simultaneously struggles with feeling inauthentic because such spaces are not wholly familiar to him. A section of the chapter looks at the challenges that Jez faces as a Māori boy living in an urban environment that does not give him the same connection to whānau and iwi support networks as other boys discussed in this thesis. I argue that the homogeneity of Jez's city is one of the most disruptive influences on his effort to express his masculinity as a Māori man, and that he feels he has no option but to flee the city. The chapter goes on to examine how Jez finds his place in te ao Māori through his art, something he was previously scorned for by his teachers and peers. Unlike the other texts in this thesis, *Bugs* is focalised through the perspective of a female character. A final section looks at how Māori masculinity is seen and understood through the gaze of a Māori woman, and also how Jez understands himself as a result of this perspective.

*The dominance of Pākehā masculinity in non-Māori spaces*

In the stories of Stewart and Ihimaera, both set in the mid-twentieth century when urbanisation had not yet had such an acute impact on traditional Māori communities and whānau networks, we are shown characters who are encumbered by the effects of Pākehā hegemony and masculinity. However, these characters are able to find or make spaces for themselves away from these encumbrances so that they can develop their own sense of Māori masculinity. *Bugs* is set in an unnamed urban area<sup>16</sup> during the early twenty-first century, a time when the majority of Māori lived in urban areas and one in six had lost connection with or knowledge of their iwi (Meredith). The diffusion of Māori throughout Pākehā-dominated urban environments made it more difficult to maintain connections to mātauranga Māori and to avoid the encumbrances of Pākehā masculinity. Because of this, the character of Jez lives a markedly different life than Tama or Himiona. While his mother and best friend are Māori, his connection to te ao Māori is tenuous. As well, unlike the other boys discussed in this thesis, the Māori women who are most significant in Jez's development (Bugs and her grandmother) are not from his whānau. This makes Jez unique in terms of the characters this thesis considers because, while he receives significant guidance and instruction from the Māori women in his life, this guidance does not come from a mother or grandmother; he perhaps lacks a sense of unconditional and ubiquitous maternal support that the other boys receive. Jez seemingly receives little attention and guidance from his mother, and indeed it appears to be he who acts as the guardian and parent figure in their home. Bugs thinks that one of the only things keeping Jez around their hometown is because "he thinks that if he can get a job then his mum won't need those guys any more, that he will be enough. But he could be more than that" (54). Despite wanting to do anything he can to support his mother, even if it means dropping out of school to start earning money as soon as he can, it does not appear

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<sup>16</sup> The names of landmarks in the town would suggest the setting is Taupō.

that Jez receives a great deal of support in return. Instead, it is Bugs, Nikki (Bugs' mother), and Bugs' grandmother who seem to have given Jez the most support from a young age. This support, while welcome, is not constant; Jez is disempowered and alienated by the lack of a strong whānau support network.

Whereas Tama, Boy, Himiona, and Jez all have avenues where they are able to express themselves as Māori boys, it is arguably Jez who is least able to express himself and find success as a Māori boy. Pākehā power structures are so ubiquitous in his life that almost every choice he does (or does not) have is dictated by the expectations that his school, teachers, and wider society put on him. At a Māori achievement seminar at school Jez, along with the other Māori students, is told that “most of us will fail” (22). The only avenue for success that is seemingly open to Jez is on the rugby field; he is yet another victim of the myth that Māori men's qualities mean they are only fit to succeed in the sporting arena (Hokowhitu, “Tackling Māori Masculinity” 269). He is enthusiastic about drawing and shows strong artistic abilities, but he is barred from taking art in his senior year at school because he had not taken it during his first year at school (97). He is shamed for the things he is not good at, barred from the things that he is, and left to fill the role that has been expected of generations of Māori men before him as physically gifted but intellectually lacking. Because of this, he is left to tell Bugs that:

“We don't need to [talk], because here's how it goes. I say that I want to leave school, you rabbit on about choices and opportunities, but you just don't see that there are none. Not for me. Not now... I was in the Second XV, B. That was never my ticket out... It's a waste of time; there's nothing there for me... So I stay at school for another year. Then what? I follow you to uni?” (135)



Jeze is left feeling not just that the options he has are undesirable, but that there simply are not realistic alternatives offered to him.

In many ways, the situation that Jez finds himself in is representative of a society where colonisation, Pākehā hegemony, and cultural assimilation have been able to marginalise te ao Māori to the point that it is nearing invisibility. Chadwick Allen suggests that in the twentieth century, the “overwhelming majority” of Māori stories “simultaneously assert both the continuing viability of the rural Maori land base to support ‘traditional’ Maori culture and the real possibility of a successful return to that land base should individuals not succeed in the urban world” (101-102). While this is certainly true in *Tama and Other Stories* and *Bulibasha*, *Bugs* shows a young man who is not succeeding in the urban world (at least not in any way that he is satisfied with) and who seemingly lacks any ‘Māori land base’ that he can return to. His opportunities for success are constrained almost entirely by Pākehā expectations about what sort of man he is and can be.

Such expectations are not only limited to areas where it is perceived that he can be successful, such as rugby. There is also the weight of expectation on Jez about what sort of man he will be if he is a failure. If he succeeds, he succeeds in areas that Pākehā discourses say are right for him; if he ‘fails,’ it is in ways that are seemingly predetermined by that fact that he is a Māori boy in a Pākehā-dominated society. Bugs is warned by her teacher not to “get mixed up with bad boys” (202) which leads her to realize that Jez must feel like “he’s a mistake that they’ve given up on” (203). This is despite the fact that Jez by all accounts seems more chivalrous, thoughtful, and creative than other boys at school who spend their time “aping it up on the couches, flinging the cushions around the room like shit” (201). Bugs is careful to avoid carrying or wearing blue or red bandanas, “no gang colours, ‘cos I know Jez is sensitive about that” (7), and she sardonically notes that they need to be careful about how they walk around town because a “sixteen-year-old Māori running in this neighborhood?

Probably not out for a jog” (177). The cumulative effect is that Jez is made to feel that, no matter what he does, he will always be seen by some as a potential gang member, a neighborhood-walker of dubious intent, or just simply a ‘bad boy.’ Just like Tama in *Mangu*, Jez is made to feel that Pākehā masculinity is defined by its normativity but also its exclusivity; his masculinity and character will always be judged in opposition to the Pākehā boys and men around him. Even if he was to aspire to reach the norm of Pākehā masculinity, it will always be unachievable for him.

It is important to note that in the novel only two men (Jez and Bugs’ uncle) are confirmed as being Māori; while other characters may also be Māori men, they are not referred to as such. Because of this, as this chapter will discuss, there are few characteristics and actions of men in the novel that might said to be coded as Māori masculinity. Apart from Bugs’ uncle, Jez only has any prolonged interaction with two other men in the novel: Mr Dumble, his life skills teacher; and Havoc, his mother’s on-and-off partner. Mr Dumble’s place in the novel is defined by the fact that he mocks Jez publicly for the only thing that he seems to have passion for - his artwork (71). This scene is representative of Jez’s experience in the education system generally; it also speaks to the British cultural norms inherited by New Zealanders whereby “banter” and “underpoliteness” might be seen as “establishing or maintaining a bond of familiarity” (Leech 216-218). Whereas “the rest of the cunts in here [the classroom] laugh and whoop and clap” (71), Jez is crushed. Bugs supposes that “shame is what this school runs on,” but for some Māori – like Jez – intense feelings of whakamā can lead to “withdrawal from the situation because of the loss of mana, including the loss of personal agency and power, running away from the situation, or anger” (Kidd et al 137). Banter might be a distinctly British way of maintaining bonds between men, but for Jez, who already feels marginalised, and who clearly feels no love and warmth from the same teachers that mock him, such ‘underpoliteness’ leaves him feeling “not welcome day after day” (203).

The masculinity portrayed by Havoc is starkly different to that which is represented by Dumble, but is equally repellent to Jez. Havoc is portrayed as a “wannabe gangsta [sic]” (232) and small-time drug dealer. It has been asserted that films like *Once Were Warriors* portray Māori gangs “very positively” (McDonnell 7) as “an idealised modern-day warrior group” (8), but there is nothing at all about Havoc and his lackeys that is coded as Māori or aligned with Māoritanga. While *Bulibasha*’s Himiona sees the dynamics of the iwi replicated in the shearing gang, this is unsurprising because the shearing gang is operated by the whānau who cooperate with and support one another; Havoc’s “wannabe” gang in *Bugs* is not this. It seems those who subscribe to the notion that there is something inherently warrior-like about Māori men are also keen to see gangs coded as Māori or representative of kaupapa Māori.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the loss of traditional whānau networks and support structures, economic inequality, and the influence of portrayals of gang culture in American media are the more likely reasons for Māori to turn to gangs (Bellamy). Whatever the rationale that Havoc and his friends have for acting like gangsters, it does not appear to be because they get the sense of support and cooperation that Himiona gets from the whānau shearing gang. When Jez tricks Havoc by tattooing the word ‘cock’ in enormous letters across his back, Havoc’s mates only “crack up” and “giv[e] him shit” (229). If it was not clear to him before, then Jez can see that Havoc and his friends are just as cruelly mocking as Dumble and the boys at school.

Jez, who so desperately needs to be supported and believed in, is presented with two visions of Pākehā masculinity: Dumble, who symbolises the authorities that will tolerate Jez if he keeps his head down and does the jobs he is given, and who coldly mock and attack him if he does not; and Havoc, whose only purpose in life seems to be the hedonistic pursuit of

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<sup>18</sup> This is not to suggest that there are not gangs who adopt and promote a kaupapa Māori approach to the issues affecting their members (Bradley). Rather, it is simply to say that the gang in *Bugs* (and arguably the gang in *Once Were Warriors*) is not coded as being representative of ‘traditional’ Māori, and that it is unhelpful to associate the violence of gang members with ‘traditional’ Māori warrior-masculinity.

drugs and alcohol, and whose relationship with those around him is volatile and violent. Both are repugnant to Jez, and so it is natural that he seeks an alternative pathway. However, it is far less easy for Jez to orientate himself within te ao Māori than it is for Tama, Boy, or Himiona; like these other boys he sees visions of masculinity that are repellent, but alternative models are not immediately obvious to him.

*Expressions of identity and masculinity in different spaces*

When a subjugated man is surrounded by standards and norms of masculinity that are unattainable, with no obvious alternatives, then there seem to be only two possible outcomes. He might spend his life trying to accomplish a Sisyphean task by trying to be what the dominant narratives say he is not, or else he might try to construct his own individual sense of masculine identity based on who he thinks he can or ought to be. Himiona, Tama, and Boy all have the support of a koro, koroua, or kaumātua in their community who help them to feel more secure in their sense of Māori masculinity. However, part of this sense of security and identity comes about because these kaiārahi show the boys that there is not just one way to express Māori masculinity. The elder men all help the boys to see that they can maintain their sense of individuality and still be accepted and immersed in te ao Māori (in comparison to the stifling sense of conformity and repression they see in Pākehā masculine norms). Because of this, they are all secure in themselves as individuals and as Māori men. Without the same access to mātauranga Māori as Tama, Boy, or Himiona, or clear models of non-Pākehā masculinity to look up to, Jez is faced with something of a crisis about who he wants to be. He clearly is proud of being Māori and wants to assert his Māoritanga, but without the same level of support and education in te ao Māori that Tama has, Jez is faced with feelings of expressing himself inauthentically, and feelings about whether or not he is ‘pretending’ to be

something he is not. This is manifested in the novel during moments when Jez is uncomfortable seeming like he is being insincere or imitative. Early in the novel Bugs recounts the time when she and Jez were in trouble with her uncle for play-kissing as part of a dress-up game:

But no matter what Uncle said, no matter how wild he got – Jez just took it. Stood there like those soldiers on TV man, let Uncle yell and yell and just stood there. That’s what Jez is like – solid. Finally Uncle says *Get out of here, both of you*, and Jez takes off. Really sprinting. I run after him but I’m slowed down by the dress – I have to pick up the skirt in big bunches to free my legs. I catch up to Jez and he’s already shed his Prince gear. All he says to me is: *Let’s not pretend any more, Bugs*. (4, italics in the original)

Many years later when Bugs suggests dressing up for Halloween, Jez again expresses his disdain for dressing up and “pretending”: “‘C’mon, it’s a chance to be anyone else, anything, for a night.’ *I catch up to Jez and he’s already shed his Prince gear...* ‘I don’t pretend to be anything I’m not’” (204, italics in the original). Jez feels chastised after the reprimand from Bugs’ uncle and clearly has hesitations about dressing up and role-playing afterwards.

However, part of his reaction also demonstrates his strong desire to feel and to be seen as authentic and sincere. Jez, like so many young people of his age, may not have a clear sense of identity and selfhood but the options he has seem especially limiting. Tamara Qumseya, in her research about cultural identity negotiation of minority youth, notes that some Indigenous young people “emphasised that expressing their indigenous culture consistently was important for their core identity coherence” with one subject of her study going on to say:

“One must know his origin and who he is and to show people who he is. If I were unsure who I am at home, I would be unsure of whom I am outside. My personal and

psychological uncertainty would show to others. .... If I ... acted like I were someone else, then my mind would stay preoccupied in my actions, and not with the energy I have to put into my future or relationships or anything else.” (125)

Jez’s reaction to Bugs’ seemingly innocuous dress-up suggestion at Halloween may well be linked to a much deeper sense of frustration and exhaustion that comes from feeling like he is acting like someone else throughout the rest of his life. This is not to suggest that Jez does not identify as or feel Māori, but simply that he is not safe or able to express himself as such in majority Pākehā contexts, including at school. Bugs notes that “high school is a classic example of a dystopia... Conformity... Restricted freedoms... Constant surveillance... Censorship...” (19), however the standard to which Māori youth are expected to conform is heavily influenced by the majority Pākehā culture in school. To varying degrees both Bugs and Jez need to discard parts of their own identity at the gates of the school so that they conform, but only Bugs is able to attain any clear sense of success and acceptance at school after doing so. For the young people in Qumseya’s study, “[identity] fragmentation could be avoided if a young person retained a coherent internal identity... and was clear about why they chose to alternate to achieve their goals. Even so, they still experienced distress due to discriminatory contexts and devaluing of the indigenous culture” (129). Bugs can more easily see the utility of conformity (notwithstanding the stress and feelings of cultural devaluation it would cause) because she is successful in the school environment; Jez has no such feelings of success, but all the same negative associations remain.

Early in the novel *Bugs*, while remembering the dress-up games that she and Jez used to play, thinks that “I reckon Jez loved playing dress-ups more than me; he liked to be someone else for a while” (3). If this was the case when they were younger, what changed by the time they are at high school? Arguably, the novelty of being ‘someone else’ would be diminished if one felt the need to do so wherever they went. At school Jez must hide his art

lest he is mocked by teachers and peers. In public he has a calm and laidback demeanour (“Even without music on he moves around the world with a heavy bass line and a Jamaican lilt – Jez is island time personified” [32]) to the point that Bugs only ever sees unguarded anger and sadness in the faces of Jez’s self-portraits (“It’s strange to see Jez angry; I think that’s the only record of it. But it’s just art” [54]). Around Havoc and his friends Jez has to be civil and peaceable while absorbing their mocking and teasing (56), at the same time he is also keeping himself on alert to protect his mother (52) and Bugs and Charmaine (76) from Havoc’s violent outbursts. At the end of the novel Bugs is unsurprised at the fact that Jez would want to leave both school and their hometown behind, because “of course he wants to walk away from this; if you’re not welcome day after day, why would you stay?” (203). This feeling of being unwelcome is no doubt at least partially due to the fact he has to act like ‘someone else’ wherever he goes; he does not feel welcome to be his authentic self.

There are arguably two contexts in which Jez feels most comfortable and accepted: while he is alone with Bugs and Charmaine, and while he is with Bugs’ whānau. Bugs and Charmaine are positive regarding his artistic skills, encourage him to continue at school, and want him to aim high in his career plans; they are uplifting, supportive, and have high aspirations of what he can achieve. However, their positivity about his potential contrasts with the messaging he receives from every other part of society; he might be accepted for who he is with them, but this sphere of acceptance is small.

When Jez is with Bugs’ whānau one night for dinner, her grandmother tells him about the meaning of his name in Māori:

“Muka... It’s the stuff in flax. If you peel away the outside, it’s what’s inside. They use it for weaving because it’s strong. It binds things together. It’s what Maui’s ropes were made of when he fished up the North Island and when he tamed the sun... it

wasn't just stories; it made me feel... she said I carry it in here." He touches his heart.

"The muka, eh?... I'm telling it wrong. I don't know, eh?" (119-120)

The effect on Jez is profound. Bugs notices that before speaking with her grandmother Jez was "tense, his hands wadding into fists" (116), but afterwards he was "opening and closing his fingers slowly like unfurling leaves" (117-118), significant not least of all because Jez was earlier anxious about having dainty, "girly" hands (68). Not only is he less anxious and self-conscious, but his mannerisms even strike Bugs as more organic and natural before she even learns about the connotations of his name. For Jez, the explanation of his name gives him a signal to think about the connection between his name and his own positive traits (strength, ability to unify and connect), while also giving him a connection to a world of stories, culture, and history that was otherwise missing or tenuous. Learning about the history and stories attached a name is not just important to Jez on an individual level, but because of the shared traditions and wisdom it opens up:

Our pūrākau, alongside our many other kinds of narratives such as proverbs, traditional chants, and other oral traditions, provide directives for our behaviour and help to guide us in our present context and beyond... Pūrākau represent an important tool of decolonization, which enable the use of our creation stories as important sources of Māori knowledge. Integral to the unravelling of colonization is our own ancestral wisdom, which can only be found in our stories (in their many forms).  
(Seed-Pihama 112).

Whereas the support and inclusiveness offered by Bugs and Charmaine might provide him with a group of two where he can feel like his identity is respected, the idea of his name and the stories attached to it lets him feel connected to an entire world where his identity could be respected and his strengths acknowledged. It situates him in a world and tradition where he



feels like he makes sense in a way he has not felt before. His name, and the connotations attached to it, might give him the pressure of something to live up and aspire to, but that is clearly better than the alternative. Qumseya found in her research that “cultural identity continuity (knowing who one is in oneself, and feeling safe to express that in majority contexts) was an essential foundation of wellbeing outcomes among indigenous peoples” (114); beginning to learn about his name and the pūrākau attached to it leaves Jez with an ineffable feeling, one no doubt connected to this knowledge about himself that he has been unable or unwilling to express, especially in majority Pākehā spaces. However, a key part of Qumseya’s claim is that Indigenous people must feel safe to express their identity in majority spaces if they are to realise such wellbeing outcomes (an issue especially pertinent to Jez who, unlike other characters discussed earlier, lives his whole life in Pākehā-dominated environments). At this early stage of his cultural awakening Jez is still reticent about expressing himself to Bugs, much less in a more public setting. When Bugs first asks him about the meaning of his name all he initially says is ““It’s what it is”” (119). It is one thing to ‘know who one is in oneself,’ but quite another to have the space and comfort to express that publicly. It is easy to see how this sense of reticence about expressing one’s own culture may come from a fear of seeming like an imposter to one’s own people for not knowing enough, or appearing too zealous about one’s culture in majority contexts (or, as Bugs says, not seeming like a “born again Māori or anything” [1]). In turn, aspects of oneself interconnected with culture, like masculinity, may well be muted in Pākehā-dominated spaces, and many Pākehā will readily fill these silences with their own interpretations about Māori masculinity.

Significantly, Jez’s demeanour after he has this conversation with Bugs’ grandmother is in stark contrast to how he is in so many other spaces. He seems more vulnerable and less stoic, he is sincere and does not try to make a joke of things (as he does at other times), and he is less self-conscious about things that might typically be coded by Pākehā masculinity as

effeminate like his delicate hands or emotional openness. It is significant that at this moment when he is in Māori space talking about his place within te ao Māori, he seems the least preoccupied with putting up a front of staunch and stoic masculinity. This is in stark contrast to the moments that Jez is around Havoc and his friends, or even at school, where his masculinity and sexuality are called into question. Elizabeth Kerekere asserts that the rejection of gender-policing is important not only because it allows one to be who one truly is, but also because it can allow for a restoration of lost mana (18). The sense of self-assuredness that he gains corresponds to a subtle dismissal of the modes of masculinity that he has, up until this point, felt the need to express at school, in public, and at home in front of Havoc. Even though this moment is not a point in which Jez is trading one mode of masculinity for another per se, the sense of connection to te ao Māori and the confidence that it brings allows Jez to express his sense of masculinity and self without regard for the pressures that he feels in other parts of his life.

*Toi Māori, toi moko, and kirituhi*

The way Jez expresses himself most obviously throughout the novel is through his art and design, although the form that this takes changes significantly. During his time at school he is made to feel like his art is something to be ashamed of:

“I think, Mr Muka,” Mr Dumble says, at the board now, hanging up Jez’s sketch, “That you ought to have an exhibition, yes? So the rest of the school can appreciate your work, yes?” And Mr Dumble stands there, leaning against the board with his arms folded, smiling at Jez as the rest of the cunts in here laugh and whoop and clap.

(71)

During this passage in the book Charmaine is sitting next to Jez in class reading a magazine (“one of those big glossy ones, a *Cosmo* or *Marie Claire* or something” [65]). While Mr Dumble confiscates both Charmaine’s magazine and Jez’s drawing, only Jez is the subject of derision and mocking from both teacher and the class. Both of them were doing something that was not permitted, however Charmaine reading a women’s magazine was somehow ordinary and expected by the teacher, while Jez drawing was remarkable or abnormal. One could imagine that Dumble might find any number of things to mock about the content of a magazine like *Cosmo* if he so chose, and he no doubt would have done so if Jez was the one reading the magazine, but instead found the more obvious target to be his art. Considering that creative behaviour has been coded and understood by some, for “theoretical and empirical reasons,” to be more likely in people with both “both masculine and feminine personality characteristics” (Harrington and Anderson 744), then the very fact of being artistic might mark Jez as being less masculine in the eyes of some. Coupled with the fact that Māori men in particular are limited by Pākehā narratives to “physical, violent and stoic roles” (Hokowhitu, “Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism” 191), it is sad but not altogether unsurprising that someone like Dumble finds there to be something unusual and ridiculous about Jez’s art.

Artists and *tohunga tā moko* were held in high esteem, and were often highly sought after in pre-colonial Māori society (Higgins). However, Jez not only finds no place for his artistic skills in the Pākehā world, he also feels shunned and scorned as a man who is passionate about art. Along with being barred from taking senior art as a subject, he is left feeling like his art, the way he is most comfortable expressing himself, is not welcome or valid in the school environment. He resigns himself to the fact that he has no place at school (or perhaps more rightly that school has no place for him), but just before he leaves Bugs notices that he “started drawing on himself so that the teachers couldn’t take his art off him

any more” (131). The first drawing Bugs notices, done shortly after the conversation with her grandmother about his name, is of “a rope that wraps around his forearm from his wrist” which later becomes his very first attempt at a tattoo on himself (212). After years of doing temporary art – drawings on his bedroom walls that get painted over (54) or the sketches that get confiscated by teachers – it is significant that the first piece of permanent artwork he does is of these ropes. It is not just about a simple representation of his name – it is also something that marks his connection to te ao Māori and his place within it; as Ngahua Te Awekotuku asserts, “Māori inserted ink with a passion, inventively, on themselves, in their assertion of beauty, confidence, belonging and identity” (72).

However, despite this act asserting his identity and place within his culture, Jez still does not seem to feel entirely safe expressing his cultural identity in all spaces. The first time that Bugs even sees his tattoos is when he seeks to assure her that that the tattoo he is giving her is the not the first he has ever done (212), and at other times he seems to keep his arms and wrists hidden away under sleeves, as he does throughout much of the novel. When Jez says that he is not interested in dressing up for Halloween because he does not pretend to be anything he is not, Bugs notices that he “is playing with his sleeves” (204). At this point he has almost certainly given himself the tattoo of the ropes but he still keeps it covered. He has found an outlet for his creativity and artistic skills that is meaningful on an individual and cultural level, but there seemingly exists a degree of hesitation about exposing that in a Pākehā-dominated space. This could be because of the memories of the scorn heaped on his art in the classroom, or it could be because of some lingering feelings of inauthenticity as he did the tattoos by himself without any instruction in the tikanga. However, while fidgeting with his sleeves he says that he does not ‘pretend’ to be anything he is not; he knows that the tattoo is an authentic expression of who he is, and of his connection to te ao Māori, even if he has to complete the tattoo in relative isolation from that world. In a bittersweet way, the tattoo

represents both how clear his place in te ao Māori might be, but also how isolated he is from the tikanga and knowledge of his iwi and whānau. On another level, it also shows the connection that Jez has with so many other Māori boys raised in urban environments away from iwi support networks:

In their own clumsy way, over the decades of unavoidable Pākehā contact, state-sponsored education and incursive missionary influence, Māori youth marked this continuity [of moko, and of whakapapa] as well. They felt compelled to. “There has always been the compulsion to imprint the skin... This is not considered self-mutilation or defiant posturing but a compulsion that comes from a place deep within.” (Te Awekotuku 161)

In this way the tattoo is symbolic of not just how Jez asserts his own identity and cultural beliefs, but also of how such assertions become corrupted and warped by years of colonial influence.

Another reason why Jez might be simultaneously proud of the tattoo but afraid to display it publicly is because he is anxious about the reaction he would get from non-Māori. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku suggests that “Moko is about identity; about being Māori in a Māori place, being Māori in a foreign place, being Māori in one’s own land and times, being Māori on Māori terms... It reflects...how Māori want to be seen” (208-209), but the way that people want to be seen does not necessarily correspond with how they are seen. Colonial narratives around moko, particularly moko on men, sought to associate them with warriors and violence (64). Arguably such narratives linger today as some non-Māori associate moko with gang culture, and some wearers of moko encounter hostility and discrimination (Higgins). It may well be that Jez associates his tattoo with strength and unity (131), but he also is cynical (or perhaps realistic) about how some non-Māori will see him. If a Māori teenager out for a run

is going to be eyed with suspicion (177) then in all likelihood so too will his tattoos. He knows that this part of himself represents his creativity, his knowledge of te ao Māori and his place within it, and his talent to do more with his hands than throw a rugby ball. However, in a tragic way it is exactly this part of him which will be used by some to justify their preconceptions about what Māori men are like. In a space dominated by Pākehā people and ideas about Māori masculinity, it is that much more difficult for Jez to feel like people will see him, and his tattoos, in the way that he wants to be seen.

*Expressions and interpretations of sexuality*

Whereas Stewart's and Ihimaera's stories are largely focalised through characters with an introspective and self-centred understanding of their own masculinity and sexuality, the female authorship and narrative voice of *Bugs* mean that Jez is more clearly held to account for the impact that his masculinity and sexuality might have on the women around him. Through this narration we not only see a Māori woman's perspective on the masculinity of a Māori man, but also how she sees this masculinity intersecting with and affecting her own life as a Māori woman. Throughout the story there is an undercurrent in the way that Bugs thinks about Jez that suggests that she see him as a potentially disruptive force in her life. When Jez wants to run away and take Bugs with him, she sees a parallel in her mother's own life:

This is how it happens. This is how I become what they expect. A statistic, not smart enough to pass. Not smart enough to make my own decisions. A car, a boy, one night and everything I hoped for, gone. Those shards of memory of Mum sitting there staring at the wall, the curtains drawn against the hot summer's day, while this song

mixed and eddied with my cries. And she's so young, and so tired. Tired of thinking about the stupid decision that led her here: a car, a boy, one night. (238)

Bugs sees that her own role and future as a woman could be determined by one boy and one night, as it was for her mother, but the boy in question would be able to extricate himself from the situation. In such a situation she feels that she would be doing many things wrong: becoming what 'they' expect, becoming a statistic, seeming not smart enough to pass or make decisions. However, the implication is also that Jez is similarly becoming what 'they' expect of a Māori boy by driving off into the night and running away with Bugs; he too will be seen as a statistic, not smart enough to pass and making stupid decisions.

It is clear that Bugs has internalised some of the negative stereotypes about Māori that have been pushed on her throughout her life. The language that is used in Bugs' discourse about hers and Jez's future is a language of failure strikingly similar to that of the Māori achievement seminar earlier in the novel. Whether or not she personally believes it, she knows that she and Jez will be seen as having failed in life, but also, disturbingly, that this was somehow expected of them. The difference between her and Jez seems to be that she has hopes for a life where she can prove such stereotypes wrong. Through a combination of her mother's own experiences with a man who abandoned them, and also the narratives that have been pushed upon her throughout her life about Māori becoming just another statistic, she is wary of attaching herself to Jez as he seeks to make a new life for himself. Angela Moewaka Barnes and her co-authors found in interviews with Māori regarding their experiences and internalising of racism that "the undermining of Māori culture [is] a driver reinforcing a sense of Māori inferiority, naturalising certain behaviours, creating conflict and uncertainty" (68). Certainly Bugs' uncertainty about her future with Jez seems inextricably linked to narratives that she has internalised about young Māori becoming just another statistic; this stands in stark contrast to the confidence and excitement that Charmaine, a Pākehā girl, has about the

possibilities ahead of her when she leaves with Jez. It is possible that Jez is doing the best or only thing available to him to escape the barriers in his life, but Bugs has been conditioned to be uncertain about his potential, which leaves her wondering if his choices might compromise her own opportunities and dreams.

One of Bugs' earliest memories of Jez is when her mother and uncle caught them about to act out a kiss while they were role playing as a prince and princess and they "freak-out and star[t] yelling at Jez" (4). Even from a young age both Jez and Bugs are inculcated with the idea that there is something dangerous about even the semblance of sexuality, particularly Jez's sexuality. Indeed, by the time they are teenagers Bugs feels frustrated by what she considers to be the carelessness of Jez's sexuality, bemoaning the fact "he kind of leans way back and leads with his dick. *And look where that's got us*" (14, emphasis in the original). Whereas early in their lives Bugs is happy to play the role of princess to Jez's prince, she later becomes worried about what exactly it might mean if she continued to play that role:

All those princesses in fairy tales, waiting in a tower, waiting in a glass coffin, waiting to be kissed like their lives mean nothing without a prince. Waiting to live happily ever after. Worse still are the princesses who give up their lives for him – the ones who dance in red shoes until they die, the ones who give up their voice to follow after him – step by painful step on their new feet. This is what we're fed; this is what we're supposed to aspire to. It's not my life... It's bullshit. (182)

The fears that Bugs has about being left alone with a child like her mother was, or becoming a voiceless princess following her prince step by painful step, or, like Charmaine's mother, becoming "background noise for my dad's life, the radio you put on so you don't feel so alone" (185), are all completely reasonable and justified considering the experiences of



women in her life. Throughout the novel, however, Bugs is also confronted by the messaging, whether subtle or explicit, from people in her life that Jez is especially threatening as a possible sexual or romantic partner because he is Māori. In school she is encouraged to avoid Jez because he is a ‘bad boy’, despite no clear evidence that Jez ever did anything particularly ‘bad’ at school. Decoteau J. Irby sees such demonization of young men of colour as part of a pattern whereby “White-supremacist patriarchy reproduces normative Whiteness through the continual surveillance, punishment, distancing, and removal of primarily heteronormative Black male bodies” (783). Jez is singled out for scrutiny and punishment because of the fact that he is not Pākehā. Despite the fact that Bugs thinks that the treatment of Jez is unjust (“If the world was fair, Jez... would have been born to someone who recognised his talent, sent him to classes, bought him supplies” [57]), it seems unlikely that society’s messaging about Māori men made no impact on her subconscious.

While Bugs may not vocalize all of these fears to Jez, he is sensitive enough to his mother’s relationships with men like Havoc to sympathise with the guardedness or protectiveness that Bugs and her whānau might feel. As a result, Jez is confronted by the fact that Pākehā narratives about Māori masculinity and sexuality are not only limited to Pākehā spaces; they so permeate the discourse of his school and community that they might just begin to take hold, to varying degrees, in the minds of other Māori, even those who know him personally. Indeed, in his analysis of internalised racism in African-American youths, Wesley Bryant noted the following factors as affecting the impact of internalised racism on individuals and groups:

- (a) an awareness of a self and group identity that is based on traditional and contemporary African-centered worldviews, philosophies, cosmologies, and achievements ...
- (b) the degree of acceptance of the dominant culture’s traditions,

beliefs, and rationale for the denigration of people of African ... (c) social economic status ... (d) peer subcultures ... and (e) education. (691-692)

All of these factors are significant in the lives of Jez and Bugs, but in particular the lack of identity based on Māori-centred worldviews, low socio-economic status, and a lack of access to education are issues that are central to much of the novel. Accordingly, both Jez and Bugs are likely to be more significantly affected by internalised racism than they might otherwise be. Because of this, Jez may well be primed to feel that occasions when he is yelled at for being the bed with Bugs, or made to sleep in her uncle's room so that he does not get up to any "funny business" with Bugs (118), or having Bugs abandon him when he decides to leave the city behind, are all affirmations of the insidious, racist messages he has heard and seen about Māori masculinity and sexuality throughout his life. That these 'affirmations' come from other Māori who are close to him would make them significantly more hurtful and damaging, regardless of whether that was their intent or meaning.

#### *Māori boys in Pākehā cities*

While there have been disruptive effects on Māori life from urbanisation, Mason Durie asserts that it has not led to comprehensive disruption of Māori identities:

Fifty years of urbanization have demonstrated that it has been possible to live side by side with other New Zealanders without being assimilated into a homogenous way of life. It has been possible to retain links with whānau (extended family) and hapū (clan). It has been possible to recreate a sense of community that is not dissimilar to whānau. (24)

However, being able to create this sense of community is not easy or possible for all, particularly in areas where the population is dominated by non-Māori, as the setting of *Bugs*

seems to be, nor for those who are particularly marginalised and isolated from their culture (Morgan 301-302). Even when there is a concerted effort to create Māori spaces within cities, Māori youth raised in urban environments may feel out of place within more traditional cultural spaces (Borell 79). Such feelings are likely to be more pronounced for boys of Jez's generation because their whānau may have lived in cities (and away from traditional Māori spaces) for a number of generations. Indeed the boys in Stewart's stories *Tapu Hau a Tane* and *Patu Wairua*, set several decades before *Bugs* and in a part of Porirua with a large Māori population, seem much more at confident with their knowledge of tikanga and mātauranga Māori than Bugs and Jez do. Being raised in a community with minimal interaction and experience with traditional markers of Māori culture (language, marae, mātauranga Māori) can leave some young urban Māori feeling ““pakehafied”” (Borell 46). For Jez, the Pākehā-dominated space that he is raised in presents a series of unique barriers to asserting his identity and masculinity as a Māori man, barriers that were not nearly so significant for Tama, Himiona, or Patu. While all of these characters confront competing representations about what Māori men are like from Pākehā and Māori perspectives, the balance between the two is much more skewed for Jez. Even when his school tries to hold the Māori achievement seminar mentioned earlier in this chapter, the messaging is not positive:

Anyway, there's all us kids – OK, all us Māori kids – rounded up for a 'seminar' on Māori 'achievement'. What it really was – a bunch of loser seniors saying how hard they'd worked to pass. Just pass. And then they hit us over the head with statistics about how most of us would fail; most of us would amount to sweet F.A. And it was supposed to be motivating. Well I bet there were a couple of people in there like me who wanted it even more after we were told that we couldn't have it. But I could see it in the room. Everyone else was slouching in their chair; they had this look in their eyes – defeat. (21-22)

In a space that is dominated by Pākehā voices and perspectives about Māori, even well-meaning attempts at supporting Māori can be strewn with problematic assumptions and narratives. Being told that they are likely to amount to “sweet F.A.” would be dispiriting enough, but when this is one of the only times that the students receive attention for being Māori it is that much more damaging. Even more concerning is that, unlike Tama and Himiona, Jez has very little in his life to counter the messaging he receives about being Māori at school. If one is proud to be Māori, and wants to know more about being Māori, but the loudest dialogue about being Māori is about academic failure it will leave only negative associations without much to counter it.<sup>19</sup> When Tama’s koro talks to him about the difference between tangata ngākau and tangata rahoā it gives him the capacity to see two different visions of what a Māori man can be, and to know which one is preferred in te ao Māori. When Jez hears that he is likely to amount to nothing because he is Māori, there is nothing to counter that narrative.

When Durie asserts that it is possible to recreate a sense of community in urban environments not dissimilar to whānau, it follows that there must first be people with the cultural knowledge to create such a community. However, apart from the aforementioned discussions with Bugs’ grandmother, Jez does not seem to have ready access to cultural resources, with the notable exception of optional te reo Māori classes at school. Even then these classes are only considered a positive thing by his mother because she thought it would be helpful in the town’s tourism sector, not because “[I] get to know where I came from or anything, not for me, eh?” (73). He is made to believe that being a Māori man is only useful inasmuch as it can be commodified, and that the value of learning te reo is financial, not cultural. Jez is confronted by the fact that in touristic spaces, expressions of Māoritanga like

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<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that while Bugs is spurred into wanting success more when she is told it is out of reach, she also has whānau and teachers talking about university and professional careers as attainable options for her, something Jez does not have.

moko or speaking te reo Māori may be seen as nothing more than a gimmick or attraction. This speaks to something problematic about the access that Jez has to Māori culture in the city: if state schools are responsible for the delivery and instruction of aspects of Māori culture, what narratives will be reinforced? Are these the same narratives that would be reinforced by Tama's koro, or Bugs' grandmother, who are instructing their mokopuna? Considering how schools often present subject choices as inextricably linked with career opportunities, there is often a perceived opportunity cost to taking Māori subjects at school at the expense of other options that are seemingly more lucrative or utilitarian (Borell 54). This might be seen as part of a wider trend in which urbanised Indigenous people are made to see their indigeneity as a marketable, saleable aspect of themselves, which is particularly problematic for those who, like Jez, have not had strong connections to aspects of their culture as a result of being raised in urban environments (Morgan).

While earlier generations of Māori men were very much restricted by colonial narratives to employment as physical labourers (Hokowhitu, "Tackling Māori Masculinity" 268), Jez is presented with another option: to sell himself as an image and representation of a Māori man to tourists. Certainly there are positive things to say about opportunities to share and celebrate one's culture with visitors, but for Jez in particular he is sold this as an option precisely because academic success at school is seemingly shut off to him. It is a positive thing when te reo Māori is promoted and fostered after so many years of being repressed, but the messaging to Jez that his culture is useful inasmuch as it can be marketed to tourists means he is still subject to the same restrictive narratives about who Māori men can be. The ideal of what a Māori man can be might be shifting from what it was decades before, but it is still defined in opposition to, and still seen as less valuable than, Pākehā masculinity (Hokowhitu, "Maori Masculinity, Post-Structuralism" 186). Added to the list of soldier, farmer, labourer and rugby player (things that Jez is seemingly allowed to be successful at as

a Māori man) is tourist guide, but he is still excluded from other academic fields open to his peers. It is clear to him that his culture is valued largely on a superficial level, as there appears to be little or no attention given to the depth of wisdom in mātauranga Māori, nor in the value of kaupapa Māori.

In Stewart and Ihimaera's stories, education related to tikanga and mātauranga Māori happens exclusively in Māori spaces, and never in Pākehā-dominated schools. For Jez no such division exists, but he suffers from not having the same access to Māori spaces that Himiona and Tama do. Even though the characters in Stewart's and Ihimaera's stories are seen to leave behind their respective homes, there is a very clear sense that they maintain a strong connection with their tūrangawaewae or their papakainga. For Himiona his tūrangawaewae is Waituhi, where he was raised, but for Tama it is Te Kete Aonui, the marae he serendipitously finds in the mountains when he leaves home. For Jez, there does not appear to be any such place that he might consider his tūrangawaewae. In her study of cultural identity and diversity of South Auckland Māori youth, Borell grouped her interviewees into three groups: those who belong to an iwi based in the area where they lived; those who belong to an iwi in a different location but who maintain contact with their home iwi; and those whose iwi connections are replaced by connections to their local community. Regarding the third group, Borell noted that:

some participants expressed great pride in being Maori and an awareness of what some of the conventional indicators were, were interested in learning these or participating in cultural activities but identified a range of difficulties and barriers to their participation. (50)

For Jez, being located in a Pākehā-dominated urban environment, and being disconnected from his iwi and tūrangawaewae, is a major barrier not only to seeing and learning about

different modes of Māori masculinity, but also to having a space where he feels safe to express his own masculinity. This is not to suggest, however, that the proximity of one's tūrangawaewae is of vital importance. The other two groups of interviewees that Borell describes (those who live close to their tūrangawaewae and those who live further away but maintain contact with their iwi) had greater opportunities to learn about and be immersed in te ao Māori. Indigenous men raised without connection to or awareness of their cultural traditions may even begin to see their indigeneity as incompatible with urban living, and a hindrance to success in the city (Morgan 301). In *Patu Wairua* we see boys who are compelled to leave the city because they see Pākehā power structures as incompatible with their vision of Māoritanga. To put it in the framework of Qumseya's research, those boys were confident in their identity, but were not safe to express it in majority contexts. For Jez, it is arguably the case that he is not even at the point of trying to express his Māoritanga in majority contexts because he is not yet confident with his identity in any context. What Patu, Tama, and Himiona gain from knowing their tūrangawaewae is a space where they can learn about, test, adapt, and express their identity as Māori men free from attack and criticism.

There are undoubtedly many different manifestations that such a space could take, and it is perhaps a largely product of Stewart's and Ihimaera's own rural upbringing that meant that Patu, Tama, and Himiona find these spaces in remote rural areas. Indeed, urban marae and urban Māori authorities provide cultural spaces and opportunities that entirely meet the needs of their respective communities (Hokowhitu, "Producing Indigeneity" 359). The common element between Te Kete Aonui, Waituhi, and urban or rural marae, is that they provide a space where Māoritanga and Māori masculinity can be expressed free of Pākehā control and with minimal Pākehā influence, but such a space is missing in Jez's world. The closest that he gets to such a space is Bugs' grandmother's house, but no matter how supportive and welcoming Bugs' whānau are, it seems unlikely that Jez would attach himself

there permanently. Like Tama, Patu, and Himiona before him he is at the age where he wants to go off by himself and gain more freedom, and there are few options for him if he stayed with Bugs' whānau (Bugs' uncle talks about there being only “one path” – being a farmer [172]). However, when Jez does run away it is not entirely clear where he is running to; life in a twenty-first-century city may offer him possibilities not available to his predecessors, but it also isolates him from te ao Māori in an unprecedented way. The other boys discussed in this thesis left home for a number of reasons: Patu left behind supportive whānau so he could receive further training and education by his koroua; Tama left behind an unsupportive father so he could find his mother's whānau and live with them; Himiona left behind his whole whānau to find education and jobs in the city, but he remained close with them and visited often. Jez wants to escape because he is terrified that “he'll be trapped here” in the city (240), but his future seems entirely uncertain. He is urged on by Charmaine's plea that “you don't have to go back; you don't have to be what they expect of you” (239), which speaks to the problem that Jez has if he were to stay living there. In his hometown he feels weighed down by the expectations of who is as a Māori man, as indeed do many of the other boys discussed throughout this thesis. However, unlike these other stories, *Bugs* does not offer a clear insight into what Jez can or will do once he manages to shake off the pressure he faces as a Māori man in a Pākehā-dominated space. Whereas Stewart finishes his collection of writing by offering a vision of what a mātauranga Māori education could offer to disaffected Māori boys, and Ihimaera shows the healing that can happen to a whole community when attitudes towards masculinity begin to be decolonised, Hereaka is less didactic. Perhaps this is reflective of the position of young Māori men like Jez living in Pākehā-dominated urban environments in the twenty-first century. Irihapeti Ramsden suggests that the experiences of each generation are so different, the way cultural changes develop is unknowable: “How each of us expresses our Maoritanga is the product of a variety of experiences. None of us is today



what our ancestors were, and our descendants will not be like us” (243). For Jez, the way that he maintains access to te ao Māori, while working against a world of pressure and expectation, is yet to be seen.

## Conclusion

“This is where we start. Let it be blank. Blank is different from nothing. Nothing suggests, well, nothing. No. Thing. But blank is possibility – it may be filled, it may change, or it may remain. Blank” (Hereaka, “Prologue” 22). Throughout this thesis I have endeavoured, as Brendan Hokowhitu proposes, to look for the untruths that permeate critical discussions and stories. After stripping away some of these untruths I believe that there are not necessarily definitive truths about Māori masculinity in the three texts discussed above, but there is possibility, and there is some blankness to see different visions of Māori masculinity in the spaces left behind when colonial discourses are discarded. We see Māori boys who want desperately to succeed in academia, the arts, and sport, but who are unwilling and unable to only succeed if it means abandoning parts of their Māoritanga. There are boys who are comfortable and happy navigating between Pākehā and Māori spaces but who are obstructed by the exclusivity and restrictiveness of Pākehā masculinity. Present throughout are also tāngata ngākau and tāngata raho<sup>20</sup>, boys who are preoccupied by things of the mind and heart just as they can be preoccupied by their sexuality or their physicality. However, throughout all texts we see the primacy of tāngata ngākau for the vast majority of Māori men and boys in these stories.

These boys’ masculinity is primarily defined by compassion, wisdom, empathy, bravery, equity, and magnanimity. So why has such a significant section of critical and societal commentary on Māori masculinity focused on physicality, strength, and violence? Quite simply, because such commentary is part of the same narrative-making process in which national and cultural myths surrounding Māori masculinity are created and perpetuated. Those who would look to texts like those discussed in this thesis but see only

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<sup>20</sup> Here I give use Moorfield’s spelling, not Stewart’s, as there appear to be many examples with this spelling and few with the alternative.

violence and aggression have been so affected by colonial narratives about Māori men that they are not able to see the blankness or the possibility in these stories, and in these characters. Whiti Hereaka implores the reader to “listen closely to the blank...let it invade you, colonise you; assimilate it” (“Prologue” 29). It is likely that she is directing this plea specifically to Māori readers of the pūrākau in her collection so that they might have Māori stories and Māori perspectives colonise their mind at the expense of colonial narratives that have dominated for centuries, and in doing so continue the process of decolonising stories and narratives about Māori. The onus on Pākehā readers and critics is to not colonise the page with our views, or make the characters assimilate to our perspective. For us to be able to receive and understand fairly what these stories tell us about Māori men in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, men still under attack from colonial narratives that seek to undermine their very existence, we cannot let our reading be corrupted by the stories that Pākehā have been telling about Māori men.

At the end of *Bugs* we see Jez run away from his home, his town, from his friends and whānau, all because he could not see a future for himself in a place where he could not freely and confidently express his sense of self and his sense of what is meant to be a Māori man. There are many questions that remain at the end of the novel about what will, and what can happen to Jez in the future. Could he go and find his own marae and koroua in the mountains? Could he go to university and become a lawyer, all swallowed up in the concrete blend of cultures? Could he help his friends and whānau to reject the impositions and repression of Pākehā patriarchy and find a new, more equitable way forward? These questions may speak to the place of many Māori boys living in Pākehā-dominated cities and spaces today, unsure if, how, or when they will be able to succeed as Māori. Hereaka is not interested in answering these questions (at least in this novel), finishing by saying “I should apologise...I made you think that you’d have that feeling too, like a god, knowing

everything...But I'm not going to" (241). *Bugs* may leave us questioning, but the questioning is exactly the point. Hereaka tells us that "stories live through us and us through them... Does it follow that a story must die as it ends, as you close the pages of the book – or does it live on within you, nestled deep in the folds of your mind?" ("Prologue" 27). As these stories end the authors implore us to see the truth in the lives and experiences of these young tāne; their lives, their potential, and their strengths are so much greater than the sum of the colonial narratives that sought to define them for so long.

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