

## Echoed Silences: In absentia: Mana Wahine in institutional contexts

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### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

The journey mapped herein is based on a women's studies conference paper written and presented in 1999 (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999)<sup>2</sup>. When we (Hine and Trish) wrote the paper, we worked together in Te Uru Marau-rau: the Department of Māori and Multicultural Education at Massey University. A decade later Hine works in the Masters of Educational Administration Programme at Massey and Patricia is a professor and the Head of the Graduate School at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangī, a 'Indigenous University' in Whakatane. Engaging the original paper we create a reflexive dialogue in which we work to connect tacit knowing to explicit knowledge (Cunliffe, 2002). As we re-enter a conversation that decried the absence of mana wahine in institutional spaces, uppermost in our thinking as we look back and talk forward is the question – what has changed for us?

**Key Words:** Indigenous feminism, mana wahine, reflexivity, speaking across difference

### Prologue

*Me aro koe ki te ha o Hine-ahu-one.*

*Pay heed to the dignity of women.*

We enter into the discussion of feminism in practice knowing that as we take up the invitation to speak, it does not guarantee a hearing. Being afforded a hearing even by those sensitively inclined – those who we might choose to speak with, or to, in solidarity – is difficult. Why? In response, we would argue, it is because hearing is dependent on much more than the amalgam of body fluid and tissue. As argued elsewhere (Waitere-Ang, 2002), while we recognise the laudible desire to invite other to speak we need to dispel the associated myth that other has been historically silent. By all accounts Māori women are noisy. They have historically spoken about a variety of things, across numerous contexts (locally, nationally and internationally) over a significant period of time.<sup>3</sup> Putting the onus on indigenous peoples to speak, then, without a concurrent focus on the social conditions that afford a hearing, in effect, renders the speaker mute. Speaking and listening cannot be split into productive and receptive modes, abdicating the listener of any responsibility in the communicative act. To not only listen (to detect sound) but to hear someone is to be actively engaged in socially constructing relational

1 We would like to thank the reviewers for their feedback and the constructive criticism given.

2 This paper is based on an abridged version of a conference paper: *In absentia: Mana Wahine in institutional contexts* presented at the Women's Studies Association Conference Hui Raranga Wahine, Victoria University Wellington, November 5–7, 1999. The full paper, without the interlocution, was reproduced in the unpublished conference proceedings of the same conference.

3 See, for example, the history of the Māori Women's Welfare League established in 1951. Through this organization, women were able to represent themselves in government for the first time. Whina Cooper, the first president of the League at the age of 80, led a national land march in 1975. King (1977) attributes Te Puea's mana to being catalytic in bringing the Kingitanga movement to a place of national significance. Māori women have formed delegations to the UN, participating in indigenous rights forums. We have also engaged in our own internal struggles both intra and interculturally.

meanings. We would argue, therefore, that the ability to hear is significantly effected by shared spaces that traverse socio-political histories, linguistic, cultural and, yes – theoretical, epistemological and ontological airwaves which connote levels of resonance or dissonance in the auditory range of the listener. So while we believe there is evidence in Aotearoa New Zealand that the institutional acoustic is expanding, unless feminism takes account of the multiple forces of subjugation where sexism, racism, colonialism and class combine and overlap with the political aspirations for self determination, feminist studies will only ever, at best, take account of part of indigenous women's realities.

As we adopt a critically reflexive approach to mapping our academic journeys we are cautious like many indigenous women (see Green, 2007) as we evoke and write under the auspices of feminism. This is not because we deny a place for feminist understandings in our lives, or because we want to spurn alliance building with non-Māori; on the contrary, it is because our position is tempered by scepticism of feminisms that do not take account of the specificities of socio-political, historical and cultural contexts that need to be accounted for when engaging with the muddy realities of indigenous women's lives.

In this paper we commence, as we did at the conference a decade ago, with a poem about names (Burgess 1998). We did, and do so, to mark the struggle over the power to name, claim, define and theorise our lives (Smith, 1999). We move on to look at what mana wahine means to us before locating it within the broader Māori positions being articulated in academia. We then turn to outline our focus on absenteeism before returning, in the style of cyclic reflexivity, to consider the centring of mana wahine before drawing the paper to a close with a canonical refrain.

Puanani Burgess' poem demonstrates for us the ways in which we see and describe ourselves and how others see and describe us. The bifurcated gaze results in a myriad of positions that at times collide, sometimes complement, and at times muddy what might otherwise form neat distinctions and boundaries.

As Puanani Burgess (1998) writes;

### **Choosing My name**

When I was born my mother gave me three names:  
Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani.

Christabelle was my 'English' name,  
my social security card name,  
my school name  
the name I gave when teachers asked me for my real name  
a safe name.

Yoshie was my home name,  
my everyday name,  
the name that reminded my father's family  
that I was Japanese, even though  
my nose, hips and feet were wide,  
the name that made me acceptable to them  
who called my Hawaiian mother kuroi (black)  
a saving name.

Puanani is my chosen name,  
my piko name connecting me to the 'aina  
and the kai and the po'e kahiko -  
my blessing; my burden;  
my amulet; my spear.

### **Puanani Burgess (1998)**

They are names borne by children standing in a crossroads of abraded relationships. Similarly, when we were at school, children often called us by other names. Hine was called Henni Penny, and children delighted in telling her ‘the sky was falling, the sky was falling’. When she thumped the instigator on the head and asked him if he meant ‘like that,’ he just called her Penny. Patricia was supposed to be a safe name but she was often called a ‘dirty little half-caste’ because her name and her colour didn’t match. She also resorted to thumping children but ‘they’ just called her a nigger instead.

A sensitive teacher told Hine that names were important, relating to the rest of the class that her name meant girl. But some of the children laughed and asked her why her mother called her girl – as if she didn’t know that she was one. Patricia knew that she had another name but didn’t tell anyone because she knew it was a special name that related to a specific event in her hapu history, knowing intuitively that to tell ‘them’ was to invite ridicule.

Mere called her daughter Hine-tu-whiria-o-te-rangi and Ngahipara[s] mother Heeni named her mokopuna Maringi Noa nga Roimata. These were names that many of their school friends could neither say nor even begin to imagine their significance, their history, or their connectedness to wider events and circumstances. Like Puanani, these names have been our blessings, our taonga tuku iho, our patu, and our burden.

While the poem serves the purpose of reflecting on our childhood in institutional contexts it also helps us identify other forces at play in the ‘naming’ of Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani. These names mirror the ‘dead ends,’ ‘cul de sacs’, crescents and avenues that this paper explores in terms of Māori women and their positions within institutional settings. Christabelle signals a ‘dead end’ – to know one’s self as the colonised other, to bear witness from a position of relative safety, the cultural genocide of our view of the world, subjugated to the political and imperial filters of another – to bear witness to the demise of the mana of wahine Māori in institutional contexts. We know the sound, the structure, and the form of forces by which each name is formed. Historically Christabelle and Yoshie have represented the forces of supplication and domestication (names drawn from dominant vernaculars) that discriminate. Names adopted that require us to work to our own erasure under the auspices of ‘sameness’, that suggest ‘one people’ while treating similarity differentially – unable to disguise the body that bears it. We have come to know such forces as colonisation, imperialism, assimilation, racism, subjugation and dependency.

Although different to Christabelle, Yoshie represents for us a series of crescents, the pathways added to the main arterial route – added to maps, demarcated as subsidiary ‘byways’. Rarely in this position is the mana of Māori women at the centre in institutional contexts. Rather, Yoshie signifies our partial inclusion – invited to be physically present, – and encouraged to provide the ethnic additives without modification to structures that invariably provide pathways that re-route those traversing institutional terrains back to the central highway of Eurocentric norms. In other words, Yoshie indicates partial acceptance, the parallels of which can be seen in Māori-friendly/girl-friendly approaches where the ethnic and gendered additives become the fashionable adornment of unchanging structures and processes.<sup>4</sup>

The name Puanani is no less complex, potentially representing both a crescent and an avenue. As an avenue, Puanani has the potential to provide a parallel route. Accessibility for Māori women on this plain is not contingent on being the other; rather, both physical and cultural presence is taken for granted, embedded within institutional structures and processes. Such a

4 See, for example, the later work of Andrea Smith (2007), particularly in relation to the forums around indigenous feminism without apology accessible from the Association for Women’s Rights in development website - <http://www.awid.org/eng/content/search?SearchText=feminism>. In her article Smith shows how making space and achieving indigenous women’s politics, needs and aspirations can work in opposition to each other.

position allows us to know self in ways that we recognise (Smith 1999). The taonga tuku iho, that which is handed down as a gift to be treasured, not unused or untouched provides the patu, the analytic tool to parry and thrust, to assert a way of knowing self and contributing to the world in which we live. Juxtaposed is the potential burden of co-option implied in the crescents, signalling the ever present threats encased in the creeping highways of newly configured hegemonic norms. Cast as the burden, Puanani in the material and discursive formations of the imperial empire recognises us as those who are destined to be deficit, inferior, state-dependent, the blight of modern society seen to draw from but rarely contributing to that which is considered positive in institutional settings.

Personal names – though not always – can also serve as indicators of basic group identity. Two group names common to Aotearoa New Zealand used as identity markers and the focus of ongoing debates are Māori and Pākehā. Although both names are of Māori vernacular, their attendant socio-historic meanings are best understood within the discourse of colonisation and imperialism (Smith 1999).

As we paused to reflect on the poem, Hine asked Patricia: A decade on, what, if anything, do the names Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani signify for you?

The first two enable me to work within environments which sit outside where I am currently located at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi. Patricia (or Trish) still enables movement within dominant/colonised/institutional spaces that might otherwise exclude ‘Maringi’ and what the latter might signify or represent. Within the wananga environment, however, Patricia, Trish and Maringi are equally viable naming forms that draw from specific contexts to evoke which name is used. Prof. Patricia Johnston is used for example in a formal academic context that positions me in terms of my position and qualification: Maringi is invoked in terms of whakapapa that serves to locate my relationship to mana whenua, Mataatua and Awanuiārangi; Trish is my everyday name which is used most often outside the whakapapa (traditional) or formal forums.

It is not uncommon for many Māori women in institutional contexts to continue to struggle against the precepts of colonisation, to find the spaces in which they are able to pose questions, write and theorise without the constant pressure of assimilation working under the weight of institutional norms that remind us of our ‘abnormalities’. For those with a particular interest in women’s issues we are drawn into debates that raise questions about definitions of mana wahine, according to whom, and in what context. The process of definition is often fraught with structural and procedural barriers tainted by a worldview derived from socio-political, colonial origins that have been hostile to our cultural growth and development. In the attempt to articulate our own positions we are confronted with a labyrinth of ever-changing ideological and methodological pathways leading those who seek answers to continually have to redefine the question.

The spaces sought in institutional contexts are not then those based on dichotomies that separate us from us, that fractionate, deconstruct and attempt to dissect us; rather, they are spaces where we can understand our links and our connections. Mana wahine is a connective highway. The question of our presence and our absences is thus predicated not only on our physical presence but also on the structures and processes that constrain our very ways of knowing and engaging with the world as Wahine Māori.

What do the names Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani signify for you Hine?

Well, all three signifiers walk the same institutional hallways I do. They chafe each other and jockey for attention and certainly Puanani as the signifier for mana wahine continues to be the blessing, burden, taonga and patu we claimed it to be a decade ago. In negotiating the tensions that continue to exist (even in the face of the shifts that have been made, spaces won, alliances forged, recognised and celebrated), I find myself increasingly challenged by Ruruhiā’s comment that mana wahine is a relational phenomenon. Of course it makes sense in a Māori context, but it makes me think about what it looks like when I bring it with me into academia. If the relational principle is to have any saliency then the mana within others has to be recognised. What I

mean is that, the realisation of mana wahine as a way of my being and the blueprint by which I live, how am I to recognise the mana embodied in my 'other' in the face of my own being takatakahi (stomped on)? That's hard! The dilemma it causes lands squarely in the hyphenated space between the ethical and the political. To be clear, if the relational nature of mana wahine is to remain central to a way of being and applied as implied by Ruruhia Robin: if I takahi (stomp on) my 'other' I run the risk of re-inscribing the pathologies created by the historical practices that stomped on us (as signified by the totalising tenets signified in the name Christabelle and the partial ones marked by Yoshie). In other words I am forced to centralise the very thing that I find abhorrent – the denial of us, by being forced to act like 'them', the resistance to which motivated our initial writing a decade ago. In that scenario, do I already forfeit my mana because I play or re-centre 'their game'? I need to find a way of acknowledging the mana of others in ways that do not denigrate my or our own because clearly that is unacceptable, I would not simply accept that. So for me the ethical and the political, embedded in each of these signifiers, cohere in the space where the mini, individual me, and the macro, collective ME, meet. How can I be, and allow my 'other' to be, when their being is dependent on me ceasing to be – me? So the relationships are neither necessarily comfortable nor evenly contested but they are important to grapple with, particularly if we are to leave a legacy that has a different institutional reality.

Together we suggest that these complexities in all their nuanced gradations continue to exist. They are complicated by contexts that require the constant negotiation of the cultural borders Puanani alludes to. They are contexts where at times our assertions are not considered radical enough and in others where just being present is considered over the top. In whatever context, mana wahine is not, nor has it ever been, about changing the sex of the winning team. Mana wahine is much more complex than that; it is about recognising the dignity and authority of women and, yes, often that means engaging in political work to ensure that that same dignity is recognised by others.

## Mana wahine

As articulated by Ruruhira Robin (1991), a kuia of Ngati Kahungunu, Rongowhakaata and Ngati Porou, the interrelated nature of mana Māori and women is both diverse and dynamic.

Well, it's a very serious thing 'mana wahine' and I don't think it can be separated from 'mana whānau', 'mana hapu', 'mana iwi', 'mana tangata'. You see, mana wahine is very special but it doesn't live by itself. (p. 3)

In her thesis, Hine (Waitere-Ang, 1998) suggested that the layers and levels of mana, as indicated by Ruruhira, attributed to individuals and collectives, are given expression through mana atua, mana tupuna, mana whenua and mana tangata, providing a framework in which power and authority become the basis for ritual encounter. Arguably no academic encounter is as ensconced in ritual as that of research. At the risk of grossly understating each facet, mana atua recognises the power/authority of the celestial realm delegated to earthly agents. In this sense people "remain always the agent or channel, never the source of mana" (Barlow, 1994, p. 119). Mana tupuna is a channel through which people maintained their status and connection to whānau, hapu and iwi through human descent lines (Barlow, 1994; Mahuika, 1975; Marsden, 1992; Pere, 1982; Te Awekotuku, 1996). Mana tangata provides the means through which the mana of individuals and collectives is established, recognised and potentially multiplied. Mana whenua is derived from the connection to land and the authority to provide, produce and maintain guardianship of resources.

Mana is thus recognised as an integral component of encounter between people, and in the relationships that link cosmological, spiritual, human and physical elements. The origin of mana emerges from the earliest of cosmological narratives and extends beyond simply human interaction. Increased mana is a collective exercise in which individuals and/or collectives elevate their mana by collective recognition of significant acts or enabling processes rather than by self-ascription. Mana embodied in self and other is as much about authority as it is about power. Consideration of mana in processes of encounter emphasises, for example, a research-

er's ability to potentially diminish the mana of others if it is ignored or disregarded. What this suggests is that mana is an integral component of inter-personal relationships that requires the consideration of accountabilities extending beyond that of a particular discipline.

In institutional contexts, the mana of Māori women continues to be calculated in terms of our physical presence and the conceptual absence of the messages embedded within our voices. We are undeniably present in social indices that suggest Māori women reside in the precarious spaces outside the norm of quality standards of living, protection within the law, good health, quality education, and policy processes. Often, however, we are absent in the forums that attempt to give us a voice to resolve our dilemmas. Where we are physically present, we are often vocally absent, while in the spaces where we are vocal, the forces of the already powerful act to deny our physical presence. Hence we continue to speak and to participate from the dominant group's margins that form our centres. This is particularly poignant for Hine with colleagues who would actively encourage her absenteeism.<sup>5</sup> In a wananga context, that engagement is made complex by the positions of mana whenua, iwi/hapu dynamics by age, position or whānau name, where precedence is made on traditional interpretations (which might be clouded by colonial discourses or strongly dichotomised because of it), where the mana of wahine is celebrated and enhanced through traditional practices often unspoken, unstated but practices where not knowing or recognising the 'codes' can complicate further relationships amongst wahine and between wahine and tane.

At the precipice of the new millennium our presence was not marked by our contribution to the technological revolutions or the scientific achievements of the previous two thousand years. Nevertheless, perhaps in a more telling way, the health and location of indigenous peoples marks the distances travelled in terms of humanity, societal values and ethical practices. In too many areas we see technological revolution and ideological stagnation used as indicators to mark growth (Waitere-Ang & Durie, 1999). In the field of education, for example, time and space often delineate an authentic Māori identity. In the first instance authenticity as Māori is constructed as a relic of traditional times, something that existed before European contact. In the second, if the mana of Māori women survives and is considered in contemporary contexts it is demarcated in a spatial sense by the distance between the marae and the metropolis, considered only to exist on rural marae. In either instance the mana of Māori women in mainstream institutional contexts is listed amongst the absent. Our feminism is best understood then as a practice, which emerges out of a broader analytic front.

## Evolving Māori positions

Exploring some of the routes traversed by Māori women who seek a place to stand in educational institutions, we recognise a growing number of Māori academics drawing from cultural paradigmatic positions that take for granted 'Māori as the norm'. Four that we identify here are: Māori-centred approaches (A. Durie, 1998; M. Durie, 1997; Waitere-Ang, 1998); Kau-

<sup>5</sup> See for example Openshaw and Rata (2008), who argue that Kaupapa Māori is essentialist, built on cultural elitism, relativism and ethnic politicisation framed as 'cultural ideological conformity', which they suggest is the dominant, detrimental intellectual orthodoxy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Culturalism, it is argued, limits the university's ability to be the critical conscience of society and needs to be stopped to allow 'weighty inquiry' to remerge. Andreotti's (Forthcoming) response in the journal *International Studies of Sociology of Education*, while rightly defending Openshaw and Rata's right to speak and the defence of the university as a site of open debate, finds that their own 'culturalist-universalist' tradition also compromises these goals. She concludes that "intellectual leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century cannot be confined to one tradition of critique. Critical engagement must take account of power relations, complexity, contingency, partiality and uncertainty: for thinking to become more 'independent', it needs to acknowledge the social, historical and metaphysical roots of its privileged logics" (Andreotti, forthcoming: 9).

papa Māori (Mead, 1996; G. Smith, 1997); a combination of both (Johnston, 1998), and a new evolving paradigm referred to as Mātauranga Māori (Royal, 1998). These approaches posit a 'taken for granted' position in which the cultural locations of the researcher and the participants are made transparent.

M. Durie (1997), in advancing a Māori-centred approach, explicitly argues that biological survival alone will not ensure our cultural presence.

... Whereas one hundred years ago the main problem facing Māori was one of biological survival, the challenge today is to survive as Māori, to retain a Māori identity, while still being able to participate fully in society, and in the communities of the world. Although the 1996 census has confirmed that any probability of genocide is remote - at 579,714 the Māori population has never been more numerous - there is some justified concern that mere survival will achieve little if it is not linked to a secure identity, and a Māori centred approach to development, and a wider access than currently exists to the range of disciplines necessary for advancement in today's world. (p. 1)

Physical presence does not equate to being included, nor does it contribute to a secure identity, Māori norms or centredness. Durie maintains that other factors need to be present, what he refers to as three principles underpinning a Māori centred approach: (i) whakapikitanga – enablement, (ii) whakatuia – integration, and (iii) Mana Māori – Māori control, drawing on the concept of tino rangatiratanga – Māori self-determination. In the context of research, the first principle posits activities that “should aim to enhance people so that either their position improves as a result of the research or they are better equipped to take control of their own futures” (M. Durie, 1997, p. 10). The second recognises holistic Māori views linking well-being, culture, economics and social standing into a matrix that takes account of the individual, the collective and the complex interactions between past and present. The third principle locates the locus of control of research involving Māori, or aspects of Māori society, culture or knowledge with Māori. Associated with this principle are issues of intellectual property rights, guardianship, and management of research design and processes.

The vulnerability of maintaining a secure Māori identity, Māori-centred approaches and enhanced access to knowledge generally have historically been reliant upon the slippery terrains of political alliances. With the recording of our knowledge passing through the intellectual thoroughfares of disciplines maintaining the high ground regarding what is to constitute notions of truth, what was Māori(ish) is seen to be more preferable (digestible) than what is Māori. Māori represented in the research archives combined with the political power to enforce external 'impressions of' provided a context where violation by research and legislation has previously denied the earlier development of Māori-centred approaches. Yet clearly researchers and educators:

... have the capacity to both empower and to devalue. All too often New Zealand's past policies have erred on the side of devaluing Māori realities and in the process undermining Māori confidence and the impetus for positive development. It is time now to do the opposite: to employ research methodologies and approaches to teaching which place Māori at the centre; to facilitate a more secure identity for Māori by increasing opportunities for accessing Māori resources; to avoid misappropriation of Māori intellectual knowledge while encouraging ongoing retention, transmission and development of that knowledge; to enable greater Māori participation across the range of sciences, humanities and professions without compromising a Māori identity (M. Durie, 1997, p. 14).

The secure Māori identity Durie speaks of requires more than knowledge of tribal affiliation, or whakapapa, or an abstract sense of being Māori. More significantly, it will demand a high level of the access to Māori resources, both economic and cultural, as well as access to the institutions which characterise modern Māori society. The second point, a Māori-centred approach, locates Māori at the centre of research, knowledge and development generally, reject-

ing the practice of simply adding on a Māori perspective to otherwise unmodified highways. And the third point Durie makes is that under-representation in most disciplines and professions requires a renegotiation of the terms of access so that being Māori is compatible with other callings.

Linda and Graham Smith incorporate some of the same facets as Durie in terms of Kaupapa Māori theory and practice. While they state that the term 'Kaupapa' is commonly referred to as a collective vision or philosophy, the notion of Kaupapa is not easily defined. What constitutes a 'Kaupapa' shifts considerably from one situation to another, and is influenced by circumstances characteristic to those situations. The implementation of Kaupapa Māori in any given context will thus result in practices relevant (and often unique) to that particular context. G. Smith (1997) asserts:

Kaupapa Māori theory is more than simply legitimating the 'Māori way' of doing things. Its impetus is to create the moral and ethical conditions and outcomes which allow Māori to assert greater cultural, political, social, emotional and spiritual control over their own lives. (p. 456)

Linda Mead (Smith) (1996) defines kaupapa as a philosophy in which cognition plus action are intertwined. It involves a plan: a programme or a set of principles "which incorporate Māori preferred ways of operating and embracing Māori values" (p. 201). It is a theory related to being Māori that does not posit objective distanced forms of scientific inquiry. It predicates the validity and legitimacy of Māori as the taken for granted, where the survival of Māori language and culture is assured.

In terms of Māori women attempting to define their own space, Smith has argued that white feminisms have come dangerously close to smothering us (Māori women) in their metaphors. What she further argues is that we need to assume control over our own struggles without being caught up in someone else's – not to reject feminism – and to begin from a vantage point that is clearly one of our own (L. Smith, 1992, p. 34). As Mead (1996) states, "the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being, and over our own lives is seen as vital to Māori survival" (p. 27). Being Māori in Aotearoa is about being normal; Māori ways of knowing have validity and legitimacy; people can make strategic changes that have emancipatory potential and theorising our understandings and experiences is an important activity for Māori (Mead, 1996).

The struggle for Māori women within academic institutions is fraught at the academic level as we vie to be heard, seen and represented – as academic, as 'real', as legitimate, a position where two worlds meet or collide. Waitere-Ang (1998) couched the problematic in terms of borderlands.

In her thesis, Waitere-Ang (1998) provides an illustration of a Māori woman who visually represents the meeting of two worlds, who looks both culturally and contemporarily Māori, depicted on one side as wearing a heru and korowai, and on the other, university graduation regalia. In describing the points where both worlds meet, she states that:

The multi-layered boundaries and borderlands that Māori women are frequently compelled to negotiate are detectable at the critical points where the heru meets the mortar-board, the moko meets the lipstick, the korowai meets the gown, and the kete meets the briefcase.

The meeting of the heru and the mortar-board is about the negotiation of ideological centres and boundaries of knowledge – what is known, how we come to know it, and how such ways of knowing are validated – delineating the borderland where western male histories teach us that rationality and scientific objectivity resides. The meeting of the moko and the lipstick indicates the contested spaces of sound and voice – in which one speaks of the world, names the word, and lays claim to space. Again it is about from whose centre does the word emerge, who has the right to speak and most significantly, who will be heard. The meeting of the korowai and the gown covers the regions of the heart, used figuratively to represent the realm of emotion and by as-



sociation subjectivity. Appropriately cloaked, because the presence of subjectivity in institutional borderlands and academic research is often actively obscured. The kete and the briefcase, as two cultural repositories, also delineate cultural borders by the processes that construct them and by the nature of what they contain. In the construction of either, both philosophical and methodological forces underpin the process. In terms of the contents, they are the receptacles in which the outcomes and consequences of research are contained. Boundaries are no more clearly evident than for those not included within them (Waitere-Ang 1998: 1).

Johnston (1998) argues for a position that incorporates both Māori-centred and Kaupapa Māori approaches, drawing on the two approaches indicated previously. In doing so, however, she also identifies a contrasting ‘institutional’ procedural framework, which she calls Māori-friendly approaches to addressing Māori needs and interests. These latter approaches are based on Pākehā conceptions of how Māori should be catered and accounted for within specific contexts.

Johnston (1998) argues that the former position of Māori-centred/Kaupapa Māori has a political stance, a focus of activism, contestation, resistance and protest that culminates in challenges by Māori to institutional ineptness in addressing Māori interests and aspirations in those institutions. The political aspect encompasses Māori aspirations for autonomy and self-determination as a means to address the position of Māori. It focuses on structural rather than cultural factors, and because the focus is on structures, decision-making and identifying how Māori are excluded from participating, a Māori-centred/Kaupapa Māori approach places Māori at the centre; it recognises structural and political considerations (as well as cultural dynamics) and locates them as pivotal to addressing Māori inclusiveness within tertiary institutions. More importantly, these approaches are underpinned by a philosophy that aims at addressing the unequal power relations between Māori and Pākehā by incorporating appropriate decision-making forums for Māori, that is, decision-making by Māori for Māori.

On the other hand, ‘Māori-friendly’ approaches are cultural in focus – an approach that professes to make individuals bicultural through personalising biculturalism as an individual matter (Johnston, 1998). A Māori-friendly focus is purely one of culture – providing access to Māori culture as a means to reduce children’s (and adults’) prejudices and discrimination toward matters Māori. As such, a Māori-friendly approach does not address the unequal power relations between Māori and Pākehā, and Māori involvement occurs within parameters controlled by Pākehā. In institutional contexts, an example of such ‘Māori-friendly’ techniques is Māori karakia in particular forums, representation on committees, contributions to teaching – ‘a Māori face’ – but clearly maintenance of the status quo. Māori-friendly approaches contribute little towards addressing the needs and interests of Māori, but instead are more about ‘ticking boxes,’ being seen as sensitive and demonstrating understanding towards Māori.

We reminisce,

*It's ironic really that we still participate in these things, 'the brown voice', 'the brown body', the presence of one to 'represent the many' on committees. These institutional moments are complex, they irk when they are 'end point practices' where our presence provides an end point; an evaluative tick in the box. At other times, the same processes can be inoffensive; a commencement point on the way to developing a meaningful relationship.*

Matauranga Māori is yet another form of dialogue and practice but is inextricably linked to traditional cultural contexts and te reo Māori. Royal (1998) argues that Matauranga Māori, while based on traditional concepts, is ‘handed down’ from generation to generation and in citing Whatarangi Winiata, is defined as “...Māori knowledge...according to a set of key ideas and by the employment of certain methodologies to explain the Māori experience of the world” (Winiata, cited in Royal, 1998, p.2). In terms of mana wahine then, a matauranga Māori view would incorporate a distinctly Māori worldview or paradigm of Māori culture and experiences of women. The uniqueness of such a position, however, would recognise an equally valid and

dichotomous relationship with mana tane.

## The focus of absenteeism

Presence equals fitting within the norms of other – their construction and representation of us. Absences are forged when we define ourselves.

In examining Māori-friendly and Māori-centred approaches to addressing Māori women in institutional contexts, we recognise that there are those within the inner sanctums of research fraternities that have also questioned the arbitrary constraints of traditional approaches to the advancement of knowledge and truth claims. Research as a fundamental cornerstone of the highways and byways in institutional contexts indicate some of the cul de sacs, crescents and avenues. Taking the specific example of research, the complexities of the positions we occupy become more apparent. In terms of research, our position is a tenuous one as we negotiate the boundaries and labyrinths posed by institutions – boundaries that operate to block us, send us up the garden path, or merely to circumnavigate us down pathways that sideline us into support roles, cultural icons, the token voice, the latter clearly not pathways that lead us to the centre where critical decisions are made but ones we are forced to traverse.

Historically within institutional contexts, Māori women have been located in a number of ‘dead-end’ positions – as the cleaners, the tea-ladies and sometimes as support staff. Today, we also occupy other spaces – as students, academics and researchers. Because the core business of academic institutions to which we are attached is one of research, we engage in that business; however, we know that our involvement is perilous. The mana (integrity and authority) of wahine Māori has fared particularly poorly through the Euro and Androcentric precepts of what Scheurich and Young (1997) maintain constitutes the real (epistemology), the true (axiology), and the good (ontological disputational contours of right and wrong) in science. We have been subjected to the unchecked desires to be known, to be discovered and have been positioned as other – a central tenet of Western research in the social sciences.

As argued elsewhere (Waitere-Ang, 1998) for Māori, the problem of research revolves around the inheritance of a scientific discourse arising out of a sociocultural history, which traditionally, under the rubric of positivism, advanced notions of its own scientific neutrality. That ‘neutrality’ maintains that such inquiry is unbiased and therefore equally applicable to all. Over time this Eurocentric ‘scientific’ discourse was to gain acceptance through hegemonic processes of knowledge creation, validation and dissemination. Foucault (1982) asserts that knowledge did not:

... slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason ... Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. (p. 208)

Historically, epistemological, ontological and axiological positions that emerged from positivist assumptions provided the distinction between scientific and non-scientific inquiry. Said (1993) while concurring with Foucault, extends the problematic beyond one scientific paradigm. Said maintains imperialism and its consequent dichotomisation of the rational observer/irrational actor, civilised/savage, Christian/heathen, is the catalyst neutralising and inhibiting any “attempt at representing reality mimetically” (p. 3) of racialised groups and the differential impact on various subgroups within them. Within the social sciences, objectivity and the value-driven nature of research, universalising discourse and bias in general have been extensively critiqued (for example, Chalmers, 1982; Doyal & Harris, 1986; Longino, 1989; Scheurich & Young, 1997; J. Smith, 1989). However, the effects of discourse resulting from early pseudo-objective observations and consequent universalising accounts of colonised groups continue to

be borne, by Māori. Through more than one scientific discipline (Foucault 1982) the mana of Māori women has been the sacrificial lamb upon this metaphorical altar of knowledge.

Māori, historically caste as ‘native’, have been slotted, defined, classified and objectified within predefined Western parameters of validity. Validity was not to be sought within the communities under scrutiny, but to meet the externally derived validity checks divorced from the objects of study by time, space and culture. Historically, tenuous positions casting Māori as ‘other’ have been fed back to us as fact (Waitere-Ang, 1998).

The objectified ‘us’ referred to by Foucault (1982) historically positions the ‘other’ as the subject of knowledge within an intra-cultural context. For indigenous people and many groups of colour, ‘otherness’ (hooks, 1984, 1992; Johnston & Pihama, 1995; Mead, 1996; Said 1978, 1989; Waitere-Ang, 1998) is defined by those looking from outside the cultural milieu. Furthermore, until recently this has been the only viewpoint deposited in the Western archive.

The assumptions enmeshed in the ‘othering’ process need to be deconstructed, not as a means of how Māori see themselves in particular, but as a means of understanding the discourse about us, that is reflected back to us, through an archive that has had a vested interest in our objectification. The “rules of practice” (Foucault, 1982) for the objectification of subjects, according to Said (1978, 1993), are based on the constitutive role of the observer, the history of geographical disposition in ethnography and intellectual dissemination of discoveries. These rules come to represent a set of textual strategies that are seen to have more to do with sustaining positions of power and authority over others than with the advancement of knowledge (Said 1978).

Foucault (1982) argues that objectification lies within dividing practices, in the separation or isolation of easily distinguishable sub-groups in intracultural contexts. He claims that “the subject is objectified by a process of division either within themselves or from others” (p. 209), and the outcome of this process is the categorisation and designation of social and personal identity.<sup>6</sup> Rabinow (1984) provides a synopsis:

...essentially ‘dividing practices’ are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion - usually in a spatial sense, but always in a social one. (p. 8)

Said (1978) deconstructs the study of racialised others, arguing that imperial anthropological practice is linked to a socio-cultural milieu in which political and economic interest is adhered to a context in which discourse about other is made both possible and sustainable. Imperial strategies centred on modes of classification that encompass physical, intellectual and spiritual parameters have, in effect, been used to control and contain those othered by race. Such strategies simultaneously canonise the power and knowledge of the invasive European.

For Māori women, the effects of objectification have been devastating – easily seen in the literature, through research and the very positions that we occupy or are absent from, within this society. Because of the numerous ways by which Māori and women were defined through colonisation, there have been a number of consequences. In the documentation of Māori ‘history’, for example, Māori women became invisible, written out of our own ‘stories’. Those who recorded and rewrote the stories assumed the lead characters within Māori history to be only Māori men. The invisibilisation of Māori women was a direct consequence of the colonial process, and through schooling practices in particular, Māori history became Māori ‘mythology’ with Māori women portrayed in non-consequential unimportant roles (L. Smith, 1992).

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault does not provide a complete historical analysis adequate for Māori, but rather, identifies a recent demarcation point at which a major set of disjunctives occurred. The disjunctives highlighted by Foucault and based in the histories of Europe only intersect with our history at the point of European contact.

There is much that has been written in this area.<sup>7</sup>

Waitere-Ang and Durie (1999) discussed absence in a paper. We argued that the forces of globalisation historically and contemporarily used Māori taonga as national icons that distinguish Aotearoa/New Zealand identity in both national and international forums. A growing interest in 'branding exercises' provide slick slogans and images touted as indicative of national, institutional and corporate cultures that suggests that there is a place for Māori. However, we also argued that the use of Māori cultural artefacts, cultural values and the presence of Māori bodies (in advertising), rather than being illustrative of inclusion, provide exemplars of co-opted bodies, voices and cultural icons called to the discursive and material service of an ever-increasing imperial regime.

Discourse about 'others' have been the vehicle through which a myriad of dominant groups have vested in themselves the power and authority to definitively define what Māori look like, how Māori behave, what Māori believe and how Māori need to change. This has in turn been translated into support for political agendas that have a greater interest in the subordination of indigenous cultures and the pacification of colonised groups rather than in enabling partnerships. Hall articulates the use of 'cultural power' and 'normalisation' as a means of centring the dominant cultural group while simultaneously decentering other:

... Black people, black experiences were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation [these] were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only ... were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge ... by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'. (Hall, cited in hooks, 1992, p. 3)

Māori similarly grow up being the pseudo-other, confronted with curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices that centre the cultural precepts of the dominant group. The result is greater proficiency, for example in the dominant language and with credentials in the dominant culture that have been gained often at the cost of our own. This necessitates the posing of questions about the levels of our own complicity with our objectification and about:

... the relationship between activism and research, between power and method, (which) immediately brings to the fore a whole set of issues about the social role of research, about the conceptual and epistemological grounding of knowledge claims, about what such knowledge is for, and about who ultimately benefits from its generation. (Apple 1994, p. x)

These questions challenge historical foundations and current practices that continue to exclude those outside the 'regimes of cultural power'.

## **The centring of mana wahine**

What draws iwi Māori together, in more recent times, are the homogenising effects of colonisation; adhering an opaque veneer to the window through which Māori women are viewed by the world. Through this veneer have emerged discourse mutations that have powerfully normalised the abnormal, dramatised the mundane and turned halves into whole. It is a discourse that sees male as owner and provider, casts female authority as secondary and insignificant, and simultaneously fractionates gendered roles customarily based on complementarity and collective good.

The ideological dichotomisation of male and female, hierarchical division within society based on ethnicity, and individualism has meant that Māori women have been (re)defined, (re)fashioned, (re)named and (re)organised into a colonial social order that atrophies who and what Māori women represent (Waitere-Ang, 1998). The result is that at times Māori women

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, G. Smith (1997); L. Smith, (1992, 1999); Johnston (1998); Johnston and Pihama (1994, 1995); Waitere-Ang (1998).

must (re)mind Māori men, as much as non-Māori men and women, about who they are and from whom they descend. Many Māori women – writers, film makers, academics and artists – are located within the position of ‘talking back’, ‘filming back’, ‘writing back’ and ‘painting back’ (Irwin, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Mead, 1996; Mita, 1993; Pihama, 1995; Te Awekotuku, 1991) in order to (re)assert their authority through (re)uniting the status of Māori women as complementary and equal to that of Māori men, a position that was corrupted by colonisation (Johnston & Pihama, 1995). This becomes particularly important when non-Māori have vested in themselves the power to (re)define the position and function of Māori women in both Pākehā and Māori contexts, and when many Māori men accept such (re)interpretations uncritically. This is particularly evident when, some Māori women:

... have also been led to believe that this loss of dignity and the right to be involved with decision making stems from Māori tradition. (Pere, 1982, p.95)

Hegemonic discourse that envelops and then subverts the customary positions of Māori women is a tool of colonisation that has simultaneously subjugated women while trivialising its own catalytic subordinating role. This is achieved in part by relocating such subversion within reinterpreted Māori cultural precepts. A measure of hegemonic power is the extent to which European renditions of who we are were accepted uncritically.

The combination of scientific discovery of indigenous groups and further ideological impositions attached to industrialisation and the rise of capitalism (Churchill, 1992; Fanon, 1961) provides a mindset in which Māori women become the recyclable waste products of a colonial process. This process has more often than not seen those being colonised as either expendable commodities or raw material privy to the deft hand of the colonial manufacturer (Waitere-Ang, 1998). Who Māori women are and how they see themselves are rarely given expression in such schema.

Māori women have experienced the application of such ‘dividing practices’ by a coloniser eager to differentiate themselves from the colonised, while rationalising the way colonisation would proceed under the guise of science. Knowledge locating women centrally in customary Māori society has been ignored or rewritten to become more conducive to colonial belief. Such beliefs have reconstructed Māori women as a multi-layered other. L. Smith (1992) illustrates the contemporary impact of this dividing practice on Māori women:

Māori women belong to the group of women in the world who have been historically constructed as ‘other’ by white patriarchies and white feminisms. As women we have been defined in our difference to men. As Māori, we have been defined in terms of our difference to our colonisers. As both we have been defined by our difference to Māori men, Pākehā men and Pākehā women. The socio-economic class in which most Māori women are located makes the category of ‘other’ even more problematic. (p. 33)

Feminist discourses have been grappling with the multidimensional complexities of differences between Māori women and Pākehā women, and although are aware of the issues relating to ‘othering’, can impose the same forms of objectification and subjectivity as research has imposed on Māori more generally.

While Pākehā feminists have striven to include Māori women in the broader struggles of feminism, such an inclusion has excluded Māori women’s ‘multiplicity of practices, cultural symbols and difference’, because feminism can include Māori women, but it cannot account for us. The history of colonisation and oppression, which have been Māori women’s experiences, is not the same history for Pākehā women. Pākehā women, in comparison to Māori women, have a history of privilege based on racial distinctions and beliefs. Pākehā women also have a history based on the oppression and subjugation of Māori women. As Yeatman (1993) quotes from Huggins et al. (1991) in relation to Aboriginal women:

...just because you are women doesn't mean you are necessarily innocent. You were and still are, part of that colonizing force. Our country was colonized on both a racially and sexually imperialistic basis. In many cases our women considered white women worse than men in their treatment of Aboriginal women. (Yeatman, 1993, p. 240)

One of the difficulties associated with how Māori women are included in particular tertiary forums is that much of the analysis, research and 'inclusiveness' is controlled by white academics including men. Thus Pākehā women control the contexts within which we as Māori women attempt to define our 'spaces' both within and outside of the contexts that we as women meet, engage and participate. An over-riding consideration in terms of how we engage appears to be influenced by a common perception that 'sisterhood' signals commonalities. The result is that Māori women have been defined through the discourses, experiences and realities of Pākehā women. When we have attempted to move beyond those perceptions, there is almost a frantic (even if laudably advanced) scramble to pull us back into the fold. A more sinister strategy is a move by some academics, in positions of authority over Māori students, to utilise the latter voices to discredit and attack those of us who choose 'not to toe the party line' because we critique their work and argue back to their Māori-friendly positions.

The struggle for Māori women has subsequently been the act of distancing ourselves from Pākehā women and men, as a means to explore our differences, centre ourselves and [re]claim, [re]define who we are (Johnston & Pihama, 1994). Seeing the two positions relationally and juxtaposed in a space where we are able to meet and engage in rigorous debate is what is sought.

This has meant the development of parallel positions that enable those 'poor' minority and indigenous peoples that many well intended liberals talk about, to identify their own interests and agendas where one can claim the space to contest, deconstruct and revitalise after the onslaught and destruction produced by colonisation. We need that space, and we need non-Māori women to support *us* in it.

*Within that space, the mana of wahine Māori is validated, and what rises to the fore are the dynamics of whānau, hapu, iwi, matauranga Māori, which enable the reinforcement and practice of ahuatanga, tikanga and te reo. There are no apologies for those who do not understand the reo; there are no apologies for those who have not learnt their whakapapa, their tikanga, their matauranga, but there is a tolerance for those who seek to learn, for the practice of tuakana/teina, of 'ako' (Pere, 1982), of manaakitanga, tautoko – all unencumbered by the 'others' whose questions of why and how can distract and fractionate the learning/supporting and teaching relationships.*

*The fire that burns in our belly continues, but the modes of resistance change. While we can still resist construction of us as other living rent free in our head spaces, that does not mean that we have finished evicting the colonial tenants or the neo-colonial interlopers that continue to seek residence in the nooks and crannies 'between our ears'. Our practice emerging from the puna (a deep and enduring pool) of mana wahine is the essence of our passion: for change, for healing in uneven worlds (knowing that both the coloniser and the colonised are – albeit differentially – damaged by colonisation). We can still be reduced to tears when we think of Māori kids being consigned to rubbish heaps not of their own making and belly laugh with those same kids when their quick witted and pointed critique show they are so much more than a statistic.*

## Conclusion

Māori women in institutional contexts have been in absentia throughout the institutional spaces we have traversed. This paper has argued that we are [re]strained, [re]stricted but seek [re]lease from the shackles that have bound us to institutions and all they have historically re[presented].

We are restrained by the validity checks and balances derived from a research culture that has historically been detrimental to our cultural growth and development, where we have been:

Considered both a dangerous species...and an endangered species (suffering pathetically from a 'loss of authenticity'), I am to remain behind the safety grille for the visitors' security and marvel. (Minh-ha, 1987, p.14)

These restraints have resulted in 'dead-end' pathways and cul de sacs that lead to our being caught by scientific rationality, lab-rats – death by microscope – physically present, but for all intents and purposes voiceless and still, the motionless dance of the institutionally dying, where we are told:

You may keep your traditional law and tribal customs among yourselves, as long as you and your kind are careful not to step beyond the assigned limits. (Minh-ha, 1987, p.6)

We are restricted within discourse that privileges individualism over collectivism that prefers to see us as a nexus of conflicting and contradictory centres inadvertently supporting the status quo of individualising discourse – detached and fragmented. Benevolence dependent:

I will grant you autonomy – not complete autonomy, however, for 'it is a liberal fallacy to suppose that those whom freedom is given will use it only as foreseen by those who gave it. (Minh-ha, 1987, p. 6)

The fragmentation process invariably leads us to no place – ever moving forward to our ultimate demise. Our presence is acceptable as long as we don't move beyond the boundaries and parameters of those spaces:

With a kind of perverted logic, they work toward your erasure while urging you to keep your way of life and ethnic values 'within borders of your homelands.' (Minh-ha, 1987, p. 6)

Where our physical presence is tolerated but we remain ideologically absent, though the crescents, seductive in their curvilinear shape, beckon our attendance. We continue to struggle to mark our presence, to find normative entry points into places that continue to struggle to see us as normal, resisting being marked absent within the terms of those who control our points of departure and [re]entry.

What would mark our attendance – thus removing us from the list of absentees – is when our avenues are embodied within the institutions in which we stand, recognised as equally valid as those institutional avenues that we already traverse; where the mana of Māori women is not divorced from that of Māori men; where Puanani is unshackled by Yoshi or Christabelle; where the colleagues of Hine-tu-whiria-o-te-rangi and Maringi Noa nga Roimata can say their names, imagine their significance, their history, and their connectedness to wider events and circumstances. A decade later Hine walks along hallways with some colleagues for whom absenteeism or the expunging of Māori critique is actively advocated. Those same hallways house academics willing to complicate the space they walk in knowing that it is to be a shared space of critique. Now (in 2009) as then (in 1999) to simply turn up, to attend, to be present, be seen and be heard is an expressive act of resistance against being marked absent. Simply, turning up, taking up our right to be present marks movement toward the realisation of mana wahine (the dignity of being a Māori woman) in institutions that have historically shut us out.

We seek release within our practices and situations that reinforce who we are, and to a certain extent Maringi finds release within an institution that supports and recognizes my 'culturalness', my identity, my being Māori. However, that is not to say that this is a perfect example either. The difficulty of traversing a culturally-based institution is one of being able to recognise and challenge cultural 'norms' from those imposed colonial ones, to separate 'tika' and 'teka', to know that there are forums, places and spaces whereby such discussions can be had – without men – to know that one is not alone, to seek support of kuia and other Māori women, to challenge them also about their own beliefs and practices that might contribute to our own denigration, and to be safe to do so.

To be silenced because one thinks one might appear disrespectful or be moving beyond one's place/space into a male domain can be a highly powerful controlling behavioral mechanism of Māori women, but one that is equally open to being subverted through our resistance. Leaving a room can often relay far more than voicing the concern because the subtlety of the message is immersed within a cultural paradigm that recognises those subtleties. To not participate through choice as a means to mark dissatisfaction, to be silent and be saying no (instead of yes) (Johnston, 1998) are other forms of cultural practices that pay heed to who we are.

*Me aro koe ki te ha o Hine-ahu-one.*

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