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Thesis: Smalltalk Rearing

Exegesis: Muka Words

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Candidate's signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessie Puru', written in a cursive style.

Jessie Puru

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Ethics Approval

This research project did not involve human participants or any other potentially contentious elements, and as such did not require approval from the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEK).

Abstract

Smalltalk Rearing is a poetry collection that follows the life of a young Māori woman from childhood to motherhood. It follows her experiences growing up as a child in a small rural town with her family made up mostly of women, and their struggles to fit in to the mostly Pākeha community. In her teen years, she moved into an urban community in south Auckland, where she faced culture shock. The wāhine is introduced to different cultures. She misses her own and struggles with finding out what her identity is, as someone who is biracial. Her Māori mother's family raised her but never picked up the language and spent much time on the marae. As someone who was raised only by women, she develops a distrust of men and often thinks back on the stories of her grandfather. He was the only good man she can remember, who passed away when she was very young. The way she eventually connects herself to her cultural identity is through storytelling and looking back on experiences and retelling them regarding Māori myth and legend. With her struggles to navigate through life, she addresses her insecurities and distrust by the end of the manuscript. She realises that it was the way she saw herself that disconnected her from her cultural identity, and that she can look back on her upbringing and see that she was included all along.

Muka Words

(an exegesis)
Jessie Puru
2019

Introduction

I started this manuscript a few years ago by just collecting some poems I had written throughout my bachelor's degree and finding a theme that fits all of them. Two of my earliest poems which I have included in the book 'Kare' and 'Tawhirimatea and the Soldier' were significant because they are two of the first poems that I wrote that started to involve the themes I became very interested in continuing with. I used these poems as a skeleton to build around and wrote poems to achieve a narrative arc. I base most poems on my own personal experiences and those of members of my whanau. I used stories told to me by my family about my ancestors to create stories about them to go with my manuscript, as I wanted to include experiences relatable to people growing up in a similar climate to mine, but did not want to limit the writing strictly to my life in the hopes to make it more universal. I prepared myself by reading poetry collections by other Polynesian poets, mostly women, to get ideas on how I'd want to tell my story. I noticed in the poetry collections today that some also sought to use references to myths in their own cultures to retell their own stories or present a myth in a modern context. I thought this would be effective in not only the main characters connection to her cultural heritage, but it could also give the reader a new take on the stories that they may not know, or already know but only as being told one way.

Aims of Exegesis:

I have three main aims of this exegesis. My first main point will be how Māori literature evolved with introducing written language and how we have kept our stories alive through colonisation.

In the second point I explore is the way Māori and Polynesian writers in the modern day have kept alive the stories and myths of their ancestors with poetry and prose.

My third point will be to look at my protagonist's struggle to navigate the different worlds she is a part of and her cultural heritage being both Māori and Pākeha.

Oral Tradition

Abakoa he iti he pounamu.

Although it is small, it is pounamu.

Before colonisation and introducing written literature, Māori told stories orally, passed down to others willing to memorise and recite themselves. There were many ways they did this, such as whakataukī, mōteatea, pepeha, and prose and narrative. There may be questions these days on how these stories survived so long without the convenience of the written word to document them, but as Jane McRae (2017) implies, there were many willing to hold on to these stories. She gives an excerpt from one of the early versions of written documentation of Māori history and oral stories by Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikāheke of the Ngāti Rangiwewehi tribal group of Te Arawa, which he wrote for Sir George Grey. It states:

“Most people, most in the land, whether Māori or Pākeha people, did not know how to retain the traditions from the ancestors of old; their knowledge was of course written on the pages of books. In Hawaiki [and] here in Aotea[roa], it was etched on the head [lit. ‘skull’], within the mind [and] the heart The Māori people kept the words by heart forever; when one generation passed on, they were kept forever [by the next].”

Colonisation and other factors eventually interfered with the ability of some Māori to pass down these stories without the need of written word. It has the convenience of always being there, documented and ready for whoever will pick up and learn for

themselves. That is why Māori have embraced the written language and some people like Sir George Grey have taken an interest in the stories of Māori and encouraged them to write and translate their tales.

From this beginning of Māori orature and eventually literature, there has been an evolution of the way Māori tell stories. The song and prose are very much alive because of the sheer willingness of each generation to memorise, along with introducing written words. The first Māori literary magazine was *Te Ao Hou*, which began publication in 1952 and ended in 1976. Some writers published in the magazine were JC Sturm, Patricia Grace, and Arapera Blank. “The magazine *Te Ao Hou* (1952–76), published by the Department of Māori Affairs and edited initially by Erik Schwimmer, was the first significant outlet for the publication of fiction by Māori.” (Holman, 2014). It was in 1964 that Hone Tuwhare was the first Māori poet published in English with his collection of poems *No Ordinary Sun*.

One of the first poetry books I owned was Hone Tuwhare’s complete works named *Small Holes in the Silence*. In this collection for the first time I read his famous poem ‘Rain’ and then in that moment shared the love for rain with him and yearned for it. Before then the only poetry I had known was the stuff in English class that you can’t relate to like Edgar Allan Poe and didn’t think I was a very good poet because of this. But Tuwhare’s rain was so simple and literal, yet so impactful.

“I can hear you
making small holes
in the silence...”

Whakataukī are small proverbs or important sayings that are often metaphorical.

“Sayings were valuable to the oral society. Like genealogies they were a vital way of memorising and transmitting knowledge and history, sharing with them a

condensed expressiveness and a large sphere of reference. They were of great use to composers and orators, and they were admired,” (McRae, 2017).

Some could have a few different meanings and uses and were valued because of the belief that the wisdom of the ancestors were portrayed in whakataukī, and they were important truths that had to be held on to. I like the whakataukī not only because of their messages and pieces of wisdom, but because of their ability to say so much with so little. “Kaua e mate wheke mate ururoa. Don’t die like an octopus, die like a hammerhead shark.” is one example of a whakataukī that shows these values and uses metaphor, comparing traits of these two sea creatures to those of humans.

“Octopus are renowned for their lack of resistance when being captured, however a hammerhead shark will fight bitterly to the end, to the point that when you fillet it fresh, its meat quivers. Commonly used to encourage someone not to give up, no matter how hard the struggle is”

Like Tuwhare’s stanzas in ‘Rain’ they observe the environment around those who created the sayings. In some poems in my collection, I try to capture the concise yet impactful essence of a whakataukī, like in ‘Matariki’.

“harvesting bitter grudges
from minds like hardened soil

packing up the wounds with mud and whiskey
and opening doors to wait.”

It is motivating to know that Māori have created their own place in modern-day New Zealand literature. If you look back on the tradition of storytelling by different modes, it is easy to see why. Another interesting form of Māori poetry is mōteatea. Mōteatea are poems or songs usually sung or chanted. They tell us how well Māori are at composing poetry and conserving their history through words spoken, sung or chanted

“They are evidence of the ancient and historical Māori tradition of composition, as well as the conventions and skills of the composer poets. In addition, the songs offer considerable information about Māori culture.” (McRae & Jacob, 2011).

“My waving heron head-plume,
Alas, hath fallen this day
On the sleeping-place of chiefs
Up there on Puhara!
I now crave, as food,
That man of the roving band.” (McRae & Jacob, 2011).

This was the first verse of a Mōteatea, which was a lament for one Nga Puhi chief who was killed in battle. They compare his head to that of a heron’s, with a plume of feathers sticking out of the top. This is just one example of the well-composed chant or poem and the metaphors used within them. The composer was comparing the surrounding nature to this chief, seeing the same qualities within him.

I always thought poetry was just like any other literature in English, with big words that I could not understand with ideas I did not relate to. Despite being told that my poetry was worth continuing with, I always compared myself to the English and American way of writing poetry. It was stuff I could not understand. Never did it occur to me that poetry can be short and concise, it did not need big words to be profound. It looks to me like Māori were just using the natural environment around them to draw value from. They observed so much what the flora and fauna were up to and applied that to their way of living. They held so much weight because the way of human life depicts nature.

With the knowledge I’ve gained recently about this history of Māori storytelling, I have gained confidence in telling my own story. I can just look at what my tipuna have done to preserve their history through song and orature so well and be inspired. This has room in my manuscript, and I have some poems dedicated to regaining this knowledge that

some Māori may have disconnected from, by whatever means. There is one poem called ‘To Re-learn’ in my collection. I used the word “relearn” because it indicates that I had known these songs and stories before instead of the word “learn” which would mean for the first time.

“so I can hear what
I’ve been missing
from myself

singing *E Hara* louder
than the whaea in the front
it echoes over the outside

and the quivering ground
takahia forces my stance
to buckle underneath

tēnā koutou
the words fill my lungs
so my body repeats it

thank you
for bringing this
back to me.”

In this poem the protagonist has found herself back in a wharenuī singing in a group and automatically feeling at home and has a void filled by being part of this waiata.

Retelling the myth

Whaia e koe te iti kaburangi; Ki te tuoho koe, me mouna teitei.

Seek you the little treasure of your heart; If you bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain.

I must go back to the beginning to start this manuscript. Not to *my* beginning but to the beginning of Te Ao. I have some poems referring to the separation of Papatuanuku and

Ranginui, and I keep reverting to this story. Only recently have I been interested in making this one of the main themes in my manuscript.

We have poets who are reclaiming these stories and using them in a modern context and rewriting them to suit more the stories of their own lives or the circumstances of Māori and Pasifika people today. Some of these poets include Hone Tuwhare, Alistair Campbell, and Robert Sullivan.

I like to refer to Māori myth in my manuscript because I use it in a way to reconnect my protagonist with her Māori heritage. It is a cultural reference that helps her understand the way the world is, and because of this she realises that she isn't really disconnected from her cultural identity the way she thought in the beginning. I like to use them as well as her recalling her own memories of being brought up by Māori women, that she belonged the whole time and this feeling of disconnect wasn't because of her upbringing but of how outsiders projected onto her what they think a Māori should be. Referring to myths carried down through the generations in her whanau are necessary in the manuscript, as I try to use it as an anchor for her into Te Ao Māori. She knows these stories well along with a lot of other important lessons passed down on to her. It just takes her growing up into adulthood and motherhood to realise the importance of this knowledge.

In the new book edited by Witi Ihimaera and Whiti Hereaka called *Purakau – Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers*, Ihimaera writes in his introduction that:

“writers have begun to explore their origin stories in a different, imaginative way.

While the primary stories are considered sacrosanct, there has been a huge amount of interest in looking at contemporary society against a mythical template, either explicit or implicit. By doing so, certain truths reflecting society

or that might have contemporary worth can be compared or contrasted – or affirmed.” (Ihimaera & Hereaka, 2019.)

One retold myth from the collection that really stood out for me was ‘Born. Still. The birth and return of Maui-Tikitiki-a-Taranga (as observed by his sister, Hina)’ written by Briar Grace-Smith. It is the story of how the mother of Maui birthed him and then cast him out to sea in a woven basket. However, in this version is set in a dystopian world, where families are cramped in apartments and cities covered with smog.

“Wearing orange radiation suits and masks, Hina, Taranga and the baby, who had been placed against his mother’s breast, zig-zagged, ducked and dodged their way through the city. They had to be careful of snipers who crouched in waiting on the rooftops ready to shoot anyone who passed. If they were killed, their bodies would be sold and consumed by royalty or sold to the scientists for testing, but human cells died quickly outside of the body and the days of cloning were long gone.” (Grace-Smith, 2019).

This story offers a new way of imagining the world before ours begins and makes the reader wonder if the world is just one big cycle. Having a new perspective on our myths is one benefit of these retellings.

Towards the end of my manuscript’s first draft, I thought about how to reference Māori deities in my own work. I try to place them as ordinary people in today’s world. In my poem ‘Fuccboi’ it is from the perspective of my protagonist who gets involved with a man (Maui) who uses his charm to get what he wants only to take off on one of his adventures and she never hears from him again. I thought it would be interesting to use him as a representation of those types of romantic interactions that people can relate to. He is the charmer that turns out to be trash. He is the guy who makes you think “all men

are the same, they only want one thing.” and make you want to delete your tinder account.

“before he got out of the car
he kissed me hard and his lips were salty
and sucked all the moisture out of me
I couldn’t wait for the next time
I said “bring me back a big one”
and he said “I’ll bring you back the biggest”

when I got home
his thread was gone from my inbox.”

One example in my manuscript is the poem ‘Papatuanuku gets a Green Prescription’ where I attempt to include myth in a modern-day situation, by comparing earth mother Papatuanuku to a present-day Māori woman, with the struggles one may have today.

“your lungs don’t fill like they used to
your bosom too heavy
like it’s being walked on
and the shoulders above you feel like mountains”

I also used it to talk about how humans have neglected Papatuanuku and how they now expect her to revive herself. In one way it relates to how people who are suffering are being told how to improve themselves with no responsibility taken by those who have caused harm to them in the past.

“but forget about their part in this
the doctor says, you must bring yourself back
by your own means,
to your cinched and fertile self”

When I wrote this poem, I thought about all the women in my family, more specifically my mother and my aunty who have had health problems and disabling strokes and heart problems before they reached their 50s. I thought about the high statistics for the health problems in Māori and the life expectancy, where not much has been done except blame. I also thought this applied to the way we have treated the earth and merged the two

characters into one. It is also nice to see the Paptuanuku in your elders, as they are gods to you.

Since the days of the first Māori and Polynesian poets being published, the stories of their ancestors and gods have been told through them. We have Robert Sullivan and his poetry collection *Star Waka*, with poems like 'Waka 76'. I like the placement of Tangaroa in a bar, running into a member of his whanau like your family would down at the local pub.

"Tangaroa slams his pint on the bar,
'Gissa nother,' he hisses – the bartender
slides a frothy wave the length of the bay –
the crowd of fur seals resume their conversations,
slapping each other on the backs.

...Tangaroa looks him up and down,
checks out his moko and his waka.
'You're one of Tane's kids, ain't ya.
That means we're kin!
He pays for the drink.'" (Sullivan, 1999)

We also have Tusiata Avia, whose poetry collection *Bloodclot* focuses on the adventures of the Samoan guardian and war goddess Nafanua. One poem 'Nafanua is an Aeroplane' mixes ancient legends with modern day objects.

"Nafanua says: I am an aeroplane and I am happy to be metal
I like my swollen belly, I like the way I feel against myself
I love the way I can take them all inside me like herds of swine" (Avia, 2009).

Portraying legendary characters in modern day and as human shows us we can relate to them. The thing about Pacific gods is that they felt just like we do, and their nature (being so close to human nature) started the universe. Although they can be thought of as otherworldly, they are not out-of-reach. We can see that god or goddess within ourselves and not seem narcissistic about it. The stories say that they felt and hurt like we

did. One example is how the world began with Ranginui and Papatuanuku, clinging to each other than being forced apart and learning of their heartache.

“not knowing
that an angry man threw his eyes into the night

the belly of his shattered father
weeping rain for separation of earth and sky” from “Matariki”, page 50.

Pulled in both directions: Navigating two worlds

Whatungarongaro te tangata toitū te whenua.

As man disappears from sight, the land remains.

During the 1940s-70s the major cities experienced mass urbanisation. Numerous Māori people moved into the cities. This is when the “Urban Māori” came to be.

“The urban migration of Māori has been described as the most rapid movement of any population. In 1945, 26% of the Māori population lived in the towns and cities. By 1956 this had increased to 35%. Mass migration continued into the early 1960s. The urban population grew to 62% in 1966 and reached nearly 80% by 1986. As a result, many rural villages were depopulated.” (Meredith, 2019).

As a child, I grew up in the country, the nearest town being Waiuku, a small rural town on the west coast in South Auckland. It was an entry point to the Manukau Heads and sat near the Waikato River inlet to the Tasman. I base a lot of childhood poems on my experiences growing up in this area. The protagonist goes to a primary school where most of the students were Pākeha, whose parents were rich farmers in the area. Everyone knew each other, which a child ignores. Although the protagonist at the time is unaware of the struggles her Māori mother went through while trying to fit into this community,

she eventually grows to experience it herself with her own daughter. One poem I wrote called ‘Piano Lessons’ is from a memory I have from school when I was just starting to learn piano. I try to show a contrast on the reactions to two different children playing piano in a recital. I also wanted to include a feeling of uncertainty from the mother of the protagonist on being amongst these different parents, which she has nothing in common with. In the last stanza, the mother and daughter go off to enjoy their own after-recital meal and leave the other mothers to gossip over club sandwiches.

As a teenager, my protagonist moves into the city. There she experiences the kinds of culture she never experienced when she was living in her small community. From a small rural school to one nearing one thousand students. From a school where she was one of the few Māori amongst a majority of Pākeha, to Māori and Polynesian students being the majority in this new urban community. I wanted to point out the pros and cons of each community. She notices that it is a lot harder to stand out and be known in this new environment, so a lot of the authority figures find it easier to lump groups together. In a poem called ‘Husk the Ball’ I wanted to portray what it meant to be a brown kid in this kind of Kiwi urban school, where they only acknowledge you if you are good at sport.

“Husk the ball,
they like that – you don’t even have to do it right
they don’t know how it’s really done

or carve it
imagine a tiki
they like that – the staff, coach
after scoring their points”

Another struggle with the identity that my protagonist has is being biracial with a Māori mother and Pākeha father. Although she is raised by her mother and Māori family, she feels never completely “here nor there”. She has thought little of categorisation but often

wondered about the treatment of herself from both Māori and Pākehā because of her mixed heritage and being called “Half-caste” without knowing what it meant.

“Because of society’s history of categorisation, people of mixed race have been neglected, thus leaving them in a state of marginality because they are so often forced to choose only one racial identity when there is a need to recognise all aspects of their heritage.”(Webber, 2006).

I wanted to show my main character feeling like it confuses her, and that her identity has been neglected like Webber points out.

One poem of mine called ‘The Paper behind Words’ takes a perspective where the protagonist’s fair skin is seen as a privilege when she notices her darker skinned cousins being treated differently and being talked down upon. It offers the lesson that different people come with different struggles and privileges that we rarely think about.

“with their pinky fingers,
my fair skin
would glow red
when they made my cousins
feel like they wanted
to fade into the page”.

Another poem ‘Bias’ represents a moment of resentment of my main character’s Pākehā heritage. I use the image of her pulling out the blonde and red hairs out of her head as a metaphor for her trying to erase that part of her for a moment. We don’t know what leads her to this moment, but it picks a moment of time where we can only guess what the protagonist is thinking for her to feel this way.

“curl them into tungsten
between my nails, then
discard them like those heads
they descend from.”.

This is a small insight into the fight one can have within themselves and their struggles with identifying themselves. I wanted to show the feeling my protagonist had at the time and her resentment she had with one half that makes up who she is means she resents herself. We also have poems that might point to where that resentment comes from. In 'Only Half' she is imagining a conversation with her white father, addressing horrible things he said to her about her mother. The title nudges towards my experience of describing both my cultural identity. For example, when you say you are Māori or Pākehā there's always a response of "only half" or "half-caste" like you are not a whole person who does not see their own cultures as whole ones.

I have poems like 'Taupiri Mountain' and 'Kariotahi' where she takes what she has learned from her Māori elders and applied it. When she passes Taupiri Mountain, which is also the gravesite for the late Māori queen she remembers family always slowing down to acknowledge and appreciate her. She copies this action even when she is with friends who don't know about it. This shows that even though she doesn't know it her culture and history is known and absorbed. 'Kariotahi' is poem about a west coast beach with large waves in rips. She remembers a thing her mother tells her about never turning your back on the sea. Although she is unsure if it is a cultural superstition of just for safety, she obeys and remembers the lesson her whole life. In 'Mirrors' she is told things from her family and friends about what they do around mirrors because of their beliefs and applies them in her own life.

For the same time that Māori and Polynesian writers have been published they have been addressing what it is like to live between the Polynesian and European worlds. In the anthology name *Mauri Ola* we have poets like Aroha Harris telling her own story with the poem 'How She Knows She is Māori: a checklist'

“Someone swelled
she is clever
Māori.

Her name is alice, sarah, irene
someone calls her aunty
someone calls her cuz
she is Tūhoe, Te Āti Awa, Ngāi Te Rangi
she is fair, she knows
she is her own
checklist.” (Harris, 2010).

For a long time after Aotearoa was colonised Māori felt displaced. There was a political and societal attempt to erase Te Reo and the Māori way of life. In my poem ‘Dead Tongue’ I write about my maternal Māori grandfather. As someone who grew up in the era where Māori children were beaten in schools if they were caught speaking Te Reo, he ended up in his later years only speaking English and refusing to teach his children Te Reo. He thought there would be no point in teaching his children Te Reo because at the time there was still an attempt to erase it, and I sympathise because he did not want them to bear what he did in his childhood years.

“my koro’s mother tongue
twisted in school by a cane
fist and strap at a desk

beaten out so much
that the fear to speak of whakapapa
was passed onto his tamariki.”

As my protagonist gets older, she is more aware of the community around her and the hardships of her people in poems like ‘Kupu Hou’, where there is the criticism of how government organisations now have this trend of trying to rebrand themselves with Māori names. Another poem like this is ‘Wards of the Land’ where we are placed in a field face to face with police while also focusing on the recent struggles of Māori and the lower socioeconomic community in New Zealand.

“she and her cousin
are sitting in a paddock
facing the knees of bored police officers
they stand in a line
because of the off-chance of violence

while minutes away children
are in the hospital
and mould is being sucked into lungs
of the generations after you”

As a mother, my main character now finds the value in the lessons and stories she was told as a child by her mother and grandmother. She now is enthusiastic about cooking and making things like the older wāhine in her family did. In my poem ‘Is it too late to learn?’ my main character is feeling regret for not listening to and watching her grandmother when she was showing her how to make her famous fried bread. She ends up trying to remember and figure it out by herself and imagining what her grandmother would say to her if she were there. The voice is from the point of view of her grandmother’s spirit.

“Get those tongs. Line that bowl with a tea towel, that one I gave you. I gave you all of them. Use that *really old* one, so no fibres stick to the bread. Drain them off. See girl! You don’t shame me, so why wait until I’m in the ground to ask!”

Conclusion

My collection aims to tell the story of a woman who grows up with a matriarchy. A family of strong wāhine. In the beginning of the manuscript, we get a bit of back story concerning her family and where she grows up. At the end of my manuscript, I want my main character to be content with herself and acknowledge her past. She is eager to accept her cultural heritage because of her growth and maturity at the end. She realises things she didn’t in the beginning, which is a lot like my life. Along with the inspiration

from my own experience, a little research into the history of my land and culture, especially storytelling and myths, has helped me tremendously.

With a rich history of Māori orature there is no doubt that this quality is part of being Māori and that no one can take away this talent. They used these stories to pass on lessons and life values to the next generation with observations of the surrounding nature. They took inspiration from the ocean to the trees to the creatures around them and applied them to their own lives and community. My main character, sometimes unconsciously files away the lessons she learned from the generations before her, such as “Don’t let babies look into mirrors” or “Never turn your back on the sea”.

The orature and literature have thrived during times where people were trying to erase the culture and the language. It has made a good comeback as well as put to great use written literature. From the earliest Māori who first put pen to paper our traditions, songs and stories to the twentieth century where we have the first Māori writers published in English with their own books or in literary journals like *Te Ao Hou* (1952-76). With whakataukī and mōteatea so poetic and full of metaphor which has been memorised for generations I believe that learning this history of Māori storytelling has helped me write my poetry and add more to the narrative arc of my manuscript. This history has motivated me to write a lot of poems included in my collection. I try to use simple yet impactful language like those in whakataukī, with words that flow like mōteatea and Māori poetry which sound musical when put together.

I drew a lot of inspiration from the old myths that personify our Māori gods and goddesses. The way they are personified makes you relate to them more. Whereas in Western Christian culture it is harder to associate yourself with the higher powers. I took it further and imagined them in modern society, which has been done a few times before

with poets like Robert Sullivan and Tusiata Avia with Polynesian deities which are similar to each other.

I wanted to use Maori legends like Maui and Papatuanuku in a way that people can also relate to. For example, in 'Papatuanuku gets a Green Prescription' I wanted the reader to see the maternal figure in her I do, with the struggles one maternal figure might face, like being worn down with the environment and people around her. I wanted to relate Maui to a person a lot of us have come across in our lives because of his cheeky nature I thought they fit together quite well. With Polynesian gods and goddesses, they experience human emotion and flaws which I think feels more relatable and aspirational. It's comforting to know that they can be like us, with feelings.

The manuscript touches on a lot of topical issues. There has always been this struggle with biracial people on where they (and often others) categorise themselves. From personal experience, it can be quite confusing to be accepted by only one or neither of your cultural groups. At times it is difficult to give yourself both or multiple labels when society is intent on only placing you under either one or the other. The struggle has been ongoing for a long time, ever since the term "half-caste" was born. Another topic is the differences of growing up as either a rural or urban Māori. I wanted it to be known in this collection that each is just as valid as the other, and that no one can take her culture and whakapapa away from the protagonist.

Overall, I would like my manuscript to be an insight into the upbringing of a young Māori woman with strong women around her. She grows into someone more aware and content with where her life has taken her and has let go of any resentment towards the cultures that make up who she is and embraces them hoping to raise another strong woman to carry on in the matriarchy that is her whānau. The current last poem is called

'Ballet Lessons' which slightly echoes the poem 'Piano Lessons' from earlier in the book, except our main character is now the mother and she now appreciates what her own mother experienced in a new light. Thus, carrying the torch for the new generation.

I hope that readers will see scenes from their own lives within the pages. Whether it be from the family stories, the myths, the towns, or the landscape.

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