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"Hinenui Te Pō is a light in the darkness": Performing pūrākau in research on incest and childhood sexual abuse

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Helen Pearse-Otene
Massey University

Abstract

This article describes the use of Māori performance methods to recover and analyse ancestral perspectives on incest and childhood sexual trauma. A research team of community members and Māori performing artists drew upon pūrākau theory, arts-based research and a Māori theatre pedagogy called Theatre Marae to investigate the story of Hinetītama, the Dawn Maiden, who unwittingly married her father Tānemahuta. The researchers explored the pūrākau and shared their personal narratives during marae-based hui and an intensive creative workshop in the theatre. Their findings were then incorporated into a play called *The Swing* which was performed and further analysed in facilitated audience discussions. This analysis suggests that incest and childhood sexual abuse are perpetuated in societal processes that enable absent fathers; the silencing of mothers; the objectification of others for self-gratification and creativity; the disconnection of children from their whakapapa; and the Western-prescribed nuclear family. Furthermore, it proposes that the tale of Hinetītama and her transformation into Hinenui Te Pō, the Guardian of Death, is not merely a Māori version of an incest taboo, but an endorsement for traditional Māori child rearing practices that authorised the extended whānau as the basic social unit and dignified men as nurturers.

Keywords: Kaupapa Māori; Theatre Marae; performing pūrākau; Indigenous arts-based research; survival narrative; Hinenui Te Pō; historic sexual trauma.

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Introduction

Findings from family violence research acknowledge colonisation and historical trauma as contributing factors to Māori experiences of family and sexual violence (Balzer et al., 1997; Cavino, 2016; New Zealand Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2017; Pihama et al., 2014) and further, call for a systems-focused response (Action Station, 2019; Carne et al., 2019; Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2017; Safe Families Team, 2017). Additionally, the literature advocates for the unhindered development of culturally appropriate interventions for abuse survivors and their *whānau* (family) that are founded upon Māori understandings of trauma and healing (Kruger et al., 2004; Pihama et al., 2017; Pihama et al., 2019). In this article, I report on a community arts-based research project that explored traditional Māori understandings of incest and healing from sexual trauma as embedded in the *pūrākau* (ancestral story) of *Hinetītama*, the dawn maiden, who became *Hinenui Te Pō*, the guardian of death. A research team comprising Māori therapists, theatre practitioners, *kaihaka* (Māori performing artists), and community members investigated this ancient pūrākau and the research team's own survival narratives using a Māori theatre pedagogy called Theatre Marae (Pearse-Otene, 2020). I describe how the team analysed the story and then wove their interpretations into a theatre piece that was performed and analysed further in the ensuing audience *matapaki* (discussions).

Background

I begin this article by locating myself in the research context and acknowledging those life threads that inform my work. On my mother's side, I am a descendant of Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, and Ngāti Pahauwera from Northern Hawkes Bay. On my father's side, I am from Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, and Ngāti Kuri in the Far North, and Ngāti Ruanui in Taranaki. I work as a theatre practitioner, programme facilitator, and psychologist. The idea for this project materialised while I was co-facilitating anger management and family violence programmes at Kōkiri Marae in Seaview, Wellington. My co-facilitator and I noticed an increase in the numbers of survivors of child sexual abuse attending these groups, which were not designed to address historic sexual trauma. The participants' overwhelmingly positive responses to the pūrākau content of the programmes and their claims that they would have experienced better outcomes from a Kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy) informed intervention became the primary drivers for the research project.

Methodology

Pūrākau Theory

Pūrākau theory aligns with the notion that we use stories to make sense of and give meaning to our lives (Elkington, 2011; Lee, 2005, 2009). Collected by early European ethnographers who viewed them as quaint fairy tales or myths, pūrākau were a traditional system for preserving esoteric and practical knowledge (Lee, 2005; Parahi, 2020), and are nowadays appreciated as keys to understanding the inner psychological worlds of our ancestors (Cherrington, 2003). Pūrākau are rich resources for research that inquires after ancient Māori ontological and epistemological concerns (Pouwhare, 2016; Pouwhare & McNeill, 2018) and lay out a prescription for how one can identify as Māori through the expression of certain behaviours and characteristics (Rameka, 2016). The pūrākau of Hinetītama and her transformation into Hinenui Te Pō has been covered in previous Kaupapa Māori research on pūrākau in therapy (Taitimu, 2016; Tamanui 2016), Māori sexuality (Pihama et al., 2016), intergenerational trauma (Pihama et al., 2014), and Māori child-rearing practices and learning styles (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Pere, 1994). In my therapy work and research, I have encountered it as an incest taboo, a description of stages of depression, a story of the first suicide, and as a survival blueprint for survivors of sexual abuse. I shall also add here that I have heard folks refer to it to justify inappropriate sexual acts on the marae and incestuous marriages in isolated Māori communities.

Regardless, these different interpretations of Hinetītama's story lend weight to the concept of pūrākau as rich sources of a multiplicity of meanings. Just as our *tūpuna* (ancestors) knew what, when and how to harvest from which trees in Tānemahuta's forests, the *hua* (fruits or benefits) that we derive from pūrākau are determined by what knowledge we seek, the types of analytical tools we are using, the version (or versions) of the pūrākau we engage with, and our own positionality and bias. In recent years, Kaupapa Māori researchers have reimagined pūrākau as a method to: decolonise Western forms of knowledge production (Smith, 2012) and education (Elkington, 2011); legitimise Māori informed therapies (Cherrington, 2003, 2016; Hall, 2013; Kopua, 2018; Piripi & Body, 2010; Taitimu, 2016); develop a Māori psychological practice and workforce (Cherrington, 2003; Waitoki & Levy, 2015); inform creative research practice (Pouwhare, 2016; Pouwhare & McNeill, 2018); and record the personal, everyday experiences of Māori living in the here and now (Lee, 2005, 2009). Lee (2005, 2009) theorises pūrākau as a legitimate method for qualitative research that is critical, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural. Pursuing this thread prompted the idea of an arts-based exploration of the pūrākau of Hinetītama within the domain of the *whare tapere* (communal house of entertainment), which is the original home base of pūrākau (Kāretu, 1993; Royal, 1998, 2007) and the philosophical ancestor of contemporary Māori theatre. I decided to design the research as a therapeutic, Kaupapa Māori community arts project, and analyse the pūrākau via a Māori performance pedagogical lens called Theatre Marae.

Theatre Marae

Linda Smith (2012) advocates for the decolonisation of academic and creative sites through the establishment of Indigenous informed spaces like Kaupapa Māori Theory and Praxis (Bishop, 1999; G. Smith, 2003; L. Smith, 2012). Theatre Marae is another such site where mātauranga Māori can be reclaimed, reframed, celebrated, and shared through performances that assert *tino rangatiratanga* (Māori sovereignty) and resist the colonial hegemony that dominates New Zealand mainstream theatre. Theatre Marae emerged in the late 1980s as a means for Māori artists to reclaim performance space (Glassey & Welham, 2003), and present works that were unashamedly political (Scott, 2006) and anti-colonial (Williams, 2007). As a theatre pedagogy it is a confluence of theatre craft, *ngā mahi a te rēhia* (Māori performing arts), *tikanga* (Māori customs), and creative therapies suitable for undertaking creative inquiry that privileges Māori ways of being, knowing, relating, and doing in the world (Pearse-Otene, 2020).

A Theatre Marae approach repurposes the theatre as a wānanga to undertake a Kaupapa Māori performative analysis. Both complementary and contradictory philosophies from Western theatre craft are kept in check through the enactment of four research spheres or *pou* (markers) drawn from Māori metaphysics:

- Te Kore (The void): Aligning with the theatrical principle of *the empty space* (Alfreds, 2013; Brook, 1968). Te Kore is the limitless potential for creativity that is not yet revealed (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003).

- Te Wheiao (The liminal space): Te Wheiao refers to the shaft of light preceding the new day and the transition phase of childbirth (Barlow, 1991). The in-between, emergent quality of Te Wheiao is similarly expressed in creative notions of liminality, diversity, and cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Greenwood, 2001).

- Te Ārai (The veil): The threshold between the spiritual and physical realms (Marsden, 1975; Royal, 2003). Te Ārai is the means through which the ancestors and other psychic phenomena connect with us. It is analogous with theatre's preoccupation with religion, metaphysics, and sacred ritual.

- Te Papa Kōrero (The talking place): From this standpoint, the stage is appropriated to fulfil the conventional role of a rehearsal/performance space, with the additional requirements of a marae, research space, and therapeutic setting. To that end, the papa kōrero plays host to Māori expressions of welcome, creative inquiry, debate and deliberation, group therapeutic processes, storytelling, acknowledgement, and farewell (Pearse-Otene, 2020).

These four pou circumscribe a culturally safe space for creative research. Here, Māori notions of relating, knowing, and being can emerge and be afforded their fullest expression, impervious to the pathologising, deficit laden language inherent in Eurocentric research paradigms.

Method

Upon receiving the blessing of the *rangatira* (leader) of Kōkiri Marae and gaining ethical approval through Massey University, I began an advertising campaign at Kōkiri Marae Hauora and Māori Women's Refuge through staff email, posters, and word of mouth. The recruitment process was styled as an invitation to community members to join as co-researchers and artists, rather than study participants. Twelve people joined the research whānau (10 women, 2 men) which included survivors of incest, child sexual abuse, adult rape, and domestic violence, and family members of survivors. The name *Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai* was bestowed upon the project to symbolise the collaborative relationship between Kōkiri Marae and the whānau that would blossom into creative and well-being outcomes for the community. The project ran from September 2019 to February 2020 and was split into two phases.

Phase One: Marae Based hui. For 11 weeks, the research whānau met weekly at Kōkiri Marae in a three-hour *hui* (meeting) set along the lines of a community support group and co-facilitated by me and director, Jim Moriarty. Caring for the well-being of each individual and the group were of paramount concern, leading to the construction of protocols that held us to ethical and safe practice. I maintained regular clinical formulated a whānau care plan that accounted for risk assessment and the host marae's overarching tikanga, its code of conduct and key operating procedures. As part of our orientation, Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai was welcomed by a senior staff member of the social services division, who provided information about available on-site support and wrap around services, including a women's health service, nurse's station, counsellor, budgeting, and legal advice, and *kaiarahi* (support worker/navigator). Before embarking on the research proper, we formulated a group agreed *kawa* (protocol for engagement) that included the *porowhita* (circle) a Theatre Marae process for addressing inter-personal conflict and caring for someone in distress (Pearse-Otene, 2021). Our kawa was intended to stay relevant and responsive to the progress and changing needs of the group. Informed consent was not taken for granted either; like the kawa it was constantly revisited throughout the journey.

In phase one of the project, we engaged in *kōrero pūrākau*, a distinctly Māori approach to a growing body of scholarship in Indigenous storywork (Archibald et al., 2019). This type of research entails people crafting their lived experiences or reinvigorating ancestral stories to relate to present day issues and circumstances (Lee-Morgan, 2019). To that end, we carried out *mahinga kōrero pūrākau* (storytelling sessions) and shared our life journeys of hurt and healing alongside the tale of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and her whānau.

Everyone received a journal (in which to record their research experiences and produce creative work) and copies of the pūrākau of Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō and *Hineahuone* (Hinetītama's mother). My choice to include Hineahuone's story in the research came from an idea to contextualise Hinetītama's pūrākau within her *whakapapa* (genealogy) and was cemented after my review of incest focused research revealed a dearth of literature detailing the experiences of the non-offending parent, who is usually the mother. This appeared to mirror the silencing or absence of Hineahuone from her daughter's story. I felt that the pūrākau of Hineahuone warranted more investigation and wondered how Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai might respond to it.

As there were no other Māori language speakers in the team, the final versions of these pūrākau were written in English and comprised the common plot points of the texts that were available to us. This rendering was undertaken with full awareness and appreciation of the cultural injuries already inflicted on our stories through the processes of selective recording, translating, and editing by early *Pākehā* (European) ethnographers and publishers (Lee-Morgan, 2019; Mikaere, 1994). A way for the group to acknowledge and problematise this inescapable damage was to look at other interpretations of the pūrākau through paintings, sketches, short stories, and *whakairo* (carvings),

and seek out and analyse other texts that resonated with them.

At the close of phase one, some members disclosed that they would withdraw from the group due to overriding family commitments and health issues. To ensure that their contribution would not be lost from the remainder of the project, we carried out a final kōrero pūrākau session to formally record everyone's responses to pūrākau that had emerged over the preceding weeks. We launched into an animated matapaki about the pūrākau where we noted down key scenes, themes, and unanswered questions that everyone agreed should be analysed further in the theatre.

Phase Two: Theatre Based Workshop and Performance. In phase two the group moved into working directly with Te Rākau theatre at Massey University. Of the original 12 members from Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai, six attended the first week of the studio process to represent the *mana* (authority) of the research whānau and connect with the theatre company. We reintroduced the pūrākau of Hinetītama and Hineahuone, presented the group's findings thus far, then had our first read-through of a play I had written called *The Swing*. Set in a rural community in *Te Waipounamu* (The South Island), The Swing is about a whānau struggling to heal from intergenerational child abuse and the death of a *mokopuna* (grandchild). The play had never been performed before and seemed a suitable vehicle through which we could present the research team's analysis of the pūrākau. Importantly, the Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai whānau found both the plot and the characters to be realistic and relatable.

In an intensive three-week rehearsal, we rehearsed the play and simultaneously applied ngā mahi a te rēhia to devise a second piece that would interweave with the scripted scenes, thus having two performance narratives play out together. After the first week, and due to other life priorities, two of the research whānau retired from the production but visited when they could to support the rehearsals, offer feedback, and maintain the mana of Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai. Another joined the stage management, preparing the actors for rehearsal and advising them on their characters and dialogue.

The remainder became actors working across two groups, a cast who would perform the lead roles in the scripted scenes, and a *kāhui* (chorus) who would further explore the pūrākau in a performance-based analysis using ngā mahi a te rēhia and character study techniques drawn from acting methodology. Theatre Marae invokes Te Ārai to refashion pūrākau as the means through which we reconnect spiritually and genealogically to the atua. The revelation of our whakapapa connection to the creator reminds us of our own divinity and sanctity, and its inverse – the humanity and fallibility of the atua (Cherrington, 2003). The performers embraced this whakapapa connection to create, develop, embody, and play out the psychology of their allocated characters; they generously gave over their beings and tools (physicality, emotional range, voice, intellect, and creativity) as conduits for the characters to reveal their presence on the papa kōrero and convey their story to the research team and later, the audience.

Our analysis comprised a cyclic process where the company first discussed the questions, themes, and plot points initiated by Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai, then the kāhui expressed these elements by devising vignettes, composing waiata, or choreographing movement. Next, the material was blocked and made rehearsal ready for a show-and-tell session on the papa kōrero before the rest of the company. This was followed by a deliberation and debriefing session, where everyone could share their responses to the work, ask questions, and offer suggestions for further exploration. Taking these new learnings and queries on board, we returned to the start of the process and repeated the cycle again and again – sometimes distilling, sometimes amplifying the performance material – but always interrogating. This process continued until we reached a consensus on the themes and the aesthetic quality of the piece in which they were being presented. Only then was the final product designated as a scene and integrated into the play.

Performative, embodied ways of analysis open a channel in pūrākau research that transcends the material constraints of written text. Emboldened by the theatre's assurance of artistic freedom, we can engage all of our senses and the dramatic potential of the tinana to dialogue with the pūrākau and draw out from the depths of Te

Kore previously subjugated, hidden, or discounted knowledge that is nonetheless significant to us. In sum, by performing pūrākau we can defy the last two centuries of literary distortions that have infiltrated our ancestral stories and worked to contaminate our cultural beliefs.

The Swing was performed in front of invited audiences drawn from the arts, health, academia, justice, and social development sectors, as well as community advocates, family and friends, and members of Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai. In keeping with Theatre Marae tradition, the event was framed as an opportunity for public servants, front line workers, and community members to hui under one roof, watch the play, and then, over a light supper, share their reflections about their engagement with the performance and its themes. This allowed for further analysis but more importantly provided a platform for Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai to press home their message to those who are in a position to affect policy.

Findings

Key Themes from the Research

The pūrākau of Hinetītama and that of her mother, Hineahuone, offered a window into the views of our tūpuna about the ideal family unit and its maintenance, by presenting the fate that befalls its dysfunctional opposite. Our findings are arranged into three key themes: 1) Hineahuone: blaming the silenced, non-offending parent, 2) Hinetītama: the protective power of the extended whānau, and 3) The burden of whakamā.

Hineahuone: Blaming the Silenced, Non-Offending Parent

From the outset, the group was troubled that Hineahuone was characterised as silent and passive in her own pūrākau and then was either absent from her daughter's story or was present but complicit. Mothers whose children were abused speculated that this literary detail produced an implicit directive to the audience to scapegoat Hineahuone. They expressed an affinity for her and perceived her silence as representative of their own experiences of injustice, powerlessness, social isolation, betrayal, and rage.

> The kāhui lie in a heap on the floor, and Tānemahuta enters, brandishing his rākau (staff). The SM plays softly on the guitar while Tānemahuta mimes carving Hineahuone out of the earth with his rākau. One by one the performers roll away, leaving Hineahuone on her own. As Hineahuone takes her first breath, I trigger the heartbeat sound effect and the rest of the company perform a communal whakahā (exhale) to signal tihei mauri ora (the breath of life), but also to remind the actors that we are supporting them in this space. Tānemahuta stands away from Hineahuone and takes up a position of contemplation. Then he approaches her. He stabs at her face with the rākau, and her eyes flick open in shock. She looks like a store mannequin. The guitar recoils as Tānemahuta's rākau pokes, carves, and pierces Hineahuone. Finally, he mimes his rākau entering her tara (vagina) to find the uha (female essence). Tānemahuta offers his hand to Hineahuone and helps her to her feet. He circles her in wonderment. She places her hand to her belly – kua whakaira tangata (she is with child). He exits and she starts to transform. (The Swing production diary, January 2020)

We explored various ways to interpret Hineahuone's emergence from the earth to establish her and Tānemahuta as equals. However, no matter how the actor used his hands and *rākau* (staff) or altered his energy and movements, we could not avoid creating the impression of Hineahuone as an outcome of Tānemahuta's handiwork – she is the last of an exhaustive list of experiments to generate human life. Furthermore, we associated Tānemahuta's subsequent exploration and penetration of Hineahuone's orifices with the sexual objectification of women and their body parts, and then appraised her physiological response to his actions as an example of how victim's bodies are groomed by their perpetrators to accept abuse. Some survivors, whose own *tamariki* (children) fell prey to sexual exploitation, related to Hineahuone as a victim of psychological abuse, incapable of protecting Hinetītama. We speculated that Tānemahuta's creation and subsequent treatment of Hineahuone (Alpers, 1996; Pere, 1994; Whatahoro, 1913) might be an ancestral perspective on how family violence and sexual abuse can impair a trauma survivor's capacity to nurture and safeguard their tamariki (van der Kolk, 2014).

Gender equality is a key ingredient in safe, nurturing, cohesive families. From our exploration we derived that Tānemahuta coveted Hineahuone for her creative power but did not respect her as his equal, setting in place the conditions for a patriarchal family unit that he could control. While taking into account colonisation's hand in producing damaging narratives of Māori men (Hokowhitu, 2004), the research team acknowledged the presence of negative gender norms in our society that devalue wāhine and induce *tāne* (men) to subjugate their partners and tamariki (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2020). We resolved to challenge this discourse by performing an uplifting *waiata-ā-ringa* (action song) that celebrated the sanctity of motherhood and reminded us that a woman is our preeminent common ancestor. We wanted Hineahuone to have the final say:

> I have half an hour to come up with a waiata... I sit still, close my eyes, and quieten my mind so that only the ticking of the kitchen clock anchors me to the present. I turn my thoughts to my *karani* (grandmother): Marata the songwriter… A tune starts to trickle in, and I open my eyes. I play the tune on the guitar and the opening lyrics start falling in…
>
> > I te tīmatanga ko Papatūānuku, te whaea o te whenua,
> > te kaitiaki o te puketapu: Te One i Kurawaka.
> > Ko te ahunga o te kanapu o te hunga ora,
> > ko Hineahuone;
> > ko te ira tangata tuatahi he wahine – kia mau ki tō ūkaipō!
> > Ko te hī, ko te hā,
> > ko tihei mauri ora!
> >
> > (In the beginning there was Papatūānuku, the earth mother and guardian of the sacred mound: the red earth at Kurawaka. Hineahuone is the originating source of the spark of the living; the first human being was a woman – do not forget that! The drawing in, the breath; the sneeze of a living soul!)
>
> (Author reflection journal, January 2020)

By separating the earth and sky, Tānemahuta simultaneously brings about our world and causes eternal heartbreak for his parents. Unperturbed, he exercises his creative power by establishing his dominion: the *ngahere* (forest) and the creatures that dwell within it, followed by Hineahuone. From our analysis of Hineahuone's story, we perceived Tānemahuta's objectification of her as a warning against the dangers posed by unbridled talent that is self-serving, lacks empathy, and pursues creativity at all costs. In the wake of this learning, we turned to the events in Hinetītama's story as a terrible lesson for Tānemahuta, whose descendants now pay the price for his failure to overcome this character flaw.

Hinetītama: The Protective Power of the Extended Whānau

In the pūrākau of Hinetītama, tragedy ensues when our heroine realises that her husband, Tānemahuta, is also her father. From this we may assume that Tānemahuta has been an absent parent, leaving Hineahuone to raise their daughter alone, thereby replicating a patriarchal norm that assumes childcare as a woman's domain. The potential for child sexual abuse and incest can be restricted by protective factors in the physical and social environments of prospective victims and offenders (Smallbone et al., 2013), as demonstrated in the tikanga of the pre-European *kāinga* (village). This traditional social eco-system comprised multigenerational whānau units that assumed all tamariki as belonging to everyone, which therefore demanded a collective responsibility from all adults to nurture and protect them (Hohepa, 1994; Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Abuse against women and children was a spiritual assault on the *tapu* (sanctity) of the *whare tangata* (womb), and a social transgression against the extended whānau and kāinga (Jenkins et al., 2002; Mikaere, 1994; Milroy, 1996), which necessitated a community-wide response (Durie, 2001; Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Mikaere, 1994).

> We leave the floor set to the previous scene where Kath has swept a pile of leaves into a tidy border around the edges. The SM improvises on the guitar as the kāhui, Hineahuone, Hinetītama, and Tānemahuta mark through a choreography that depicts Hinetītama's birth, growth, and chance meeting with Tānemahuta. We light up the floor in warm tones and fade in a recording of the dawn chorus. Hinetītama performs a double short poi, and we take sentiments from various *whakataukī* (proverbs) to improvise a short waiata that we sing alongside the guitar:

> Ko Hinetītama, ko te haeata o te rangi
> (Ko Hinetītama) me te mea ko Kōpū
> Matawai ana te whatu i te tirohanga
> *(It is Hinetītama, the dawn of heaven, who is like the morning star. The eyes fill with tears upon seeing her)*
>
> As we sing, Tānemahuta spies on his daughter then turns back to hear his mother reprimanding him for what he is about to do. He rebuffs her by swinging his rākau with such force that the displaced air causes the leaves to scatter across the floor — the movement startles Hinetītama. She locks eyes with Tānemahuta, then he offers her his hand. They exit. (The Swing production diary, January 2020)

Hinetītama and Tānemahuta's mutual sexual attraction is enabled through the absence of an established father-daughter relationship. The Westermarck hypothesis (1921) holds that people who live together in their early years develop sexual disinterest or repulsion towards each other; this is supported by later research suggesting that fathers who are active caregivers develop protective feelings that can counteract potential incestuous urges (Parker & Parker, 1986; Williams & Finkelhor, 1990, 1995). Tānemahuta's apparent dereliction of his parental duties appears to verify these claims and is at odds with early accounts of our *tūpuna tāne* (male ancestors) being doting fathers who were actively invested in raising their tamariki (Jenkins & Harte, 2011; Salmond, 2016). The research whānau discussed absent fatherhood as symptomatic of a patriarchal culture that resists gender equality in the workforce (Ministry for Women, 2019), emasculates men in caregiving roles, and discriminates against stay-at-home fathers through subtle public messages like gendered signage (Alves, 2020). Furthermore, some of our team members reflected on their current roles as sole mothers and absent fathers as normalised via their own childhood experiences in broken homes and sustained through social policies that promote long-term benefit dependency.

The Burden of Whakamā

The word *whakamā* (shame) appears for the first time in the pūrākau of Hinetītama (that is, we did not see it in any of the earlier creation narratives) and so it was the subject of deep discussion throughout the research. Because Hinetītama is the first human being to encounter whakamā, we imagine that she experiences it as a deeply disturbing phenomenon that penetrates every cell of her being. The research whānau accounted for whakamā in embodied experiences that included: a draining sensation, a sinking feeling in the body, a hollowness, a choking in the throat, a drooping head, a burning face, eyes to the floor, a sickening and twisting of the guts, and a constant nag that pounds the head. These descriptions show that whakamā encompasses far more than the dictionary's basic translation of shame, shyness, and embarrassment. We drew on this visceral imaging to devise the pivotal "ask the posts of the house" scene:

> Hinetītama's world is falling apart. I trigger an earthquake/landslide sound effect which cues the performers (who have stood frozen as the carved pou of her whare) to come to life, dismantle the scene, and tipatapata to one end of the stage behind Hinetītama. They sing:
>
> He aha tēnei hūkiki o roto te puku? He mate e ngūngū nei.
>
> Auē, te whakamā me te pākatokato! Hinetītama tū tahanga, paketai.
>
> (What is this violent shivering of the belly? A sickness is gnawing at me. Alas, it is shame and anguish! Hinetītama stands bereft as discarded driftwood.). (The Swing production diary, January 2020)

Recurrent whakamā borne out of abuse is a curse, a constant reminder that overwhelms the tinana, shocks the mauri, distresses the wairua, and triggers a desperate need to avoid re-living painful memories. Members of Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai recounted that the failure to find permanent relief was compounded by a sense of ongoing injustice, anger, resentment, misplaced self-blame, and hatred for allowing the abuse to happen, and self-sabotaging behaviours that added more weight to the burden of whakamā. The literature indicates that left unaddressed, this burden might be expressed in extreme risk-taking, self-harm, criminal activity, imprisonment, addiction, mental health issues, and suicide (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2009; Niland & Fernando, 2016; van der Kolk, 2014). The inevitable fallout creates long-term effects that seep into the next generation (Frazier et al., 2009; van der Kolk, 2014), thereby locating sexual trauma as an insidious public health issue (Basile, 2005; Basile

& Smith, 2011; Campbell & Townsend, 2010; Colding, 1999; van der Kolk, 2014).

By changing her identity, Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō neutralises the potential of this curse to generate unending suffering; more than that, she rejects whakamā by gifting it back to her abuser:

> We discuss the question "*why doesn't Tānemahuta feel whakamā?*" and conclude it is because he created the world and has naturally set the environment and its rules to suit himself. He is a god. But in timeless stories such as this, the villain — even if he is a god — must have his comeuppance and pay a price, there must be a lesson to learn from it — otherwise, why would the ancestors bother ensuring the survival of this pūrākau through the generations? We find this lesson at the plot point where Hinetītama recites a karakia to form the Adam's apple in her father's throat as a final gift to differentiate tāne from wāhine. While it could be construed as a dignified and compassionate act, Whatahoro (1913, p. 39) writes "Ko te pona-whakahoro-kai a Hinetitama i ponaia rā i te kakī o Tāne, mō te hara o Tāne ki a ia tēnei" = The laryngeal prominence that Hinetītama knotted in Tāne's throat was a consequence of Tāne's violation against her. The language here suggests force and retribution. (Notes from phase one final matapaki, author reflection journal, December 2019)

The research team's curiosity around Hinetītama's gifting of the Adam's apple to Tānemahuta carried into the studio where we constructed an analysis around the word *tenga*, the word for both the Adam's apple and the crop of a male bird. This highlighted a connection between Māori men and male birds — both descendants and representatives of Tānemahuta. Male birds are the singers of the ngahere and are immortalised in *whakataukī* and mihi that emphasise the importance of speech–making as a desirable attribute of a chief. Therefore, to lack this ability contravenes an expected norm of mana tāne and *rangatiratanga* (leadership). Some of the men in the group related this to an internal tension they experienced when they stopped themselves from expressing their thoughts and emotions due to not possessing the vocabulary, the belief that strong men should not talk about their feelings, and their fear of being belittled and rejected. In rehearsal, we explored what we saw as a plausible connection between embodied experiences of whakamā and *globus sensation*, a psychological phenomenon where people experience a choking feeling in their throat when they become highly anxious or stressed (Selleslagh et al., 2014; University of Iowa Health Care, 2019).

> Some of the actors explore ideas like gulping, choking, sharp intake of breath, hand gestures, and sudden body movements to signify this powerful moment when Hinetītama knots Tānemahuta's throat with the tenga. In this action, she will telegraph to the audience that she has reclaimed her voice and her mana. We decide to apply *mau rākau* (weaponry) in the stage blocking, so while Tānemahuta is speaking Hinetītama/Hinenui Te Pō enters holding a weapon and strikes at his *kakī* (throat), which immediately silences him. The actors must sell the choreography, so it appears as if she has magically speared him in the throat and pinned him to the centre of the stage like a stuffed exhibit. He remains frozen, rigid, and silent, while she slowly circles him with her weapon and delivers her final lines:
>
> Anei he taonga mōu, he tohu whakamaharatanga mō tāua. Kaua koe e whai mai i a ahau, ā, kaua hoki koe e tangi mōku. E noho koe ki Te Ao Mārama, ka tiaki ai i tō tāua whānau. E noho rā.
>
> (Here is a gift for you, a token to remind you of us. Do not follow me, and do not weep for me. Remain here in the world of light and take care of our family. Farewell.)
>
> When she exits, Tānemahuta exhales with relief, breathes again, then gulps. He draws his hand to his throat — to something strange lodged there. He looks out into the darkness and farewells his daughter. (The Swing production diary, January 2020)

Implications for Practice

As with any research methodology, health professionals and researchers need to consider their own skill set and knowledge base before undertaking a performance approach like Theatre Marae. They should have a solid grasp of te reo, tikanga, ngā mahi a te rēhia, dramaturgy (the theory and practice of drama), and group facilitation. Alternatively, they could reach out to the community to establish a facilitation team of community members who possess one or more of these skills. Theatre making is a communal activity and a costly process, requiring a company of cast, crew, and administrators to produce the creative work. Researchers should factor

production overheads into their funding applications and would do well to partner with experienced artists in the community who are able to source arts grants, production related resources, and community funding pools that fall outside the scope of conventional research funding.

Therapeutic theatre processes can induce performers to experience personal catharsis, or conversely, they could reconnect with old trauma stored in their tinana and become distressed. Given the immediacy of this type of event, the researcher has a duty of care that goes beyond providing people with the contact details of local health services. Robust protocols for pastoral care should be developed and as illustrated earlier in this article, these can be strengthened by researchers partnering with local Māori health professionals and social services providers, all of whom will still be serving their community long after the completion of the project.

All research methods come with potential risks and limitations; however, the associated constraints and unknowns of arts-based research should not serve as barriers to Indigenous researchers wanting to take such an approach. Weighted against the challenges of applying an arts-based framework like Theatre Marae are just as many, if not more, benefits that might support communities in their long-term objectives involving collective healing, decolonisation, capacity building, and reclaiming guardianship of Indigenous knowledge and forms of representation.

Conclusion

> Did Hinetītama go to the night because she knew that Tāne would not follow her there?
>
> He is the one responsible for causing Te Ao/The daylight — so maybe he doesn't like the dark
>
> Te Pō is not bad
>
> The dark is a safe place, it is a nurturing place of potential
>
> Hinenui Te Pō is a light in the darkness
>
> (Members of Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai, personal communication, December 12, 2019)

As community members whose lives have been affected by incest and child sexual abuse, Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai explored but rejected the notion that Hinetītama's irreversible decision to retire from her father's domain and transform into Hinenui Te Pō was a suicide. Such an ending does not promote a restoration of mana, but traps Hinetītama in eternal victimhood, condones a self-destructive message that suicide is the only honourable way out, and too easily absolves Tānemahuta of his wrongdoing. Through the collective participatory research lens of Theatre Marae, Hinetītama's choice was instead decoded as a deliberate act of resistance and autonomy. She chose to reassert her mana on her own terms, denounce the conditions of her life with her father, and send a clear message to Tānemahuta and all their descendants that incest is wrong (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Her rejection of whakamā, and journey to take up the mantle of Hinenui Te Pō and claim the spirit world as her domain, is the definitive performance of survival, healing, and transformation.

In light of this project, Kōkirihia Ngā Puāwai came to the conclusion that a kaupapa Māori sexual abuse intervention should contain at its heart the pūrākau of Hinetītama and Hineahuone and core ancestral messages that elevate men as nurturers, ensure women's autonomy and dominion over their bodies, endorse the protective influence of the extended whānau, and, most importantly, instil hope and mana for survivors. While some of the findings presented here might not be new to Māori academics and social service providers who work in the family and sexual violence sector, it is significant that these learnings have been encountered, analysed, and validated as meaningful by a community using the undeniable wisdom of lived experience.

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About the author:

Helen Pearse-Otene (Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kuri, Ngāti Ruanui) is a theatre practitioner and psychologist who completed her actor training at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School in 1996. Since 1999, she has been a member of Te Rākau Theatre working in therapeutic theatre programmes in prisons, isolated communities, schools, and youth justice facilities throughout Aotearoa. Helen's research and advocacy interests are in improving wellbeing outcomes for veterans, supporting the development of kaupapa Māori interventions in health and social services, and connecting young New Zealanders with te reo, tikanga Māori, and Te Tiriti via the performing arts. h.pearseotene@gmail.com