

# Journal of Global Indigeneity

## this tauwi house

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### Keywords

Māori, Indigenous, tauwi, ancestors, settler colonial institutions

## **this tauihi house**

*for Hineiti, Karamea, Marcelle, Maureen, Mere, Petera, Te Urukeiha, Wanda, Yvonne*

i enter this house as a mokopuna of Māhaki, of Toroa, of Porourangi  
you may not see their bones strapped to my back  
but they are there  
i exist because the waters of Haumapuhia imbue my veins  
& oxygen from Hineteariki fills my lungs  
you may not see their presence in my blood and breath  
but they are there

i stand here as a mokopuna of Mei Ngahiwi  
one of fourteen named Huakatoa hapū whānau  
whose Waikato lands were confiscated  
& whose lives amongst 3,549 other “Landless Maoris”  
were reduced to lorem ipsum text in the appendix  
of volume 1, section G-01 of the journals of the  
house of representatives of New Zealand from 1900  
the names & records of my tīpuna are housed in a tauihi house  
specifically built to dispossess & eradicate iwi lives

like government houses this university & all universities  
were not created for Pacific bodies wāhine bodies Indigenous bodies  
this tauihi house was not built for us  
we should not exist in this space & the fact that many of  
the Indigenous leaders in this whare today  
have alluded to this reality in their research & mahi  
- in some form or other -  
yet remain complicit in treating me in treating us  
as expendable brown bodies  
is reprehensible

i contemplated listing the multiple ways this tauwi house has wronged me  
the countless attempts to intellectually dispossess  
& eradicate this Pacific body  
but 10,500 collective words later is there even a point  
i'm hōhā angry sad exhausted & i have little faith  
in the koretake cogs of this tauwi house  
that publicly espouse 'manaakitanga'  
whilst thrusting bayonets into my sides  
ko te tangata? kao!  
mana ki te tangata? ehara!

so maybe the house will listen if i engage with its own traditions?  
a browned-up sonnet then in iambic pentameter:  
'shall i compare thee to Invasion Day?  
thou art nought but a colonial house'  
yeah nah i told Shakespeare to fuck off years ago  
tō tātou reo rangatira might still be stuck  
in my throat but while i have blood & breath & bone  
i will honour the intellectual rhythms of my tīpuna  
whose bodies are imprinted in our whenua our waterways  
our waiata theses & poetry & in our stories laughter & tears

i am a mokopuna of taniwha of tohunga of chiefs  
i am a mokopuna of the displaced & the landless  
i am a mokopuna of the Pacific  
so slice me from kidneys to armpits if you dare  
but my kōrero and pain will seep into groundwaters  
find refuge in the mist & multiply never to be silenced

i recently realised that i've spent far too much energy  
trying to prove my worth to this tauwi house:  
that i'm \*creative\* because Keri Hulme judged me so in a competition

that i have \*international appeal\* because the University of Hawai'i Press  
likes my kupu  
that i have \*scholarship grades\* & \*impact potential\*  
that i'm a colonial fucking poster-child of \*Firsts\* &  
\*Māori excellence\* whatever the hell that means  
but this Pacific body these Pacific bodies house the physical  
spiritual & intellectual futures of our communities  
our existence inside this tauwi house is comparatively fleeting

Mei Ngahiwi birthed my Papa on the East Coast  
she survived displacement & landlessness &  
violence from multiple tauwi houses  
her body became my house became my body that houses her legacy  
this tauwi house will never house the fullness of brown lives  
& it has siphoned more energy than it deserves  
from me, from we, from all of us here today

to the Indigenous leaders in this whare  
what happened to your passion, your advocacy  
& your aroha towards us - your future colleagues  
& collaborators & friends?  
we come to you as a rōpū of perceptive, supportive  
creative & tenacious Indigenous PhD students  
together we've cried entire waterways  
held wānanga-length conversations  
& produced a Master's-degree archive of letters & emails  
& DMs & texts & poetry to get here

engaging with us should never have been this hard  
attempting to right the wrongs of this tauwi house  
should never have been this hard  
& it should never have been at our expense

it may be difficult for you to hear our stories  
but understanding our pain sitting in discomfort  
& truly listening may illuminate pathways forward

as a rōpū we know that we are only one part of one solution  
to centuries of raru but the burden of writing the story of this tauwi house  
falls also to you & your conversations with your ancestors  
for our part we are vocal & articulate  
& we ebb & flow energy & momentum to & from each other  
we *are* the Pacific & we will not bow to this tauwi house  
not today not tomorrow not any day  
but we will wānanga in partnership for the sake of our kaupapa &  
for the next generations of whanaunga who may choose to enter  
this tauwi house  
we do this with our stories with our mana with each other  
& with the tautoko of our ancestors strapped to our backs

### **Glossary**

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| aroa                       | love                        |
| hapū                       | subtribe                    |
| hōhā                       | exasperated                 |
| iwi                        | tribe                       |
| kaupapa                    | topic                       |
| kōrero                     | discussions                 |
| koretake                   | useless                     |
| ko te tangata? kao!        | for the people? no!         |
| kupu                       | words                       |
| mahi                       | work                        |
| mana                       | respect given to a person   |
| manaakitanga /manākitanga  | care                        |
| mana ki te tangata? ehara! | respect for the people? no! |
| mokopuna                   | grandchild                  |

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| raru                   | conflict                  |
| rōpū                   | group                     |
| taniwha                | supernatural water beings |
| tauīwi                 | not Māori                 |
| tautoko                | support                   |
| tīpuna                 | ancestors                 |
| tohunga                | expert                    |
| tō tātou reo rangatira | our chiefly language      |
| wāhine                 | women                     |
| waiata                 | song                      |
| wānanga                | traditional gathering     |
| whānau                 | family                    |
| whanaunga              | relations                 |
| whenua                 | land                      |

### **Declaration of conflicts of interests:**

Just under a third of this poem is strategically placed throughout an essay I wrote for a forthcoming special edition of Literature Compass: “Re-weaving Te-Moana-nui-a-Kiwa: Wāhine Māori bodies in short fiction.” Literature Compass Special Issue: Global visions from Oceania, edited by Bonnie Etherington & Tina Makereti. In saying this, the poem has not been published before in its entirety, but I have recited the poem at two different conferences, neither of which were recorded, to my knowledge.

This poem responds to a very specific situation at Waikato University that led to 7 Māori and Pacific PhD students, including myself, to leave and enrol in our studies elsewhere, and while I include in the poem specifics about my own family and iwi/tribe, the poem represents our collective experiences. As well as this, there are gestures towards our specific experiences with the University of Waikato e.g. in the phrase "Ko te tangata?", which is a Waikato University slogan, and in the Waikato tribal spelling of 'manaakitanga' rather than 'manākitanga'. However, it remains important to me that our experiences in academia are also presented as Indigenous

experiences across settler-colonial institutions more generally, not just universities, or the University of Waikato specifically. I have chosen to not name any university and to only gesture towards our specific tensions in the poem.