

HAKA ON THE HORIZON

Māori contemporary dance and whare tapere

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Abstract

The founding of the esteemed Atamira Dance Company (ADC) in 2000 signified a new wave of Māori dance, integrating cultural strengthening with innovation. For instance, the distinguished and founding members of the ADC, Louise Potiki Bryant and Jack Gray, seized the opportunity to collaborate with the inspirational scholar Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal. This paper provides a glimpse into their combined efforts towards developing the breadth and depth of haka through their contribution to the whare tapere recovery. Principles and qualities of human–land synergy and the water deity Hineruhi informed the research; the cultural work reveals the experimental horizons of what Royal (2012) calls expressions of “new indigeneity”. The invigoration of haka within the whare tapere tradition has stimulated creative direction for Māori contemporary dance. Unique works by Potiki Bryant and Gray illuminate momentums of Māori contemporary dance in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords

Māori contemporary dance, haka, somatics, whare tapere, whakaahua, Pacific Island dance

Introduction

The Atamira Dance Company (ADC, formally known as the Atamira Dance Collective)

has created an impressive legacy of innovative dance-making committed to evolving Māoritanga. An important turning point for the company was when founding member and

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award-winning choreographer Louise Potiki Bryant (Kāi Tahu) and esteemed scholar and director of Manu Atarau at Te Papa museum Dr Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngā Puhi) began a research collaboration into the roots of haka in 2005. Founder of the ADC, Jack Gray (Ngāti Porou, Ngā Puhi, Te Rarawa), also played a key role in the investigations. This paper examines how their research alliance and efforts have yielded rich conceptual resources for evolving theories and practices of Māori dance. The impetus for this study was Royal's (1998) doctoral thesis that focused on weaving together the fragments of knowledge about the *whare tapere*, an institution that fell out of practice in the 19th century due to colonialism, lifestyle changes and Christian conversion (Royal, 2007). *Whare tapere* "were pā-based houses of storytelling, dance, music and games. They were a traditional Māori venue where entertainment and fun was actively pursued" (Potiki Bryant, 2014, p. 6).

Royal's (1998) thesis catalysed the revival of this tradition and the founding of the charitable trust *Ōrotokare: Art, Story, Motion*, which specialises in invigorating Māori and Indigenous knowledge through the performing arts. For over 15 years, Royal and Potiki Bryant have led a continuous exploration of the lineage of the haka within *whare tapere* tradition. This has inspired new creative directions for Māori contemporary dance and for the ADC. Two examples of Māori contemporary dance informed by the oral history and principles of *whare tapere* include Potiki Bryant's development of an Indigenous somatic approach that connects the body, mind and spirit and Gray's acclaimed dance performance *Mitimiti* about his ancestral homeland in the Hokianga. Achievements of these dancers provide a window into why the company is a "leading creator and presenter of Māori contemporary dance theatre" (ADC, n.d.). The company is "considered a major player in the 'coming of age' of contemporary Māori dance" (Bradshaw,

2015, p. 89; see also Sciacchia, 2013; Zaitz, 2009). They are

a pan-iwi collective of artists, their movement vocabulary includes Māori archetypes and elements, ballet, and contemporary techniques coupled with influences from sport, hip hop, and yoga. They have regular national tours and perform across the Pacific, Asia, and the United States, and are reputed for their cutting edge approaches to performance and for their commitment to telling important Māori stories. (Cruz Banks, 2015, p. 41)

The following section will outline the significance of ADC and the importance of contemporary Pacific dance in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. The debates and tensions entailed in the term "contemporary" are discussed; the methodology is described; and the background story of *whare tapere* revival and haka redefining by Royal, Potiki Bryant and Gray is provided. Political and cultural implications as well as motivations behind the recovery are mentioned. Finally, how the *whare tapere* principle of *whaakahua* inspires somatic exercises and philosophies of performance through the embodiment of human-land synergy and the deity *Hineruhi* is analysed.

The rise of Māori contemporary dance

Established in 2000, ADC is reputed for producing very powerful choreography relevant to their *whānau* and to the wider sociopolitical and (post)colonial context of the nation. The company asserts the important voice of Māori in Aotearoa, and their experimental performances aim to respect and advance understandings of their cultural heritage (M. Patterson, personal communication, February 13, 2009). The literal meaning of "atamira" is "stage" and another meaning of the word is "platform for the dead body and the process of caring for those who

have died” (ADC, 2009). “Our work is about life, death and genealogy; our company represents diverse Māori people,” said Jack Gray (J. Gray, personal communication, February 12, 2009). Many of the founding members no longer dance or perform with the company as they have moved on to new endeavours, and current artistic director Moss Patterson (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) has updated the mission statement in order to highlight a different tenor that is developing in the company. However, their work still chronicles the tribulations, mysteries, seasons and celebrations of life in Aotearoa, and the group remains a platform for dancers and choreographers to explore Māoritanga (Horsley, 2009).

The ADC is a salient flashpoint for New Zealand’s dance history and the nation’s world reputation for developing remarkable Indigenous performing arts. Converging tikanga Māori with cultural renaissance and inventiveness, their work activates Māori ways of seeing and creating knowledge (Cruz Banks, 2010, 2015; Potiki Bryant, 2014; Shea Murphy & Gray, 2013). Historically, Indigenous contemporary dance in Aotearoa has been a platform for equally embracing ancestral wisdom, innovation and interculturalism, in addition to challenging dominant narratives in order to move past them. For instance, the ADC followed in the footsteps of the 1980s Taiao Dance Theatre led by Stephen Bradshaw, a troupe that could be called the first wave of Māori contemporary dance because they laid the foundation for conceptual and cultural protocols. Bradshaw, along with other Taiao members, pioneered a kaupapa Māori dance that aims to “acknowledge whakapapa or ancestral past within a changing world” (Bradshaw, 2015, p. 80). In addition, during Bradshaw’s leadership and liaison work within the Auckland City Council and Toi Māori Aotearoa, he contributed to the professional development of the ADC through his guidance on performance proposals, budgets, timelines, securing funding, and other matters. Other Māori artists

who have contributed to the shared momentum and spectrum of Indigenous contemporary dance include Charles Koroneho, Moana Nepia, Tāne Mete and Tai Royal (Okareka Dance Company), Tanemahuta Gray, Merenia Gray, Tru Paraha and Cat Ruka. Samoan New Zealand choreographers have established internationally celebrated companies such as Black Grace and Mau Company. The organisation Pacific Dance New Zealand, led by Eosefa Enari and Aaron Taouma, should also be mentioned. This backdrop reveals a collective force of Māori and Pacific Island contemporary dance artists surrounding the ADC, and together they are developing insight into culture, identity, Indigenous creative processes, and knowledge-making through dance.

The term “contemporary dance” is problematic for several reasons. “Contemporary” is a Western cultural construct that is often assumed to be divorced from tradition or heritage (Bradshaw, 2015; Gray, 2015). Pacific Island dance scholar Adrienne Kaeppler (2004) has insisted that there is a need to acknowledge the mutuality between tradition and contemporary dance expression. Both senior choreographers and mentors for the ADC, Stephen Bradshaw and Charles Koroneho have said they are not comfortable with the descriptor “contemporary”. Bradshaw (2015) favours “continuum Māori dance” because it implies an ancestral past (p. 79); however, at the same time he realises the word “contemporary” has currency within the global dance industry. Koroneho prefers the words “Indigenous performance” or “haka” to describe evolving Māori dance (Maraetv, 2013). He has a point because as Karetu (1993) notes, haka is a general name for Māori dance, which is “comprised of both physical and spiritual aspects” (Matthews, 2004, p. 10). Haka is often described as a posture dance accompanied by chanted or shouted song and performed by groups of men, and increasingly today by groups of men and women. One of the main characteristics of haka, according to Matthews (2004), is that the actions involve all parts of

the body to emphasise the words (for further discussion see Gardiner, 2007; Hokowhitu, 2014; Karetu, 1993; Royal, 2007). While Māori contemporary dance might not meet particular aesthetic criteria assigned to haka, Gardiner (2007) reminds us that haka is an evolving, living tradition and not just about certain bodily qualities but also the embodiment and activation of Māoritanga.

Scanning across Oceania, several Pacific Island dance scholars researching in areas such as Hawai'i, Fiji, Marquesas, Banaba, Tonga and Guam/Guãhan confirm that dance continues to be an important vehicle for Indigenous knowledge strengthening and advancing, and for (re) establishing important cultural transmission (Alexeyeff, 2009; Cruz Banks, 2013; Flores, 1999; Freeman Moulin, 1994; Hereniko, 2006; Kaeppler, 2004; Teaiwa 2008, 2014). In sum, the pan-Pacific dance energy elucidates a "critical postcolonial dance recovery" (Cruz Banks, 2009, p. 356) or, in other words, the recuperation and advancement of dance knowledge that was historically interrupted due to colonial predicaments. With Royal's help, whare tapere research exhilarates Indigenous insights and prospects into haka. Both Potiki Bryant and Gray harness the discoveries as fuel for moving Māori contemporary dance into the future.

Dance and somatic research

I became interested in the ADC after seeing their performance *Mapunapuna* at the Tempo New Zealand Dance Festival in the year I relocated to Aotearoa from the United States. The study reported here was carried out between October 2008 and 2012 and was ethically approved by the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee and Academic Committees at the University of Otago in 2009. The methodology used for this research—dance ethnography—values understanding dance within a given community and this is more important than the particular movement, action or specific

performance (Dunham, 1947, 2005). Likewise, Kaeppler (1978, 2000) advises holistic examination and paying close attention to cultural praxis, meaning, movement content, and the wider sociopolitical context.

For this paper, information was gained through participation-observation of several whare tapere wānanga, in addition to interviews with ADC members and archival research such as Jack Gray's online dance blog (now defunct). Field notes were also logged; and I also drew from personal participation in whare tapere somatic research guided by Potiki Bryant. The information was collated to analyse whare tapere research and how it enriches understandings of haka in relation to aesthetic principles, philosophical outlooks and creative processes. Moreover, comments from Royal, Potiki Bryant and Gray on drafts of this paper have informed revisions.

The term "somatic" is used here to describe a qualitative study of movement that examines the lived body through observing and sensing how we invent, initiate and fine-tune body awareness. Myers (as cited in Nettlefiol, 2008, p. 92) notes that somatic systems are used to investigate "the givens" of movement: the gestures, posture, the organisation of steps, initiation of movement, and the use of particular body parts such as thorax, pelvis, legs/feet and head. Notions of somatics such as those presented in the work of Bainbridge Cohen (1993), Fortin (1998), Myers (as cited in Nettlefiol 2008) and Nettlefiol (2008) were mostly developed within the context of European and North American contemporary dance. However, somatic progenitors such as Bainbridge Cohen and Conrad were influenced by Japanese and Afro-Caribbean movement philosophies (Eddy, 2002). What is often missing from the discussion of somatics are the intercultural trajectories (Eddy, 2002), and how somatic experiences can be stimulated by cultural cosmologies. This study provides an Indigenous New Zealand perspective of somatics. A somatic approach is relevant because, as Royal (2014b) notes,

embodied knowledge is fundamental to the development of Māori epistemologies.

Dance ethnography that draws from somatic memoirs can unearth rich experiential and kinetic information different from what might be gleaned through classical participant observation. However, the process of being deeply engaged in movement practice does have limitations for it can consume one's research attention and result in missing other kinds of social environment details. However, these analytical imbalances were addressed by bringing together other sources of information such as field notes. Ongoing dialogue about this research with Potiki Bryant, Gray and Royal has also assisted in fostering a well-rounded interpretation of the nuances of their haka research.

Redefining haka with Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal

Royal's research aspirations have been about identifying the roots and routes of haka evolution and its genesis within the *whare tapere*. Haka is often erroneously called a war dance; it is more accurately a generic term for "dance" and frequently associated with Māori concert parties (Gardiner, 2007; Royal, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011). A ritual component of many occasions, haka is performed at events such as welcome ceremonies and weddings; there are haka with and without weaponry for paying homage to the life or the death of a person. The haka featured in many public performances today is a product of the political climate of the 1970s and reflects qualities of protest, conflict and political activism (Karetu, 1993; Matthews, 2004; Royal, 2007). There are quite a few forms and functions of haka that stay under the radar. For instance, due to media coverage, Potiki Bryant (2014) asserts that "many people are familiar with the All Blacks' haka, but there are other types of haka" (p. 23). From its inception, the ADC has been interested in "extending past the kapa haka focus to explore

the diverse ways Māori express themselves in dance" (D. Wehipeihana, personal communication, February 9, 2009). Kapa haka is often described as traditional dance; however, the haka we know today emerged in the late 19th century as an important vehicle for proclaiming tribal identity and political activism (Karetu, 1993; Royal, 2007). Whitinui (2010) highlights the educative value of kapa haka—an activity that activates embodied Māori cultural connectivity and language. Influenced by pre- and post-European contact culture, kapa haka has become synonymous with Māori culture and has been popularised internationally through the Pacific Arts Festival, All Black rugby games, television, advertisements and YouTube (Fong, 2002; Hokowhitu, 2014; Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002). Hokowhitu (2014) discusses how Māori imagery, circulated by the postcolonial media and global conglomerates, has stymied our understandings of haka by "selling the exoticism of 'traditional' Māori masculine culture" (p. 274). While there is a widespread belief that haka is a male terrain, Hyland (2015) contends that "kapa haka actually began as an event initiated by women" (p. 73) according to the founding *whare tapere* story of Tinirau and Kae (Royal, 2014a). In short, there is a lot of miseducation about haka origins and evolution.

Misunderstandings and static notions of Māori dance have disadvantages. For instance, not fitting into the kapa haka norms has been a source of frustration for ADC members Jack Gray and Moss Patterson. Gray stresses that "Atamira tells Māori stories, but not in a literal way", and feels disappointed when people do not understand this (J. Gray, personal communication, February 10, 2009; see also Zaitz, 2009). He is alluding to the consequences the company has faced because they challenge the expected standards of Māori dance. Both Gray and Patterson have felt Māori and other Pacific Island communities have sometimes been dismissive of their work because of the element of contemporary theatrical dance. In Gray's

words, “We have our backs against the wall because we are challenging the culture [by] not doing kapa haka, which is what everyone else is doing” (as cited in Zaitz, 2009, p. 145). While the ADC does not shy away from cultural innovation, the troupe is committed to the philosophies of Māoridom, and to exploring who they are in the contemporary world (M. Patterson, personal communication, February 19, 2009). While many of the dancers grew up learning kapa haka, what distinguishes them is their intercultural training in ballet and contemporary dance, and how they apply these forms into their creative development and performances. Over the years, ADC has remained dedicated to pushing the envelope of what Indigenous Māori dance can look and feel like.

So when Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal approached Louise Potiki Bryant to begin research about forgotten dances that predate kapa haka in an effort to compose a new haka, there was an aspirational match. Royal was keen to work with Potiki Bryant because he “wanted to work with someone who lived, breathed, and slept dance . . . as there was no intact whare tapere, it was natural for us to turn to a dance expert, a choreographer, to help us understand the creative potential of these ideas” (Jack Gray Dance, 2009). The collaboration coupled Royal’s understanding of the whare tapere with Potiki Bryant’s skills in choreography. Her dance workshops drew from archetypical haka motifs and Western contemporary dance devices. Their aim was to promote cultural creativity, not cultural preservation (Royal, 2009).

Together, their research delved into the historical information about haka before European colonisation. The inaugural wānanga was held on September 30, 2005, in Porirua City and included Royal sharing his discoveries about haka within whare tapere and physical research led by Potiki Bryant. Following this event, Royal compiled a booklet for the attendees to assist dancers interested in increasing the creative

possibilities of haka. In October 2005, Royal wrote in the *Kotātāra* newsletter published on the Ōrotokare website, “Our interest is to encourage the rediscovery of the depth and breadth of haka in history to stimulate the composition of an innovative haka” (p. 2; copy in author’s possession).

One of the goals Royal wanted to achieve in this new dance was to rebalance the masculine and feminine energies of haka. This was done through exploring mythological dance archetypes such as Tānerore and Hineruhi and their environmental elements. In the whare tapere haka workshops, the participants, regardless of gender, could explore the qualities of both masculine and feminine deities. Reflecting on the workshop in the December 2007 *Kotātāra*, Jack Gray expressed his deep appreciation for how Royal’s initiative confronted gender dichotomies in Māori dance: “There is so much emphasis on the division of the genders that it creates so much confusion as we all try to be either one or the other.” He added that in the workshops there was no pressure for “a pretense about being tane/man or wahine/woman” (p. 2; copy in author’s possession). Gray also appreciated how the whare tapere haka research was addressing the existing bias towards the deity of Tūmatauenga. This predisposition might be exacerbating the tendency to label haka as a war dance associated with aggression. Potiki Bryant challenges this partiality through in-depth somatic study of the mythological paragon Hineruhi, whose feminine virtues are fundamental to the whare tapere. Hineruhi’s qualities will be explained in the next section.

Royal also wanted to address the preoccupation with tribal identity and histories in haka. While he argues identity affirmation is valid and an ongoing concern, the whare tapere model contrasts this focus with increased emphasis on internal awareness and the ability to let the natural world find expression through human creativity. There is an emphasis on the land–people synergy (Royal, 2007, 2009) to

foster experimental haka that encourages the discovery of different qualities of movement. The aim was to refresh and fertilise conceptual frameworks and creative approaches to haka unique to Te Ao Māori.

The following section describes the whare tapere somatic research carried out. The exercises explore the qualities of the atua Hineruhi and I draw from my own participation to analyse how the explorations hone natural world attention and expression. I also ruminate about the first modern whare tapere event.

Evolving Māori dance through whakaahua

On October 19, 2009, I participated as an invited dancer and researcher in a whare tapere workshop attended by several members of ADC. We assembled for a wānanga and retreat at Royal's family land at Waimango, overlooking the Hauraki Gulf. Potiki Bryant led us through exercises and week-long discussions exploring Hineruhi, a water deity who is called the "Maker of the New Day" and referred to as "light on the dew of the water" (T. A. C. Royal, personal communication, October 19, 2009). Throughout the week, we discussed the water deity, Hineruhi, who exemplifies femininity. This atua glimmers, purifies, and awakens water spirit. We began under the sunlight sky, next to the sea, where about eight of us stood in a circle with our feet in the calm water. Potiki Bryant suggested we close our eyes and listen. Removing sight stimulated a meditative state for me, and it heightened audio and tactile sensory information, enabling me to attend more acutely to the nuances of land and sea. The sounds of the wind, trees, water, birds, and the scents I could smell engulfed me. I could very clearly hear the drone of ripples in the water. This sensuous attunement and connectivity to the land laid the foundation for other exercises to come. One such exercise was practicing fluid

hand and finger articulations inspired by the water's movement. Potiki Bryant told us to soften our shoulders and elbows and find a quality of suppleness and grace by encouraging us to "imagine touching the surface of water without disturbing its natural flow". We tried doing this with our hands resting on the actual surface of the water, as if we were light sparkling upon the sea. Gazing into the water for some time, I remembered something Royal once asked: "how does water teach us to dance?" (field notes, October 21, 2009). The Hineruhi study invited us to experience a sensory connection with the ocean and the surrounding environment, and facilitated the conception of dance inspired by the landscape. What I discovered was that from a whare tapere perspective, dance is conceptualized as a tool for re-centering human consciousness to the natural world. (field notes, October 22, 2009)

In the above somatic portrait, by closing our eyes we removed the preoccupation with the visual. Humbly and quietly standing next to the South Pacific Ocean, I felt receptive to sunlight and to the touch of water. I noticed that the sunlight painted the ocean with textures of effervescently rolling ripples and with a water-colour echo of blue sky and clouds above. The activity enlivened the Hineruhi cosmology and historiography that inhabits the ocean. As Hau'ofa (2000) reminds us, the land and sea are historical record keepers. Spiritual and respectful orientation to water is fundamental to societies across Oceania and this is a common thread across many contemporary Pacific Island dance initiatives (Teaiwa, 2008).

The Hineruhi exploration is in line with Pan-Pacific endeavours towards reinforcing and strengthening the relationship to the ocean and surrounding elements. Hineruhi studies with Potiki Bryant focused on registering the presence of ocean, sky, sunlight, wind, shadows and other aspects of the natural world that provide inspiration for dance-making.

The approaches evoke somatic sensibilities that cultivate embodied and felt understandings of Māori ecological knowledge.

What I have learned from participating in these Hineruhi somatic studies is the way in which whare tapere research advances cultural principles and creative processes unique to Aotearoa. For example, within this performance model, the ultimate goal is to achieve whakaahua, to transform into the realm of a deity and other aspects of the natural world (Royal, 2007, 2014). The explorations of Hineruhi next to the sea and immersed in the water were about aligning our senses to place, and engaging in a practice that grounds a dancer into the sensuous-spiritual dimensions of life and land. The Hineruhi exercises we did could be considered somatic tools for developing whakaahua.

The philosophy of whakaahua is about activating land embodiment in order to enable the energy to come through as one dances. From this perspective, dance strives to dissolve the separation between humans and environment and is not limited to any particular cultural style of moving or gendered aesthetic. Whakaahua values the embodiment of nature, such as “shining light on the water” through dance. It “goes beyond ego or human emotion to reveal the nature of Te Ao Mārama” (Jack Gray Dance, 2009). Emerging here is a Māori notion of somatics that is not human body centred. Instead, it is more about developing a sensuous relationship with landscape. In this model of somatic study and dance, one’s concentration goes beyond the biophysical properties of movement and towards communing with the environment. Achieving whakaahua is not about representing an atua such as Hineruhi or her element of water; rather it is about “unification of the human person with the natural world” (Royal, 2011, p. 8).

The whakaahua workshops strove to strengthen somatic orientations to the qualities of land and associated ancestral cosmologies. The core value of whare tapere, according to

Royal, is to advance a “(re)indigenizing process” that is about “reconnecting spiritually back to one’s tribal homeland(s) and the spaces of the ancestors” (Indigeneity Contemporary World, 2012). The experiences and exercises at the wānanga seeded ideas for choreography and performance.

After five years of workshopping, the first modern whare tapere was held in 2010 on Waitangi Day (February 6). The event was located at Royal’s family land at Waimangō, Wharekawa, Hauraki, where over 150 people attended to see the restored dance tradition and partake in the related games, songs and puppetry. Potiki Bryant directed a dance piece entitled *Te Kārohirohi: The Light Dances*, and the performers included ADC members and other Māori dance artists. Stevenson (2012), who reviewed the piece when it was restaged in 2012, called it “a watershed of dance performance in Aotearoa” and went on to say that “it places contemporary dance practice within the traditions of Māori mythology and ancient haka dance forms, at an elemental level, so that the dance becomes one with the land”. Stevenson’s observations pick up on core values of the whare tapere, such as the importance of embodying elements of cosmology and nature. In this sense, whare tapere indigenises contemporary dance by (re)conceptualising it through a Māori lens. From this trajectory, to dance is to be in a state of whakaahua, or to come into being and to move beyond one’s individual identity (Potiki Bryant, 2014). From this point of view, dance is not a selection of sequenced human movements with particular aesthetic conventions; rather, whakaahua is about the process of metamorphosis within a dancer, of learning to channel through one’s body the qualities and vitalities of landscapes.

Moving into the future: *Mitimiti*

The whare tapere research continues to plant seeds for evolving Māori dance. For instance,

Jack Gray's acclaimed ADC performances of *Mitimiti* (2012 and 2015) demonstrate how the work has inspired choreographic aspirations and brave new creative directions. Whare tapere has influenced Gray's trajectory as a dancer. In his words, the experience

opened up a space of connectivity with the natural world and transposed this quality of whakaahua (transformation) into my embodiment practice. I feel that the work deepened a way for me as a contemporary dance trained theatre performer to cross over into a more culturally relevant space . . . empowering indigenous possibility. (J. Gray, personal communication, September 12, 2015)

Gray's comments signal the importance of whakaahua for developing his sense of a Te Ao Māori dance worldview of performance. Accordingly, Gray (as cited in Laird, 2013) describes *Mitimiti* as a "series of investigations about the whakapapa on his mother's side" that examine the generational distance from his ancestral land and his process of reconnection to the traditions and tribal stories of his extended family. To develop this dance, he visited *Mitimiti* in the Hokianga, in the Northland region, a few times to gather information. Gray immersed himself into the place, and he noticed "within the essence of my wairua, when I went to *Mitimiti*, I found that it was the same, and so I love that now I have a link . . . to the place that names how I feel as a person, as a Māori, and as a dancer" (Jack Gray, 2014). Gray said the choreography is about the identity fracture that occurs when one does not understand and value the spiritual places to which we belong. *Mitimiti* explores the effects of becoming disconnected from one's ancestral home and being raised in an urban environment and the resultant disconnection (Laird, 2013). However, Gray does not focus on the sense of loss. For him the whare tapere trajectory has reinforced the importance of sowing deeper connections to ancestral homeland.

Gray's attention to the principle of whakaahua might have also contributed to the shift in the company's signature artistic styles. According to reviewer Whyte (2012), *Mitimiti* breaks away from the performance aesthetics that have made the company recognisable. Reihana-Morunga (2015) says the work "lifts an avant-garde lid off the bucket that contains themes of colonisation, urbanisation and globalisation". Responses to the dance work comment on how it portrays the cultural complexities of being Indigenous today and depicts how people navigate the realities of land dispossession and loss of voice through history (Whyte, 2012). The concepts of dance gleaned through whare tapere revitalisation have refuelled success in dance innovation and performance excellence, thus accomplishing their continued mission to be a platform for telling relevant Māori stories.

While the whare tapere research has provided new exhilarating models for Māori dance-making, there are still postcolonial tensions that arise from telling Māori stories in Western theatre settings. For example, Gray says that "*Mitimiti* is forcing me to find a medium between high end theatrical expectations and consciously community based authenticity" (J. Gray, personal communication, September 12, 2015). His words reveal the pressure that is sometimes attached to simultaneously holding torches for high art and for Indigenous ways of doing things. This is a challenge entrenched in a discussion about cultural clashes, the market economy of dance and biased definitions of art (Mazer, 2007). Nonetheless, these conflicted encounters can be informative about the interplay between Western contemporary and Māori performance. *Mitimiti* could be described as synchronously reclaiming Indigenous identity and creating an intercultural one through creative process and performance (see Balme, 1999). The upside is that through experimentation and integration of diverse worldviews, expressions of "new indigeneity" (Royal, 2012) might be distilled.

Tensions brought about by postcolonial circumstances come with the dilemmas and opportunities of cultural hybrid evolution. The whare tapere performance models ADC has implemented are not immune to cultural mismatches and ontological quarrels. However, the tradition's values and philosophies reveal emerging and evolving Māoritanga through past, present and future haka.

Concluding thoughts

The partnership between Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal and Louise Potiki Bryant, with the help of Jack Gray and others, has led to a fruitful journey of re-establishing and evolving notions of haka through the lens of the whare tapere. Their project pushed the boundaries of dominant, colonial and status quo narratives of haka that may be stunting the expressive cultural potential; and has revealed the role that somatic-ancestral-ecological connections play in nurturing Indigenous creative processes. For example, in the work *Mitimiti*, the ADC continues to tap into the dance-making possibilities of whakaahua and to extend haka prospects. While the combination of whare tapere and Western contemporary dance comes with disagreements, the integration does provide opportunities for developing Indigenous versatility and dance composition. In conclusion, this portrait of Māori contemporary dance illustrates an ongoing evolution and the in-progress articulations of indigeneity; and a commitment to challenging and advancing Māori culture. This story of whare tapere revitalisation initiated by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, Louise Potiki Bryant and Jack Gray reveals bravery and innovation, and offers a glimpse into their journey through cultural change and how they are merging recovery of cultural knowledge with future dance aspirations.

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Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
atua	deity or ancestor
haka	dance performance
Hineruhi	water deity called “Maker of the New Day”, referred to as “light on the dew of the water”
Kae	a priest in Māori mythology killed by Tinirau after he disobeyed him
Kāi Tahu/Ngāi Tahu	the principal Māori tribe (iwi) of the South Island
kapa haka	Māori group dance
kaupapa Māori	a Māori approach (to dance)
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices and beliefs, Māoriness
Ngā Puhi	tribal group from the Northland region of the North Island
Ngāti Porou	tribal group from the East Coast of the North Island
Ngāti Raukawa	tribal group from the Maungatautari-Tokoroa region of the North Island
Ngāti Tamaterā	tribal group from the Hauraki region of the North Island
Ngāti Tūwharetoa	tribal group from the Lake Taupō region of the North Island

Ōrotokare	locality where the modern whare tapere entertainment is based in the Horowhenua District of the North Island
Tānerore	son of Tama-nui-te-rā, the sun, and Hine-raumati, the Summer Maiden; credited with the origin of haka
Te Ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Ao Mārama	the natural world
Te Rarawa	tribal group from north of the Hokianga region of the North Island
tikanga Māori	Māori customs and traditions; “the Māori way of doing things”
Tinirau	ancestor of all the fish in Māori mythology
Toi Māori Aotearoa	Māori Arts New Zealand
Tūmatauenga	god of war
wairua	spirit or soul
wānanga	houses of learning
whakaahua	to acquire form, transform
whakapapa	genealogy, living history
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whare tapere	pre-European contact houses of entertainment, storytelling, games, etc.

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