Female comic

Kura from Briar-Grace Smith’s *Nga Pou Wahine*

**Time:** day

**Location:** the street.

*Kura* is a 21-year-old Maori woman living with her Uncle Walter and Aunty Lizzie in the suburbs and working in the Fine Foods Tomato Sauce Factory. She has never known her mother and throughout the play searches for answers about her past. She escapes from time to time into a vibrant fantasy world. In this extract she is talking to her friend Tia about men.

Tia has just asked her, “How many men have you met apart from your uncle?”

**KURA (replying to TIA’s question):**

After JT, I’m just not interested. JT with his leathers and the only pick-up line he knows. *(she speaks as JT would)* ‘CHER! You’re alright, eh? Aw yeah, you into a cruise then? I gotta smoke. CHER.’ JT and the way he used to ask me for a date. *(as JT)* ‘Hey, are you into drinking? Wanna come down the clubrooms and scull a few beers after the game? *(chants)* WARRIORS, WARRIORS *(pause)* aahr, your shout, eh?’ For about a month I thought JT was the Luke Perry of the sauce factory. He could even pop one eyebrow up by itself. He was beautiful. His dark eyes, his sideways smirk. *(pause)* The way he was always chewing Juicyfruit. Every time he walked into the tearoom my heart would pound like
a hammer, and I could hear the blood racing through my veins. I wanted to be his fantasy.

*Heavy metal music starts to play and the fantasy begins. Kura acts the following dialogue out, pretending to ride a Harley Davidson.*

My legs would be wrapped in tight leather pants. Dressed in a tasselled jacket and studded belt, I’d come roaring into the tearoom on the meanest, shiniest Harley Davidson he’d ever seen. Cool as, I’d swing my boot over the seat and go to him, mincing all the way. *(she gets off the bike and minces over to an imaginary JT)* Then I’d sweep him up into my arms and give him the wettest, longest, hottest kiss ever. *(she dips JT and kisses him long and hard)* Yeah, I’d shove my tongue so hard down his throat he’d choke. The tearoom would be stunned. There’d be wide eyes and cigarettes left hanging in mid-air with the ash just dropping off the end. And finally, after I’d kissed the life out of him, I’d drop him onto the floor and walk. *(she drops JT and walks; then she stops and looks back at him)* Leaving him a smoking, seething pulp of black leather. *(the fantasy is over)*

Me and JT had a few dates outside the clubrooms. There were lots of cuts and bruises and dirt. It was like sumo wrestling downhill. But I believed, under the layers of leather and black jersey, there was a prince. I thought I was special to him. He thought I was ‘alright, eh’. But then I found out JT had
sampled most of the women at Fine Foods. JT was used goods.

So from across the rows of machines and people I yelled at him. Then I deflected a perfectly good sauce can on his head. Only trouble was he got off on it and I cried for weeks because I thought he loved me. It must have been the same for Aunty Liz and Uncle Walter. With them it must have been one phoney burst of passion that burnt them out and left them sick of each other. (pause)
There must have been something that brought them together.

Commentary

In *Nga Pou Wahine*, Kura’s story unfolds through the monologues of five characters. The staging of the original production was stylised, with each character occupying a specific part of the set and being represented in the set design by visual symbols.

Although originally written for one female performer (with no costume changes), *Nga Pou Wahine* might also be performed by a larger cast.

In her preface to the play Briar-Grace Smith writes:

> When I was a child I remember being taken out fishing with my father in Whangaruru harbour. While we were out there, he told me the story of a great tupuna with long red hair. She was captured, and while being taken out to sea, she cut her hair and threw it to the waves, so giving back her mana to her people. Although much of it I had forgotten, that story became the inspiration behind writing Nga Pou Wahine.

See Uncle Walter’s monologue from *Nga Pou Wahine.*