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Baby Done (2020) is an Aotearoa New Zealand screen comedy where the laughs derive largely from apparently reversed gender norms: Zoe (Rose Matafeo) is pregnant but has no desire to be a mother, while her partner Tim (Matthew Lewis) assumes a maternal role.[1] Zoe displays stereotypes associated with reluctant parenthood—denial, the desire for independence, the rejection of sentiment regarding children—while Tim is comically anxious and solicitous. In the United States context, gender theorist Pamela Thoma's study of similar, popular millennial 'unwanted pregnancy' films, *Juno, Waitress* and *Knocked Up* (all 2007), suggest that they "celebrate as models young, white, American-born women who demonstrate their privilege as consumers and their modern feminine subjectivity through choosing to reproduce. They carry pregnancies to full term or become mothers despite explicit statements that their pregnancies are unwanted and despite barriers to autonomy and security."[2] These films, Thoma argues, "commercialize motherhood and popular feminist politics, affirm consumer mothers' social belonging or citizenship in a fantasy world that claims it has 'surpassed feminism,' and ultimately displace a broader human rights-based political movement for reproductive justice."[3] In endorsing the allegedly 'natural' role of women as mothers, the films effectively endorse patriarchy.

Baby Done is both like and unlike these films. It is an 'unwanted pregnancy' narrative, broadly comic, both in tone and narrative (a 'chick flick'), and its lead character ultimately has a child, but it is set in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a Pasifikan protagonist who denies her pregnancy, displaying contempt for parenthood in all its social and commercial incarnations. On the other hand, abortion, a possibility in the US films, is not mentioned in *Baby Done*. Is this because abortion is a 'choice,' albeit one superseded by 'consumer choice' in the US films, whereas Zoe's dilemma needs to be understood less as individual choice but symbolically, in relation to cultural background? Thus, the film can be better explained by reference to Aotearoa New Zealand as opposed to US culture, and by comparison with other New Zealand texts (television advertising and Taika Waititi's films, for example, especially given that Waititi produced *Baby Done*). Denial plays a role in all these narratives, but in the New Zealand film it is much more

prolonged. And while the US protagonists all approach the problem as normative women, in the New Zealand film the protagonist behaves like a man.

Ambiguous identity is a recurring theme in the work of *Baby Done*'s writer and director, Sophie Henderson and Curtis Vowell. Their first film, *Fantail* (2013), was about a Pākehā woman who thinks she is Māori. Vowell noted his interest in the theme stemmed from his discovery that he was part Rarotongan, something his parents did not tell him until he was a teenager.[4] This ambiguity is lacking in the US films, whch are about heterosexual, middle-class, white women who despite the 'adversity' of pregnancy make normative choices and end up playing traditional roles. *Baby Done* features a more tortured protagonist who really struggles to accept parenthood (despite there not being any obvious impediments, such as poverty), while also being a comedy in which (as with all the films) pregnancy is played for laughs. If the US films construct US national identity as 'nativist,' white and heteronormative, then *Baby Done* presents a complex protagonist who repeatedly refuses to make the 'right' choices, including about her gender identity—she is not just opposed to motherhood, but identifies as a man (while in a heterosexual relationship and pregnant).

My sense is that, in *Baby Done*, all these identity issues are linked. The blurring of parental and gender roles intersects with ethnicity to produce a complex representation of national identity, fronted by one of New Zealand's biggest international stars. Earlier Matafeo vehicles, such as TV comedy *Funny Girls* (2015–18), featured "a Flight of the Conchords-esque narrative about Matafeo and Laura Daniel's attempts to create a comedy show for women. This begins with Matafeo pitching her idea to a room full of dismissive male suits."[5] The series addressed how women create comedy in a masculine culture by both parodying and emulating it, which is broadly Matafeo's approach in *Baby Done*. Zoe's problems with motherhood relate to a dominant, homosocial culture which devalues femininity and normalises masculinity, although in different ways to other paternalistic cultures (like the US). She apparently identifies with dominant local masculinities (hence her disavowal of femininity), connecting to what Anita Brady terms a transgender aspect to New Zealand cultural representations, where femininity is only representable as masculinity.[6] However, Brady does not consider ethnicity. A potentially transgender reading of Zoe as a manlike woman, or a woman (mis)performing masculinity, is complicated by her Pasifika ethnicity. I have therefore added a reading of her performance as mimicry of the white, male coloniser.[7]

Misperformance primarily refers to comic convention. What is funny in a character relates to their perceived failure to adapt, displaying a kind of social rigidity. Comedy is thus based on social rather than moral conventions.[8] Zoe is comically inflexible in her disavowal, which is tied to her masculine behaviour (or, Zoe's inflexibly masculine behaviour means that she disavows her pregnancy).

BABY DONE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The film's opening scenes centre around Zoe and Tim's arboriculture business, Forest Mates (their slogan is "we trim a mean bush"), showing Zoe as a competent, if slightly reckless tree pruner, while partner Tim looks on from below, voicing health and safety concerns. The company name is significant, establishing the centrality of nature,

the outdoors, but also the ambiguity of 'mateship,' suggesting both homosociality and sexual union. The soundtrack, by Pasifika female hip-hop artist Coco Solid, also establishes Zoe's female feistiness, undercut in the following clinic scene when she discovers that she is pregnant. "Tapeworms can give false positives," Zoe tells the nurse, who responds "It's not a tapeworm, it's a baby."

Following scenes initially suggest that both Zoe's and her friends' aversion to parenthood and domesticity is young people's normal, even healthy reaction to social pressure and generational uncertainty. Zoe's friend Molly represents millennial anxiety, grimly intoning that "In Tanzania, one in 20 women die in childbirth," and that having a child "is the worst thing for the planet". Zoe and Tim disrupt a friend's baby shower with irreverent behaviour, simulating sexual intercourse (after the hosts suggest they should have a baby too), sneaking a peek into the gender reveal box and ridiculing convention (drink ice cubes with babies inside). The film title refers ironically to the conventional expectations they are sending up: 'Married, house, baby, done.' Their reactions could also suggest 'heterosexual pessimism,' disillusionment with heteronormativity, although such pessimism has been criticised as quietist.[9] On leaving the party, Zoe announces, "We just lost another two of our friends," continuing the millennial anti-parent theme, although also echoing a traditional, patriarchal narrative: "Wedding bells are breaking up that old gang of mine". Early in the film, then, ambiguity is introduced into the audience's perceptions of Zoe's attitude and motives, just as 'baby done' comes to have a second meaning as Zoe tries to sideline the implications of impending birth.

The audience knows what Tim and Molly do not: Zoe is pregnant. A gulf gradually opens between Zoe, her friends and eventually the audience too, due to her increasingly distracted behaviour and grandiose delusions, including the intention to compete in the world tree climbing championships. At a national tree climbing event, which Zoe wins, Tim discovers a pregnancy test in Zoe's bag. The ensuing stand-off culminates in an abortive (so to speak) joint bungee jump, with Tim announcing, "I thought you wouldn't go through with it. I thought that if I brought you up here, you would tell me what was going on!" The confrontation culminates in Zoe pushing Tim off the platform after the operator refuses to allow her to jump (as she is pregnant). By turning the confrontation into *Jackass*-style slapstick, the film temporarily sidelines the implications of Zoe's stance.

Though Zoe and Tim are apparently a conventional heterosexual couple, the narrative constructs Zoe as masculine and Tim as feminine in behaviour. For example, Tim is emotional and empathetic: "You always cry when I cry," Zoe comments. Zoe is represented as active and competitive: if she is not climbing trees, or winning events, she says, "I feel like I'm not living." Tim's solicitude, such as his wanting to refrain from sex, because "It's like the baby knows," echoes or parodies traditionally feminine concerns. Zoe accuses him of "being obsessed with being a dad," reversing the normative expectation that women are more concerned with parenting, and of "nesting," after he cleans the house.

A feminist reading would not necessarily see any anomaly in partners swapping roles.[10] Gender equality emphasises that roles are not fixed, and in this sense, there is nothing unusual in Zoe's desire to stay at work or in Tim adopting a maternal role. Pregnancy is not natural or inevitable, but social, emotional and physical 'labour' that can be shared. The narrative of the film, however, comically stresses the gap between Zoe and social

expectation: she gets stuck up a tree and pees on her rescuer; gets wedged under a door in a nightclub toilet (a men's toilet, oddly); attempts a threesome with Molly and Tim, despite not having told Molly she is pregnant; skips neonatal classes; and ultimately boards an overseas flight (en route to the world tree climbing championships), going into labour on the cabin floor. Molly comments: "You're a baby having a baby," while Tim, once again assuming the feminine role, says "I know you hate being pregnant and I wish I could do it for you, because you are so fucking bad at it." The comedy consists in Zoe's behavioural rigidity that society censures through laughter.[11] But this rigidity also reflects the society that laughs.

GENDER AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Zoe's plight can also be interpreted as a symptom of New Zealand culture's continual harping on masculinity as the preferred sign of national identity. Historically, constructions of the nation have emphasised Pākehā masculinity.[12] The 'Kiwi bloke,' a laconic rural type, came to prominence with 1930s cultural nationalist writers, continuing through national sports teams like the All Blacks, popular comedians like John Clarke (Fred Dagg) and a local "cinema of unease,"[13] and ending up in TV advertising, such as the Speight's beer Southern Man campaign. The bloke is identified with rural landscape: South Island hill country (in the Speight's campaign), the outdoors and nature, which continues in '100% Pure New Zealand' branding, representing New Zealand as a mecca for outdoors activities and extreme sports.[14] 'Nature' identifications are also nostalgic, spilling over into colonial ideology—the identification of white masculinity with land (as opposed to tangata whenua), for example, or indeed the term 'Kiwi,' which naturalises settlement and homogenises the New Zealand population. The Speight's campaign can also be read "as an ironic, nostalgic version of an admirable fiction (a belief that 'real men don't exist anymore and I wouldn't measure up if they did … society is changing, things will never be as they were in the past.'"[15] This irony is self-protective in that it allows men to distance themselves from accusations of sexism, but also suggests that on a global stage, the Kiwi bloke is a complicit rather than hegemonic masculinity; his impassivity hides 'unmanly' feelings of inferiority or effeminacy.[16]

Work on New Zealand national identity by US advertising agency FCB noted not only masculine normativity, but, more unusually, the absence of femininity in national iconography:

> When [US researchers] asked … for images that represented New Zealand, women brought pictures of All Blacks, sheep, tractors, the beach—the same as the men. Where were the feminine symbols? The Americans said they had never been to a country where men and women were so morphed … a land where blokes are blokes and even women can be blokes.[17]

Brady extends this argument, analysing the Speight's TV advertising campaign to argue that the adverts' homosociality is so pronounced that female characters are redundant, producing a curious tension.[18] Women are required to confirm the male characters' heterosexuality, but homosociality militates against their presence. The Speight's advert "The Deerstalker's Ball" (1992) illustrates these points, partly as an exception—for most of these adverts do not feature any women.[19] Sharon, a blond, flirtatious barmaid, offers two tickets to the ball to the younger of two 'blokes,' with the clear implication

of a date. But the young man passes the second ticket to his older male mate, who comments, "Good sport, that Sharon." In that appellation, "good sport," Sharon is both acknowledged as a 'bloke' and negated as a woman—misrecognised twice. She is both absent and present, a man and a woman. Brady argues that Sharon incarnates:

> a New Zealandness embodied as female that simultaneously misperforms the imperatives of femininity, and the imperatives of masculinity. The gender binary that functions in the service of national identity is not male/female but masculinity as the gendered and the transgendered body. This 'transgendered Kiwi' is a homosociality recast as the normative binary of masculinity and femininity.[20]

The gist of Brady's argument is that New Zealand culture is so masculinised, it makes sense to be a man, even if you're a woman. Zoe's dilemma can be read as acknowledgment of the impossible situation of women in this national narrative. Accordingly, she states that pregnancy is a threat to her identity: "I can't become one of those pregnant women, Tim. What if I'm not me anymore?" At the same time, she is revolted by women's anatomy: "Do not say vaginal ever again, please, it's gross"; in this, and not wanting to hear the word 'period,' Zoe registers a disgust with abject maternal bodies that is identified with patriarchal masculinity.[21]

If Kiwi men and women want to be best 'mates' (in both senses of the term), women might have to perform masculinity, both for their men, but also as agency in a culture that only recognises masculinity as authentically local. The lesbian Topp Twins (Jools and Lynda Topp) provide an example of women behaving like men, also cross-dressing as 'Kiwi blokes' Ken and Ken, whom they have performed both on stage and in life. Clearly, as lesbians, the Twins enjoy parodying 'bloke' masculinity, but as one review of *Untouchable Girls*, Leanne Pooley's 2009 documentary, points out, although "satire is involved, these incarnations don't so much send up other social groups as inclusively gain trust through infiltrating them."[22] "Untouchable" has the additional connotation of 'stone butch,' or a lesbian presenting as masculine.[23] How do we read such mimicry? Judith Butler suggests that "there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and rearticulated as instruments of cultural hegemony."[24] One example discussed in the documentary concerns a visit to Showgirls, an Auckland strip bar, where Lynda Topp joined the male clientele in ogling the girls. No one seemed to mind that Ken was a lesbian woman in drag, because as Ken and Ken point out in the documentary, "We both go out with women" ("we" could refer to Ken and Ken, Jools and Lynda or men and lesbians). It appears that the Topps are in some ways confirming rather than challenging New Zealand masculinity. "People think Ken and Ken are real," they say; no one had a problem with Lynda acting like one of the boys.

According to Brady, "If women are to be admitted into the homosocial space that is the performance of nationalist mythologies, they can only do so if they fail to fully take up the position of the feminine … Femaleness recognizable as New Zealandness can function only as a misperformed masculinity that underpins, rather than disturbs, masculine homosociality."[25] The Topp Twins example is more ambiguous. In one sense, they enact 'female masculinity,' but in another they are playing along with dominant local gender paradigms, which has surely contributed to their popularity.[26]

GENDER IN *BABY DONE*

The New Zealand identification with men, nature and the outdoors is taken up by Zoe in various ways. As well as her job (tree trimming) and company name (Forest Mates), there is her competing in extreme sport (the national tree climbing championships, set in Rotorua, where Tim and Zoe also "do the luge, the gondola, all the big ones … mud pools, bungee jumping." Rotorua is a centre for the outdoor leisure/adventure sport activities, such as bungee jumping, which comprise an important part of Aotearoa New Zealand's brand identity. Bungee jumping, for example, was developed as a commercial leisure activity by New Zealander A.J. Hackett. In the tree-climbing championship, Zoe beats a field of men, again emphasising her aspiration to compete with 'the boys.' While this is admirable, it also makes Tim's emotional reaction to Zoe's pregnancy (discussed above) more incongruous, being set against a background of sporting victory and 'she'll be right' New Zealand outdoors, phlegmatic masculinity. This incongruity is strengthened by Tim's Englishness. The fact that actor Matthew Lewis played the hapless Neville Longbottom in the Harry Potter franchise makes him appear comically inept in relation to Zoe's intransigence. Tim is like Jock Phillips' "new chum" (1987), the refined English immigrant who cannot adapt to the harshness of colonial life—or in Zoe's words, "a fucking pussy." A Pākehā bloke partner would have upset the symbolic scheme which identifies Zoe as the 'real Kiwi.'

Another aspect of homosociality is banter, a pattern of competitive joking and 'affectionate abuse,' which in homosocial groups can play important roles "affirming the bond of love between men while appearing to deny it."[27] Since 'love' between men cannot be expressed directly, instead it is expressed through abuse, also a form of self-policing by which the group identifies and punishes perceived femininity or 'weakness.' If, as mentioned above, Tim appears feminine in relation to Zoe, this is emphasised by the characteristically combative ways that Zoe interacts with him: "What is the wildest thing you can think of? … I mean, like adventurous, like crazy, like get a tattoo, or stay up for two days straight … or be world champion of competitive tree-climbing." When Tim comes up with plans, Zoe dismisses them: "My God, boring! So boring, Tim! I'm embarrassed for you right now." When Tim goes all out and suggests "a threesome with Molly," Zoe continues emasculating him: "She's not even my hottest friend." In one scene, Zoe surprises Tim watching videos on his computer; we hear women moaning; he is watching childbirth videos. "Why can't you just watch porn like a normal person?" Zoe asks him. "I almost wish you were wanking to this." Normalising porn may be an ironic joke, but it also shows Zoe presenting (again) a masculine perspective as normative. Tim's attempts to plan for their baby are routinely scoffed at by Zoe.

The "radically disrupted" homosocial/homosexual continuum that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick identified in male/male relations is parodied in *Baby Done* as a disruption of heterosexuality.[28] Repeatedly, Zoe and Tim attempt to have sex but never succeed. While on one level this could be a comment on how pregnancy disrupts sex life, on another it could be interpreted as evidence of Zoe's increasing assumption of a masculinity which makes sexual relations with her male partner incongruous, or Tim's assumption of a maternal role which makes him hesitant to have sex at all. Zoe's acceptance of Tim's wish for a threesome (a wish that Tim is reluctant to reveal) could be seen as further evidence of a twisted homosociality in the sense that Zoe is 'offering' Tim Molly's body in lieu of her own, echoing the ritual exchange of women which perpetuates patriarchy.[29]

Brady suggests that New Zealand women are "not quite man enough for a real … man."[30] This puts them in the position of trying to be both feminine and masculine simultaneously. Another way of thinking about this contradiction is that men are never quite masculine enough for Zoe. No one in the film espouses the traditional Kiwi bloke archetype (perhaps because as suggested above, it already seems slightly anachronistic), and she feels obliged to carry that role herself, abseiling out of her bedroom as part of her plan to abscond to Canada for the world tree-climbing championships. Her position is fundamentally ambiguous: is her masculine identification voluntary or involuntary? Does it serve her needs or contradict them? Does it confirm colonising patriarchy or parody it? Is it intentional or unconscious parody?

ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Thinking Zoe's identity as a Pasifikan woman may address her dilemma by reference to the "multidimensionality of Black women's experience" and the potential double erasure she suffers by being both non-white and a woman.[31] As a Pasifikan woman, she could signify exotic Other, à la Gauguin, but more specifically non-white mother in a "utopian historical romance" producing a new nation, inter-marriage being common in early New Zealand settler narratives.[32] Early in the film is a scene in a greengrocer where a preoccupied Zoe places some fruit against her stomach, as if imagining the foetus. Tim spots this and offers her a pineapple and a coconut, to which Zoe responds, "You're picking very racist fruits, actually." This is the only mention of race in the film, but it speaks to both of the above themes—parenthood, and the implied objectification of Pasifika women.

The main recent change in representation of New Zealanders in local film and TV has been the increasing prominence of non-white, usually Pasifika or Māori characters—typically male, but often in a paternal role and a family context.[33] The Kiwi bloke's homosociality meant that he was rarely represented as a family man. Emphasis on family is common in Pasifikan and Maori culture, but popular culture representations often add a paternalistic and implicitly nationalist inflection. Studies of New Zealand TV advertising suggest that these non-white father figures feature prominently in narratives in which they relate primarily to sons or to white men.[34] The symbolic function of the non-white father is to perpetuate a foundational colonisation myth in which tangata whenua welcome white settlers, thus representing biculturalism normatively. Like Spike Lee's "magical Negro,"[35] these figures selflessly help white men (to dance, in a recent Speight's advert) and reassure colonisers that settlement is legitimate.[36]

In *Baby Done*, Zoe's father Sefa (Fasitua Amosa), an obstetrician, similarly represents a reframing of New Zealand masculinity in ethnic terms. He reassures Tim, after Tim confesses that he has no dad: "Listen Tim, I'm basically your dad. I love you, and there's no need to talk about it." Thus, he fills the role of the loving non-white father, and his parental role extends to his profession—symbolically a 'father of the nation'). This position is more a renegotiation of patriarchy than a critique, but it does represent an alternative to Caucasian blokey impassivity. The paternalist, albeit familial, emphasis continues to exclude women, however, who might also feel, like Zoe, ambivalent about their role in perpetuating family (accordingly, father-daughter relations in the film are quite strained).

Zoe's ethnic and gender identities intersect. Her identification with the coloniser via her assumption of bloke masculinity could be read as Indian postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's mimicry, a colonial dynamic in which imitation is both colonising ('aping' the coloniser) and anti-colonising (because mimicry can also parody, exposing the artificiality of the coloniser's assumed superiority): "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."[37] Mimicry is both peculiarly relevant (given that New Zealand and India are both former British colonies) and ambivalent, a "blurred copy," like Judith Butler's gender performance: "'imitation' is at the heart of the heterosexual project and its gender binarism … hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations."[38] This double-edged colonial/racial situation, which Bhabha identifies with comedy and farce, finds its echo in Zoe's double-edged gender performance.

Throughout the narrative, Zoe becomes increasingly isolated, similar to the 'man alone' tradition of New Zealand literature and film. She even 'goes bush' with a rucksack, although she ends up at her parents'.[39] But she is also an ethnic 'fish out of water,' a Pasifikan in a Pākehā world.[40] Such a view is supported by the film's casting. While Zoe's friends are Pākehā or white, the medical system and maternity care are represented as Māori/Pasifikan—midwives and nurses (played by Kura Forrester, Madeleine Sami and Bree Peters) and her obstetrician father. This puts Zoe apparently in conflict with her ethnicity and with authority, as these institutional characters offer expertise about childbirth, which Zoe rejects. Representations of the ubiquity of Māori and Pasifika teenage pregnancy may also be relevant: Zoe could fear becoming a 'statistic'—a young, non-white mother.[41] Maternity care, already feminised, is also ethnicised against its hegemonic opposite, Pākehā masculinity. This binary is extended through their associations with different spaces—outdoors for blokes, where Zoe feels at home, and internal clinical spaces for maternity care, where she feels threatened and anxious. Ironically, the more solicitous people are towards her, the more alienated Zoe becomes. She only seems comfortable in the traditionally masculine spheres of physical action and aggressive banter. Ultimately, masculinity loses (or authority wins). The baby cannot be wished away, and Zoe finds insight via the Māori/Pasifika caregivers. This suggests that her rejection of femininity is initially linked to a rejection of her ethnic identity, but that in the final scenes there is a rapprochement. Of course, this moment could be normative, as it requires Zoe to embrace the maternal and ethnic stereotypes she has up to this point resisted. On the other hand, obligatory masculinity is another normative stereotype, so perhaps the alternatives cancel each other out.

The intersection of ethnic and gendered identities is also underlined in the one prior occasion when Zoe does accept a maternal role—in relation to her Māori workmate Sonny (Matenga Ashby), whose mother she impersonates in an unlikely attempt to get Sonny's suspension from school overturned. This scene is ironic in many ways: Zoe adopts the role she has rejected in every other context, and she skips antenatal class to do it (underlining her denial). The ruse is rumbled by the Māori/Pasifika school principal (Rachel House). House reprises her role in Taika Waititi's films of a butch woman who dominates and threatens mateship by emulating its more forbidding characteristics of impassivity, laconicism and the veiled threat of violence. She thus represents an example of how women can emulate masculinity without being defined by it. She outstares Zoe, who has to back down and admit that her maternity is a ruse (ironic

given her situation), which underlines how Zoe is unprepared to mother and ironically foreshadows how she will have to accept help from her ethnic peers. One might also suggest that mimicking motherhood symbolically prepares Zoe for the real thing.

Another way of thinking about parenthood in the film is by considering that Zoe is the product of an interracial romance between a Pākehā woman and a Pasifikan (Samoan) man. Interracial romance is one of the archetypal New Zealand narratives. It usually occurs between a Pākehā man and a non-white woman, although since the 1970s the reverse has become the norm, reflecting the influence of (amongst other things) feminism and biculturalism. An example is Waititi's first film, *Eagle vs Shark*, where the woman was played by Loren Horsley, as is Zoe's mother in this film, with the possible connotation that Zoe's parents represent the protagonists of Waititi's film, two decades on. This continuity between filmic worlds suggests an Indigenous, whānau-related perspective, although non-white fatherhood, as we have seen, can also be interpreted normatively.

In the birthing process, Zoe's relationship with the Pasifikan delivering midwife (Sami) becomes important. Sami's character speaks Zoe's masculinised language, which helps Zoe accept her situation. Characteristically (in terms of its local and gendered identifications), this mutual recognition occurs through banter:

> Zoe: Do you think pregnant women become mothers just as soon as they give birth?
>
> Midwife: Um … Yes?
>
> Zoe: What if they become a dick?
>
> Midwife: You're already a dick.

The midwife ironically affirms that Zoe is both a mother and a 'dick,' thus bringing genders together, like other New Zealand unisex vernacular expressions ('you guys' or the ubiquitous and ambiguous 'mate'). Throughout the film, banter has been an important means by which Zoe has negotiated her situation, and here it suggests that she can reconcile the dualities of masculinity and femininity, Pākehā and Māori/Pasifika, singledom and parenthood, public and domestic. On the other hand, the gender reveal at the end of the film ("It's a boy!"), confirms the normativity of masculinity, albeit non-Pākehā (they name him Sonny, after their Māori co-worker). It is an ambiguous resolution—conventional in its endorsement of normative 'motherhood,' but somewhat multicultural in foregrounding non-white identities.

CONCLUSION

When Zoe says, referring to her life before pregnancy, "I really want my old life back," the statement has broader implications about nostalgia for mythical pioneer days and a refusal to accept the face of change, which is brown and babylike. Zoe's story could be a parable about how the Kiwi bloke's reluctance to move on has damaged the national psyche. Brady highlights how this reluctance has produced a paradox in which "the gender binary that functions in the service of national identity is not male/female but masculinity as the gendered, and the transgendered, body",[42] which plays out in texts that highlight local or national identity as masculine and symbolically cancel femininity. However, women can and do assume masculinity in different ways and with

different meanings, both affirming and parodying dominant masculine culture. I see Zoe as a character whose unwanted pregnancy, a standard 'chick flick' narrative, is articulated in culturally specific ways by her adoption of a male persona and denial of her physical state, which can read as a feminist denial of maternal stereotypes but also as identification with hegemonic bloke masculinity.

I have further argued that ethnicity, mostly a subtext in the film (presumably because it complicates the representation of national identity as gendered), allows an alternative reading of Zoe's performance as colonial mimicry, which can be servile or subversive, just as Zoe's gender performance is both affirmation and parody of masculinity. In line with the general 'ethnicisation' of New Zealand popular culture, the narrative embraces the idea of a bi- or multi-cultural family, albeit a paternalistic one, achieved by melding non-white identity with public health, identifying ethnicity with authority. Zoe's labour does seem to bring her more into relation with her ethnic—and, by implication, New Zealand—community, although this family metaphor is normative if it implies that colonisation is an equal relationship. In that light, calling the baby Sonny, after the film's token Māori character, is continuous with bicultural settlement narratives that still foreground masculinity.

The contemporary New Zealand cultural landscape is marked by increasing non-white and non-binary gender presence, but it has continued to emphasise masculinity. Rose Matafeo, who plays Zoe, is, apparently, the perfect riposte to my argument, as she is now an international star. In her comic performances in general, however, she presents a highly ambivalent, tortured persona: "stand-up as a medium for me is 'I hate myself, and I want to tell you about it.'"[43] This sentiment is possibly symptomatic of a broader cultural anxiety about New Zealand identity, which types like the Kiwi bloke mainly served to conceal. If we consider a parallel female celebrity example, New Zealand's former prime minister Jacinda Ardern, what is disturbing is that her overseas eminence is partly driven by her virtual exile from New Zealand due to death threats and online hate, suggesting that New Zealand women still face peculiarly intense discrimination at home, in direct proportion to the scale of their achievements. Mentioning Ardern within the context of her giving birth while serving as prime minister is relevant here, for isn't Zoe, in the film, among other things, also resisting the remorseless surveillance that pregnant women face? In this light, it is not surprising that behaving like a bloke still functions as a defensive mechanism in New Zealand culture, for men and women alike, and that for non-white women, traditionally scapegoats, the attraction of self-denying bluster is powerful. Overall, *Baby Done* suggests the ongoing power of hegemonic masculinity in the local context, even if it is mediated in more ethnically diverse ways. But perhaps Matafeo, like Ardern, envisions a more promising future on the global stage.

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1. *Baby Done*, directed by Curtis Vowell, screenplay by Sophie Henderson, produced by Taika Waititi (Madman Entertainment and Piki Films, 2020).
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