



**PUNA  
WAI  
KŌRERO**

AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
MĀORI POETRY IN ENGLISH

EDITED BY

Reina Whaitiri

Robert Sullivan

**In this pioneering anthology, two leading Māori poets and scholars collect together many Māori voices in English and let flow a wellspring of poetry.**

From revered established writers as well as exciting new voices, the poems in *Puna Wai Kōrero* offer a broad picture of Māori poetry in English. The voices are many and diverse: confident, angry, traditional, respectful, experimental, despairing and full of hope, expressing a range of poetic techniques and the full scope of what it is to be Māori.

The anthology collects work from the many iwi and hapū of Aotearoa as well as Māori living in Australia and around the world, featuring the work of Hone Tuwhare, J. C. Sturm, Trixie Te Arama Menzies, Keri Hulme, Apirana Taylor, Roma Pōtiki, Hinemoana Baker, Tracey Tawhiao and others – as well as writers better known for forms other than poetry such as Witi Ihimaera, Paula Morris and Ngahua Te Awekotuku. Short biographies are given for each poet, and the introduction, glossary and poem dates will make this taonga of Māori poetry especially useful in schools and other learning institutions.

Robert Sullivan (Ngāpuhi) and Reina Whaitiri (Kāi Tahu) are the editors of *Homeland: New Writing from America, the Pacific, and Asia*, published by the University of Hawai'i Press, and, with Albert Wendt, the award-winning ***Whetu Moana: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English*** (winner of a Montana New Zealand Book Award) and ***Mauri Ola: Contemporary Polynesian Poems in English II*** (finalist in the New Zealand Post Book Awards), both published by Auckland University Press and the University of Hawai'i Press. Reina Whaitiri is a scholar, editor and researcher on Māori and Pacific literature; she lives in Auckland. Robert Sullivan is the author of many award-winning volumes of poetry. He currently teaches at Manukau Institute of Technology.

## INTRODUCTION

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Whakapapa is the fulcrum around which Māori construct iwi histories. It is also the source from which we draw inspiration. Everyone and everything, including poetry, has whakapapa, and the kaupapa of *Puna Wai Kōrero* is to explore the one hundred or so years of poetry written in English by Māori. As far as we have discovered, the earliest poem published in English was written by Apirana Ngata, so it is him that all subsequent Māori poets writing in English whakapapa back to.

Sir Apirana Ngata was a true visionary and his mauri lives on in the people and in his work. It was Ngata who collated hundreds of annotated songs in te reo rangatira, culminating in the pre-eminent anthology *Ngā Mōteatea*. This is the most important collection of Māori-language song poems ever published and was completed after his death by noted scholars, translators and linguists, including Pei Te Hurinui Jones, Tamati Muturangi Reedy and Hirini Moko Mead. Ngata continues to be a guiding light for Māori so we accordingly begin this anthology with his poem ‘A scene from the past’.

For Māori, contact with Pākehā and their literary forms provided an exciting opportunity to express their experiences in new ways. The traditional forms of oral poetry remained – such as waiata ringa ringa, waiata tangi, waiata aroha, oriori, karakia, haka and whaikōrero – but writing words down in a different language and different forms was the beginning of new genres. Māori quickly and enthusiastically began experimenting, and the work collected here in *Puna Wai Kōrero* is but a fraction of what has been produced over the years. We apologise for having to be so selective but hopefully what is presented will encourage further anthologising. Song lyrics, for example, and slam poetry are genres deserving of further study and need to be collected to show the variety of work being written

*Puna Wai Kōrero* is also a tribute to Hone Tuwhare, whom we acknowledge as Aotearoa’s poet laureate. He is certainly worthy of that title in the Māori world but he also stands alongside those considered to be the best New Zealand poets. Since the early 1960s Tuwhare’s poetry has been enjoyed by generations of readers and his work has been translated into many languages. The numerous references to Tuwhare in this collection demonstrate the high regard in which he is held and, although he will be missed, his mana lives on in the large body of work he leaves. His son Robert has generously given permission to publish the poems included here. We extend our thanks to him. Some of Hone’s poems selected for inclusion



are the personal favourites of the editors, while others will be recognised as iconic representatives of his work. Ngā mihi ki a koe, Hone.

Our matua Selwyn Murupaenga kindly allowed us to use the title *Puna Wai Kōrero* for this anthology. Murupaenga was one of the first Māori to be involved in radio, film-making and television in Aotearoa and he produced a long-running (1971–96) weekly National Radio programme entitled *Te Puna Wai Kōrero*. The word ‘puna’ refers to a wellspring, while ‘wai’ means both water and memory. ‘Kōrero’ refers to talk, stories, the mana kupu of a highly charged language as well as that in everyday use. The title of Hone Tuwhare’s 1993 collection, *Deep River Talk*, also expresses some of the essence of what *Puna Wai Kōrero* can mean.

In most previous anthologies of New Zealand poetry, Māori poets have been given only cursory acknowledgement. One purpose of this anthology is to showcase the many Māori poets who have contributed to the literary landscape of Aotearoa. While poets such as Hone Tuwhare, Robert Sullivan, Rangi Faith and Arapera Blank are established poets, others have not yet had the recognition they deserve. With *Puna Wai Kōrero* we wanted to provide a space for all poets of Māori descent.

The pioneering work of Witi Ihimaera, D. S. Long, Irihapeti Ramsden and Haare Williams set a benchmark with the publication of anthologies of Māori writing, *Into the World of Light* (1982) and the multi-volume *Te Ao Mārama* (1992–96). These important anthologies introduced New Zealand to a broad but little-known and little-understood Māori world and gave voice to the many writers who would not have otherwise been heard. In the introduction to the first of these books the absence of Māori literary anthologies is noted, even though Māori writing is described as ‘the pou tokomanawa of New Zealand literature’. Writers such as Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme and J. C. Sturm are now well known for their fiction but Māori playwrights, lyricists and script writers still need to be anthologised.

We would like to acknowledge the work of Huia Publishers, who have been publishing annual collections of short fiction by Māori writers. They recently published *Huia Histories of Māori: Ngā Tāhuhu Kōrero* (2012), a collection of essays by Māori scholars, edited by Danny Keenan. The Māori literary journal *Ora Nui* has published two issues since 2012, and other indigenous Pacific anthologies featuring Māori writers include *Mana*, and the award-winning *Whetu Moana* (2003) and *Mauri Ola* (2010) co-edited by Albert Wendt and the editors of this volume.

For this book we have attempted to find as many poets with a Māori whakapapa as possible. There must certainly be poets we would have selected had we been aware of them. Some others we have not been able to contact for permission

to use their work. In both cases we regret their absence. While there is a wide range of voices and perspectives in the poetry, there are generally elements which are identifiable as Māori. Sometimes the Māori connection is obvious while at others it is more obscure, more subtle, or perhaps not there at all. There may be direct references to traditional songs in te reo or to well-known personalities, or allusions to other poems or poets. Many poets refer to Māori who have spent their lives promoting and supporting Māori rights and their respect is clearly expressed. The many references to local legends and incidents may not be recognised by all, but for those connected to them by tradition or memory, there is great pleasure in the reading. Although the Glossary includes brief explanations of some historical events, comprehensive coverage is simply beyond the scope of this anthology.

In selecting poetry for the anthology we wanted to ask questions of the poets and their work. What identifies Māori poetry? or a Māori poet? What compels us to identify as Māori even though our links may be tenuous, or slight, or forgotten, even hidden? It may be painful to remember who we are or where we have come from, but frequently there is a sense of what it is to be proudly Māori. It is often the exploration of whakapapa which effects a connection. With aroha and manaakitanga, we support the work of writers who have asserted their Māori identity through their whakapapa.

The poetry in *Puna Wai Kōrero* comes out of the countryside, from the towns and cities, and from many countries around the world. The Māori diaspora spreads across the globe but wherever we find ourselves we continue to identify as Māori and remain connected to Aotearoa – after all, this is the one and only place on earth where we can claim a tūrangawaewae. The voices are many and diverse: confident, angry, passionate, respectful, proud, despairing and full of hope, expressing the full scope of what it is to be human, and especially, to be Māori.

Much to our delight, artists not widely known for writing poetry offered us work: Witi Ihimaera, Paula Morris, Ngahua Te Awekotuku, for example. Both Ihimaera and Te Awekotuku have previously been anthologised in poetry collections but it is a privilege to be allowed to include their work. It is gratifying to have poetry written especially for *Puna Wai Kōrero*: by Paula Morris, Briar Wood, Jacq Carter and Amber Esau, for example. We are also fortunate to have poetry from long-established poets such as J. C. Sturm, Trixie Te Arama Menzies, Keri Hulme, Apirana Taylor, Roma Pōtiki, Hinemoana Baker, and Phil Kawana. We note that Hawai'i-based poet Vernice Wineera, who continues to write, was the first Māori woman to publish a collection of poems, *Mahanga: Pacific Poems*, in 1978.

## HINEMOANA BAKER

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Hinemanoa Baker (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Te Ātiawa, Ngāi Tahu, Germany, England) was born in Christchurch and raised in Whakatane and Nelson. She has lived for more than twenty years in Wellington and Kāpiti. She is a poet, recording artist, singer-songwriter, occasional broadcaster and tutor of creative writing. Her first collection of poetry, *mātuhi | needle* (VUP, 2004), and her second, *kōiwi kōiwi* (VUP, 2010), draw on aspects of her mixed Māori and Pākehā heritage. Her third, *waha | mouth*, will be published during her 2014 term as writer in residence at the International Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University, Wellington.

### **Te tangi a te rito**

Bones, in this place the soles  
of my feet are not null; how  
must I walk? My throat  
has not woven the call. My throat

has not spoken the harakeke. The north  
you say, is thick with it.  
Open-mouthed for the host but not  
so silenced in the throat. In this kitchen

violence placed its thumbs on the bud  
of the call. In this garden violence  
pinched us back.  
The softness drops  
from your forehead, shame  
darkens my mouth to a  
museum, to a purple  
gallery of pūhā and pāua and the sounds  
of these things  
that keep a family well-fed  
and its friends  
at your table in the singing  
summer.

(1996)

## KELLY ANA MOREY

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Kelly Ana Morey (Ngāti Kuri, Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri) is an award-winning writer, journalist and oral historian. She was one of the inaugural recipients of the Janet Frame Award (2006), won the First Novel award with *Bloom* at the Montana New Zealand Book Awards in 2004, and held the Michael King Maori Writer's Residency in 2014. She has written four novels and three non-fiction titles, and tries to write a poem a year, not always successfully. She is a writer/photographer and copy-editor for *Show Circuit*, an equestrian magazine, and is currently writing a novel about Phar Lap, which will be published at the end of 2015.

### Ture te haki

. . . you fly your flags of history quietly  
for now  
battle pendants hidden in wooden boxes  
in blackened rooms  
rotting and fading into dust under  
well intentioned eyes  
that wonder at your beauty and your stories and  
your size  
no land beneath the wool and cotton  
and silk  
the star of David, the cross of Mikaere and the  
wounded heart  
bleeding  
no way for you to come home  
you sit and wait for darkness to go quickly  
for light to fall on your ruined threads  
the flags are quiet  
for now . . .

(1999)

## ROMA PŌTIKI

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Roma Pōtiki was born in Lower Hutt in 1958. Her tribal affiliations are to Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri and Ngāti Rangitīhi. She is a playwright and commentator on Māori theatre, and has been a theatre performer and director of a Māori theatre company. She is also a curator and visual artist and has work in the permanent collection of TheNewDouse in Lower Hutt. Her poetry collections include *Stones in Her Mouth* (IWA, 1992), *Shaking the Tree* (Steele Roberts, 1998) and *Oriori* (Tandem Press, 1999), a collaboration with visual artist Robyn Kahukiwa.

### **Bound to**

bound together in the darkness  
our faces push out of the night  
man and woman struggle with each other  
sigh and breathe as one wrist locks another  
and hip bones press  
flat against the boards.

catching and getting caught.  
Māui's net is thrown  
and scoops us both in its rough binding.

lashed by old seas  
the new fish gasp and twist onto the shore.

one thigh rolls  
the other slumps  
a summer crescent hitches itself into the sky.

no one is crying,  
we both smile.

(1993)



## MARAEA RAKURAKU

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Maraea Rakuraku is Ngāti Kahungunu ki Te Wairoa, Pahauwera and fiercely Tūhoe. *'Aunties are Boss'* is dedicated to Aunty Nancy Timoti – the truthsayer, Maria Heu Rangi, who taught me much about what sugar bowl got used at Matahi, my fellow Aunties Mere, Hari and Leanne and to the fiercest Auntie of them all, my mother Ameria Rakuraku.' Maraea's writing appears in *Call and Response 79, Huia Collections 4 and 6* and the on-line journal *Shenandoah*.

### **Aunties are Boss**

It doesn't matter how many babies you have, how many times you marry  
or divorce, how skinny or fat you become, how many degrees hang on  
your wall, how flash your car or house is or how old you get,

Aunties are Boss

They always talk to you like you are 14,  
everything they say is a directive, even when it isn't,  
there's a bed over there,  
have a kai and get a cup of tea

They ask you to clean the wharepaku and then they do it properly when  
you've finished,  
they suggest you 'throw your eyeballs around the wharekai' when you  
ask, where's the tea towel?  
You then watch as their eyeballs swivel in their head when you ask,  
'where do the dishes go?'

They send you to the shop to get tomato sauce and back again five  
minutes later to get toilet paper,  
they sack you off the computer as soon as they walk in the door,  
they tell you to stop eavesdropping and leave the room when they are  
talking to your mother,  
Aunties are Boss

They squeeze lollies into your hand when the other kids aren't looking,  
they tell you, your tāne is not good enough for you  
not directly

they do this, by ignoring him  
for years,  
they tell you, your wahine is not good enough for you  
not directly  
they do this,  
by loving your children,  
Aunties are Boss

They will remind you how precious you are in a Facebook post and message in all the other Aunties,  
when your parents separate, they pay for your music lessons, school stationery bill and uniforms,  
they send texts to your mother daily reminding her why she is better off without him,  
Aunties are Boss

Aunties will tell you not to talk to Koro, Nanny or your Mother like that and to pick that lip off the floor  
and if they ever hear you talk that way to them again  
you'll have them to answer to,  
they will tell you to stop using Koro or Nanny like they're an EFTPOS machine,  
they will tell Koro and Nanny to stop acting like an EFTPOS machine,  
Aunties are Boss

Aunties are Dragon slayers  
ready to plunge swords into the hearts of monsters,  
Aunties are Taniwha crouching in the river  
prepared to throw you back to shore should you stray too far,  
Aunties are Patupaiarehe  
silently watching from afar, certain that you will become exactly who you are meant to be as has been divined from your parents, your parents' parents and your parents' parents' parents

Aunties  
Aunties are Boss

(2013)

## HONE TUWHARE

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Hone Tuwhare (1922–2008) was a poet of Ngāpuhi iwi – hapū Ngāti Korokoro, Ngāti Tautahi, Te Popoto and Te Uri-O-Hau. Tuwhare burst on to the New Zealand literary scene with his first collection of poetry, *No Ordinary Sun* (Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1964). Over the following four decades he published twelve further collections of poems, short stories and a play, and immersed himself in writing, performing and touring both in New Zealand and overseas. He was the recipient of many awards and fellowships and was twice winner of the Montana New Zealand poetry award. Tuwhare was Te Mata Poet Laureate in 1999 and received two honorary doctorates in literature. He was named one of New Zealand’s ten greatest living artists in 2003. Hone Tuwhare passed away in Dunedin on 16 January 2008. His poetry is now available in *Small Holes in the Silence: Collected Works* (Godwit, 2011).

### O Africa

On bloody acts  
that make less human  
mankind’s brighter sun,  
let revulsion rise.  
Eclipse  
the moon’s black evil:

so that innocence  
and the child shall reign  
so that we may dream  
good dreams again.

(1964)

### No ordinary sun

Tree let your arms fall:  
raise them not sharply in supplication  
to the bright enhaloed cloud.  
Let your arms lack toughness and  
resilience for this is no mere axe  
to blunt, nor fire to smother.

Your sap shall not rise again  
to the moon's pull.  
No more incline a deferential head  
to the wind's talk, or stir  
to the tickle of coursing rain.

Your former shagginess shall not be  
wreathed with the delightful flight  
of birds nor shield  
nor cool the ardour of unheeding  
lovers from the monstrous sun.

Tree let your naked arms fall  
nor extend vain entreaties to the radiant ball.  
This is no gallant monsoon's flash,  
no dashing trade wind's blast.  
The fading green of your magic  
emanations shall not make pure again  
these polluted skies . . . for this  
is no ordinary sun.

O tree  
in the shadowless mountains  
the white plains and  
the drab sea floor  
your end at last is written.

(1964)

## Hotere

When you offer only three  
vertical lines precisely drawn  
and set into a dark pool of lacquer  
it is a visual kind of starvation:

and even though my eye-balls  
roll up and over to peer inside  
myself, when I reach the beginning  
of your eternity I say instead: hell  
let's have another feed of mussels

*Like, I have to think about it, man*

When you stack horizontal lines  
into vertical columns which appear  
to advance, recede, shimmer and wave  
like exploding packs of cards  
I merely grunt and say: well, if it  
is not a famine, it's a feast

*I have to roll another smoke, man*

But when you score a superb orange  
circle on a purple thought-base  
I shake my head and say: hell, what  
is this thing, called love

*Like, I'm euchred, man. I'm eclipsed*

(1970)

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