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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Hone Tuwhare Poetry: A Close Study as Native Maori Wayfinding

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| ABSTRACT

Hone Tuwhare is the most well-known Maori poet in New Zealand. His poetry is mostly inspired by Maori culture; his bond with nature and his views on man's destructibility on both nature and himself, as well as mythical and political themes, are the most prominent subjects in his work. Tuwhare's innermost feelings and thoughts are passionately expressed in his poetry, whether it's a show of deep reverence for nature or an angry protest against mankind's cruelty. His use of poetic devices like a poetic apostrophe, personification, and onomatopoeia all contribute to his message being delivered strongly and effectively to his audience. Hone Tuwhare was a prominent poet who was well-liked by both Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders. The research explores the ways Tuwhare expresses the Maori island peoples, who see themselves as an extension of the land. This research focuses on a close reading of Hone Tuwhare, a New Zealand Maori poet who wrote in English from 1975 to 2000, providing insights into the poems' customary worlds, or "*ritenga tangata*." "*Ritenga tangata*" most directly relates to people's traditional behaviors and traditions. Hone Tuwhare collected works interconnected themes of tragic loss, questions of identity, and integral familial bonds, all of which cannot be divided from poetic representations of the natural world. The research sums up that Tuwhare is a lyricist with a distinct voice and a distinct affinity to his Maori ancestry. Traditional ocean voyaging principles and symbolic systems are employed to navigate the worlds of the poetry as he is described. This way of navigation aims to show cultural signals in work as well as a level of concern for the worlds depicted. This concern is manifested in political, social, and economic terms.

| KEYWORDS

Maori, itenga tangata, political poems

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### 1. Introduction

Hone Tuwhare (1922–2008) was New Zealand's most famous Maori poet; he belonged to the Ng Puhi and Uri-o-Hau tribes. From a low-income family, he worked as a New Zealand Railroad machine operator at the age of fifteen. His poetry was a type of socialism. Hone Tuwhare got in deep water for his poetry and his ideas as early as 1957, when the then-Minister of Maori Affairs suppressed an early Tuwhare poem because he was a Communist at the time. Tuwhare's ideas on socialism, labor rights, and civil rights were always prominent in his poetry, but his Maori land rights and Treaty-centered work did not appear in the 1970s collections published after his second book, *Come Rain Hai*.

The political poetry in *No Ordinary Sun* (1960), for example, is not specifically about Maori. Among these are 'O Africa,' a lament for the continent's fate, and 'Monologue,' written in the voice of the Scottish boilermaker with whom Tuwhare worked at Mangakino. There is no modern Maori poetry; the poem 'Lament' refers to a pre-contact struggle. Despite Cooper's national fame as the President of the Maori Women's Welfare League and her long association with political figures like Sir Apirana Ngata, Princess Te Puea Herangi, and Walter Nash, the poem 'Poem to Josephine Cooper' in the same collection makes no mention of political struggle. Later poems about her published in the 1970s, on the other hand, are plainly political. Human rights, Maori social and economic rights and aspirations, labor rights, anti-colonialism, and biculturalism are all terms Tuwhare uses.

Keown (2008) points out that he was undoubtedly New Zealand's most sensuous poet, with work that was rustic, conversational, melodic, elegant, delicate, and personal at times. His poems have a conversational tone to them, and they are frequently addressed to specific individuals. He sold stories like a bibulous medieval monk and turned love songs into comedic sex and sensibility fables. It is a lighthearted piece. The narrator recounts Cooper's Maori assertion that the land march was not about rubbing the testicles of then-Prime Minister Bill Rowling. Throughout the novel, testicle imagery appears as various forms of baubles and even 'grenades' that Cooper has hurled. The poem's humor is intended to move readers rather than challenge them with their ancestors' flaws, yet it still reflects what has to be spoken politically.

Michelle Keown argues that, on other political fronts, Tuwhare was well-positioned to study the workings of capitalism across the wider Pacific, including Bougainville, Samoa, and New Zealand, thanks to his employment as a boilermaker. His personality, as represented in his poems, was as erratic as the weather of New Zealand, spanning a wide range of emotions. In the way he used poetic imagery to match gurgling streams and summon the bass chuckle of vast rivers, he was shaman-like. He was a coastline observer, sensitive to the water's varied moods, and imagines 'holding hands with the sea' in one poem. Moreover, he penned memorable phrases about rain. As in his poem "Rain," he conjured with rain, casting spells and charms from its presence, rendering it tangible and profoundly allegorical.

The poem '*We, Who Live in Darkness*' was first published in the 1987 Penguin collection *Mihi: Collected Poems* the second stanza closes with a face image:

"forcing me to hide my face in the earth' is a son's response to the appearance of light (which symbolizes the father deity, or sky) by hiding his face in the mother deity, or earth. This poem is about the children of Rangī and Papa's revolt. As a result, the supersession negates a strong political definition that would imply patriarchal dominance or even a violent degradation of race relations between dominating and submissive people. The final word reads, 'Brothers, let us murder him - push him off.' The fact that the connection to Maori mythology is brought up implies that there is at least another option. There are roots here as well, much like the tree in "No Ordinary Sun."

Tane Te Toko o Te Rangī (Tne the prop of the sky), also known as Tne Mahuta, is the god responsible for the woods and associated fauna and is one of Rangī and Papa's offspring. By straining his legs up to the heavens, this deity separated his parents. He is also the human race's progenitor deity. "I suggest that the imperial interpretation is softened or decoyed by the footnote, but that it is still present. The sun is also commonly associated with Victorian accounts of the British Empire on which the sun never sets. It is similar to the occurrence of the word 'entreaties' in the poem 'No Ordinary Sun' in that there is a resonance with the idea of sovereignty associated with 'the radiant ball'. (Tuwhare, No Ordinary Sun, p. 23)

In the *Collected Works* edition, which includes a Maori translation by Patu Hohepa, the former Maori Language Commissioner, "*We, Who Live in Darkness*," does not include the earlier explicitly mythological footnote. This clarifies the previously described notion of political hegemony. However, the mythical meaning is enhanced in the translated form. The translation includes certain resonant phrases that link the poem in tereō to the Maori and Moanan cosmogony cycle. (Tuwhare, *Collected Works*, pp. 214-15)

To' (and its variations 'puriuri,' 'p tangotango,' and 'po kerekere') alludes to the nights mentioned in the creation songs. The word 'black' is used in the English version, but in the Maori version, different phrases (showing gradients of darkness in the nights) are used. (The relationship phrase 'teina' is used in Hohepa's translation, suggesting that the sibling speaking is the elder one. Because Tane Mahuta is the oldest of the siblings identified in the handed-down tales, this suggests that he is the one who talks. (Paraone, 'A Maori Cosmogony', 1907)

That cannot possibly be true since, in Te Rangikheke's traditional myth, the war god Tmatauenga tries to kill the parents, but Tne refuses. The term 'teina' may be seen as a dig at his siblings, which would be in line with T's aggressiveness. (Orbell, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 221-22)

The gods mentioned are natural phenomena. They reflect a connection to the environment, among other things. In a research setting, Mason Durie characterizes indigenous eco-connectedness ethics: "In a Maori world view it is not possible to understand the human situation without recourse to the wider ecological environment impacts of research on humans cannot be considered in isolation of intended or unintended consequential impacts on the environment." (Durie, 2011, p.265).

Tuwhare's desire to integrate natural referents in his poems spans his whole career. The poet needs these layers because ritenga tangata is the foundation for all interactions. "*Making a Fist of It*" connects the anti-apartheid battles of the 1970s with the Maori land rights campaigns of the same era through a juxtaposition of subject materials. Of course, because the poems were written in the same era, this may be considered an over-reading, but Tuwhare had produced other political poetry since the 1950s, influenced by Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell and other socialist writers: "I thought it was great. I was much influenced at the time by

people like Pablo Neruda and Louis Aragon, the poets that the left sort of claimed". (Hunt, 1998 ). Tuwhare clearly saw himself as a left-wing poet, which does not rule out a Maori or Moanan identity.

Indeed, taniwha and the sand of Karirikura at the southern end of Ninety Mile Beach, which is part of the spirits' road to Cape Reinga, are mentioned in the first two poems of "*Making a Fist of It*." During the Taranaki Wars, an attack on Sentry Hill is described in the traditional tangi. Two sons of Ngati Ruanui poet Tamati Hone, Tiopira and Hapeta, were among those slaughtered. The tangi was a memorial to these sons and the many others who had perished.

Despite the numerous evident semantic layers that can establish non-cultural identity formulations, the ethnical identity of the poems has been stressed in this research simply because there are so many unseen, unheard, silent levels that might be made accessible to a reader. The process of revealing such clues and symbols is typical close-reading practice. Close reading has an indigenous analogue in the encounter; in Maori culture, meeting people face to face is highly essential. This contact is about gauging another's intentions, reading them emotionally, and sharing knowledge in a holistic rather than two-dimensional way.

Hone Tuwhare's 1997 '*Pupurangi (Kauri Snail Shell)*' focuses on a creature. The snail's ghost informs us that it formerly thrived in a destroyed kauri forest and narrates the poem. Spiral conical buildings, which have spiral sculptures, have a hilarious relationship with Maori. While the catde reference clearly refers to poor farming practices - the excrement reference and the adjective 'careless' emphasize despoliation - and perhaps obscurely indicts the culture connected with such despoliation, the catted reference confusingly implies the national culture linked with such despoliation. In the poem, the predatory snail is represented as a wanderer with delusions of grandeur and purpose. The poet's own familiar picture of nature and the associated political terrain inspires the snail's laughing as it travels a track. The beauty of this cheerful poem is that it is centered on the loss of world heritage forests in Northland; thus, its joy is subtly tempered in the last verse.

The last phrase, 'driven,' is analogous to cursing, an unexpectedly quick termination, and a jolt in the snail's vocabulary. In human words, something that is driven has an aim, a clear goal, and a strategy. This last phrase has to do with strategy and the craftsmanship of the developers. Tuwhare challenges us with the actual violence of destroying an ecosystem by speaking for this little creature. As a result of the concurrent damage caused by colonization and its sediment patterns, comparable destruction has occurred. To legitimize military activities, the snail is represented as a predator that consumes fledglings, similar to how Maori were depicted as warriors. The pupurangi's main feed is earthworms, according to the Department of Conservation website, so the snail's diet represented in the poem may be a deliberate error that matches it with purposefully inaccurate colonial portrayals of Maori life.

The snail heard colonial ripsaws and hammers, and the 'agonized screech' of trees indicated that other indigenous were killed. This deluded ghost is also a tourist, which is ironic in a Moanan atmosphere. The story of this little creature has a veiled allusion to the ecosystem's largest species, the kauri or Tane Mahuta, whose young are fashioned into waka that travel the moana. This poem is Moanan not because of the explicit allusion to waka but because of the interrelated and comprehensive frame of reference. While this snail was a land animal, one may imagine hearing the sea by bringing its empty shell up to one's ear.

Tuwhare's main political approach had always looked ambiguous to certain commentators until lately. His subsequent volumes include *Shape-Shifter*, *Short Back and Sideways*, and others, as well as his selected and collected poetry. Politics were present, according to Sullivan (2008), but he always thought them to be something to be mined from his lyricism.

'*No Ordinary Sun*,' the title poem from his debut collection, mourns the loss of a tree caused by a 'gallant monsoon's flare' of an atomic explosion in the Pacific. Tuwhare was a member of the Allied occupation army in Japan during WWII, and he spent time in Hiroshima in 1946; therefore, he was fully aware of nuclear weapons' risks. (Hunt 49). '*No Ordinary Sun*' is another excellent option.

'Tuwhare's poem "*No Ordinary Sun*" is possibly his most well-known. It is a critical examination of how solar analogies are used to naturalize nuclear rhetoric. The poem's title, '*No Ordinary Sun*,' alludes to metaphor's simultaneous creation and destruction. On the one hand, because the sun is our planet's source of life, it can never be "ordinary." The poem claims that there is no such thing as an "ordinary sun," and it rejects any attempts to standardize the uniqueness of our solar core. Making our heliotropic system's life-generating center an "ordinary sun" necessitates a comparison to something out of the ordinary.

At large, we may regard the sun as "ordinary" by looking at other galaxies, pushing the boundaries of our notions of location, stretching from the earthly to the genuinely global. The sun and its imagined similarity on our planet, that other figure of the sun on Earth: the nuclear weapon, is the second method to comprehend the comparison of being 'ordinary.' Even though the poet must rely on a metaphor of the bomb as a sun to tell an allegory about the sun and tree, the poet rejects the initial 'No,' the rejection of ordinariness that permits the nuclear weapon to become a natural figure like the sun.

The poem '*To a Maori Figure Cast in Bronze Outside the Chief Post Office, Auckland*,' published in his third book *Sapwood and Milk: Poems*, is a notable early example of code shifting.

*"I hate being stuck up here, glaciated, hard all over  
and with my guts removed: my old lady is not going  
to like it. I've seen more efficient scarecrows in seedbed  
nurseries. Hell, I can't even shoo the pigeons off  
Me: all hollow inside with longing for the marae on  
the cliff at Kohimarama, where you can watch the ships  
come in curling their white moustaches  
Why didn't they stick me next to Mickey Savage?  
'Now then,' he was a good bloke  
Maybe it was a Tory City Council that put me here" ( Tuwhare,1972)*

The poem, like the statue on a pedestal with its arms crossed, looks to be pounding its feet and clutching its arms in an attempt to get warm: "... the wind whistling/ around your balls (your balls, mate)" ( Tuwhare,1972) The title term '*Chief*,' as well as the statue's formally cultivated silence, contain political irony. "... how the hell can you welcome / the Overseas Dollar if you can't open your mouth/ to poke your tongue out, eh?" (Tuwhare, 1972 cited in Sullivan, 2008)

His poetry's ideological perspective, expressed in the working-class language of togetherness, emphasized inclusiveness and equality to the end. The vocal variety in this poem is typical Tuwhare: underclass, macho, romantic, Maori, Maoist, activist, ecological, and humorous. The change in language reflects a dual awareness in which words send dual meanings to multiple audiences. For example, this poem might be interpreted as a lighthearted reflection on a chilly day or as political, artistic, or cultural satire, either alone or in many combinations.

Furthermore, the listener is expected to be familiar with the allusions; that is, they must be members of the community of diverse voices from which the narrator hails. The skillful managing of registers into extravagantly lusty, melodramatically intensified, smart and mordant, excitedly vernacular, ridicule aristocracy; ideological, socioeconomic, cultural, locational, approachable, and ethnic references; and the nearly informal line-lengths — a far cry from the high discourse of *No Ordinary Sun* more than a decade earlier — owes as much to prose as it does to poetry. However, the poem's plain form contrasts with the publications of other poems, such as the minimalist opening poem 'Wind Song and Rain':

*"A poem is a ripple of words on water wind-huffed.  
But still, water is a poem winded: a mirrored distortion  
of sky and mountain trees:  
and a drowned face  
waiting for a second wind (a second coming?)  
rain oblivion Ripple of words  
on water." ("Rain," Deep River Talk 46)*

The beat is anything but simple, recalling the intonations of the King James Bible, one of Tuwhare's few possessions as a child. The lyric is easily sung, even though the register is not as forceful as the Song of Solomon or the Psalms. Artist Don McGlashan sang his well-known poem 'Rain,' which has a similar cadence, on the recently released audio anthology Tuwhare. The ripples in 'Wind Song and Rain' hint at delicate connections, as do Ralph Hotere's graphic lines, which ripple in color and monochrome as if waiting for the poet's breath to move them.

## **2. Conclusion**

Oral and print technologies can occasionally function as a feedback circle, which has been critical to the survival of native cultures in colonized worlds in recent histories, such as Aotearoa/New Zealand. So, where there is a political purpose, a mainly oral culture like the Maori has persisted in part due to the preservation of that culture in print as well as the voice of those few who recall and

carry on the language and culture verbally. However, this preservation can take a purist approach, ensuring the preservation of traditional forms and cultural text interpretations solely.

However, Tuwhare's poetry recited on the Northlands tour to an audience of young school children ensures the continuation of Maori story/ mythology in the tradition of the *marae* – the elder passing on the cultural knowledge to the younger generation.

Tuwhare's subsequent poems expanded on his particular style's variety and elegance. The openly communist vocabulary seen in some of his early work becomes increasingly rare in his later poetry, but, as this paper will show, Christopher Caudwell's work – and that of Marx and Engels – maintained a profound influence on the style and substance of his poetry throughout his career.

Hone's poetry is distinguished by its tonal variety, the ease with which they transitioned between formal and informal registers, sense of humor and emotional depth, closeness, and constrained frustration (as in the anti-nuclear theme of the first volume's title poem, 'No Ordinary Sun'), and, above all, their assumption of easy vernacular familiarity with New Zealand readers.

'*White Opossum*,' which is both a condemnation of predatory capitalism of (and harm to) environmental assets and a lament for the resulting collapse of an Indigenous cultural system, has a similar dynamic. Such instances demonstrate how Tuwhare fitted communist beliefs to his experience as a working-class Mori, establishing a personal poetics dedicated to "underlining proletarian forms and objectives," as he put it.

Tuwhare received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement, an Arts Foundation Icon Award, the Te Mata New Zealand Poet Laureateship, and Honorary Doctorates in Literature from Otago and Auckland Universities, among many other honors. In short, he was adored by a large number of individuals, both close and far. This great artist has left his audiences a lovely home in which they may marvel at his ability and passion, remember the stories, the vast mana, and visions, the life-force mauri he breathed into his carvings, and feel the peace and joy he continues to bring them.

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