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## Creative Writing 601 Special Edition Preface

Creative Writing 601 (soon-to-be-hopefully-renamed) is based in Te Ara Poutama, under the auspices of the Māori Media degree, the only degree of its kind in the world. To fuel, perhaps, an unknown/untapped desire for creative writing, potentially publishing in *Te Kaharoa* is an opportunity for our year one and two taura to experience the publication process from conceptualisation and development in the classroom, and sending them out into the world. Excited by the prospect of this, we invited a number of our past taura to submit work to *Te Kaharoa* as a means of seeing publication through, and potentially setting a pathway for future taura to follow. Welcome to this experiment.

The first task of the paper which I would eventually like to rename 'Writing (in) Māori Shorts' or something to that effect, is to compare and contrast two kaupapa Māori or Māori authored short stories as a means of considering a predominantly Māori audience, and to alert taura of potential critiques by readers. The remaining two assessments align with Huia Publication's emerging writers' preferences; 2) a short story that is later transitioned into 3) a short film script. An important facet of publishing with *Te Kaharoa* is the journal does not own the short stories, and ultimately the students, should there be such a desire, still have the mana over the ideas should they so choose to develop longer versions, broaden them into short or feature length film scripts, or TV/web-series pilots. Further on are some notable short story ideas that emerged from past classes which, amongst a suite of others, I inherited from Whāea Ella Henry a few years back.

Prior to introducing the student's work, I want to situate creative writing through master linguist Timoti Kāretu's (2008) interpretation of Te Kete Aronui, one of three kete bought to

the world from Te Rangitūhāhā by Tāne (or Tawhaki, depending on one's iwi affiliation). He claims Te Kete Aronui comprises the humanities, intelligence, incantations, literature, philosophy and ritual, testifying:

... [T]he philosophers of the Māori world were equally poets and philosophers anywhere [...] The body of language is being added to constantly with new compositions of haka, waiata, waiata-a-ringa and poi, as well as short stories, the odd novel and play, and articles on various topics (p. 88).

What strikes and encourages me in Kāretu's rendition, is that Te Kete Aronui brings together the creativity, logic, and cultural etiquettes that our matua tīpuna - all of whom were storytellers - passed on to us as guidance in te ao hurihuri. Ultimately, Kāretu's interpretation of Te Kete Aronui permits mātauranga Māori/ā-iwi to fit somewhere in wider academia, rather than sliced into various compartments such as '*the sciences*', '*the arts*', '*the humanities*' and the like. Here, all fit into one. Storytelling is an art and a philosophy, and in Māori Media, students have an opportunity to marry their stories with technology which I contend, inspired by Kāretu, is also part of Te Kete Aronui. In the Māori Media degree, there is an emphasis on the creative, as an intrinsic part of the academic journey. A good proportion of our taurira are excellent creative thinkers, and when the academic and creative ideally are on par, we are sure to see some incredibly strong future scriptwriters.

Stories that are passed down the generations, such as pūrākau about Māui, Tānemahuta, and Hinētītama/Hine-nui-te-pō for example, are heavily coded for cross-generational appeal. As Zak Waipara (2012) states, some were 'remixed' to ultimately reflect the Hero's Journey narrative structure (Campbell, 1949), and advantageously suits the palatability of contemporary Westernised audiences. Robert Pouwhare (2016, 2016a) suggests, this 'bowdlerisation' or 'sanitisation' to fit Western readers can be at the expense of fundamental cultural aspects. Pouwhare's forthcoming PhD thesis (2020) re-tells pūrākau by memory of how they were told to him by the old people, which starkly divert from largely decontaminated versions circulating in 'popular' Māori culture at the minute. Regardless, in both Waipara and Pouwhare's comprehensions, pūrākau in past and present tenses have intended learning outcomes. Thus, 're-mixing' pūrākau and learning outcomes are fundamentals of the short story/scriptwriting kaupapa in CWRT601.

What follows are five short stories; the first four were submitted as Assessment 2 in CWRT601, the last followed a creative writing workshop conducted in Māori Media Production and was particularly impressive. The first story is by Matilda Poasa, a Samoan graduate of Māori Media, and an AUT Intern representative to the Sundance Film Festival in Los Angeles in 2018. She wrote *The Retrieval* (2016), a story about a young Māori man recently released from a correctional facility, who finds himself grappling with his moral compass, when forced to reconcile the two parts of his grandparent's pikorua, a two-pieced necklace. The second story, is a period piece named *The Peach and the Sky* (2017), written by Ngā Tai (Tze) Wee, a Malaysian/Singaporean Māori Media major, about a young Chinese and recent immigrant to New Zealand, who amidst overt racist taunts by unknown residents, falls in love with the son of the local Māori gardener. *O Mua* (2017) was written by Jennifer Gomes, our first Bangladeshi graduate of Māori Media, and is the third short story. It is an ambitious story that follows a young wahine, a police detective, as she must protect and return an adolescent girl embroiled in a child trafficking ring. *Strawberry*, written by Taniora Williams (2018) is a coming-of-age story about a young Māori girl recalling an important connection she had with the strawberry patch that belonged to her Kuia's neighbour. Finally, but certainly not last, *Hū* written by Keanna Phillips-Johnston (2019), follows a Māori teenage boy who, wearing old, scuffed shoes in a private-predominantly Pākehā school, empowers himself by concealing his undetected intelligence, from his classmates and particularly his English teacher.

I want to close this preface with a reminder about the importance of creativity, which a good majority of Te Ara Poutama students are brimming with, the evidence of which follows in these short stories. It is with pleasure that I present some of the mahi on behalf of our year one and two taura, some of whom have graduated, and others yet to be.

## **Glossary**

haka	posture/challenge dance or
routine	
kaupapa Māori	Māori 'ways'
kete	baskets
Māori	Indigenous New Zealander
mātauranga-ā-iwi	traditional tribal knowledge
mātauranga Māori	traditional Māori knowledge
mātua tipuna	ancestors
Pākehā	Caucasian/European
Zealander	New
pikorua	a two-part necklace
poi	ball on the end of a cord
which are 'twirled'	
pūrākau	Māori stories
tauirā	student
te ao hurihuri	the changing world, modern
times	
wahine	Māori woman
waiata/waiata-ā-ringa	song/action song

## **References**

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