



THAT'S MY NAN!!

Review of the Film-Documentary, *Rain of the Children*,
Directed by Vincent Ward

Reviewed November 2008 by Tairahia Black

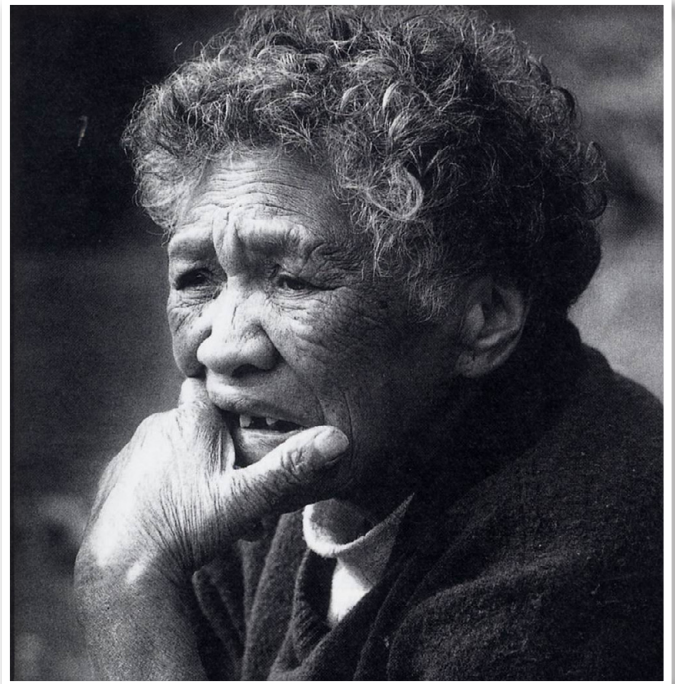
Ai! Ka tae atu nei tātau katoa, huri i te motu ki te mātaki i te kiriata *Rain of the Children*. Nā wai, na wai au i noho, kutukutu ahiahi katoa taku wairua, aku mahara mo tēnei kuia aroha me tana tama a Niki, ana tamariki e ono i matemate, me ērā o ana tamariki i riro ma te hāhi Pehipitiriana e whakapakeke, tana kāinga e whiua mai nei ēnei kōrero mo te *māku*. Waihoki kā noho, ka tauria e te whakaaro kia manaakitia te wairua o tēnei kuia mārohirohi. Kia whakaaratia ngā kōrero tika hei puna kōrero ma ana mokopuna, kia whakahokia o tātau whakaaro ki ngā kaupapa i maukino i a Te Puhi, rātau katoa ko ngā tīpuna, te hunga i whānau ki roto o te tūkinu a te pane whero kaipakanga, muru whenua, mate urutā te whakaeke mai o ngā Mihingare. Ka mahara ake ka tuhi i tā tātau whakautu koia i hua ai a *That's my Nan!*

The inspiration for the title of this review *That's my Nan!* Of Vincent Ward's film-documentary *Rain of the Children* is taken from Peggy Pānoho's gracious article in Issue 84 of Mana Magazine. Peggy Pānoho is the grand daughter of Te Puhi Materoa Tatu, Peggy is the daughter of Meri Caton (Taka nee Kahukura), the daughter of Te Puhi Materoa Tatu.

This article by Peggy provides some insight as she gathers her memories and thoughts for Nanny Puhi and Uncle Niki as she puts it. In reading her article one is taken by the fact that here is a Nanny that Peggy and all her other mokopuna loved and admired and is at the core of their memories which tells us something about Nanny Puhi.

And without probing further all of the many people who knew Te Puhi intimately I have spoken to since I viewed *Rain of the Children* said the same thing, a distinctiveness, an individuality that sprang to mind when they thought of Te Puhi. "Ē hoa, he kuia aroha tēnā, kāre i tua atu!"

Being one of the many who filled the theatres around the country to view *Rain of the Children* I sat in anticipation and waited. Throughout the film I was uncomfortable with what I was hearing and seeing, while simultaneously this review of *Rain of the Children* was gathering momentum in my hinengaro (mind) in the theatre to explain and interpret from an 'insider' perspective a series of biographical historical portraits strongly linked to Te Puhi Materoa Tatu focused on recovering, reclaiming her image, wairua and mana so that we are much better informed about ourselves and our history.

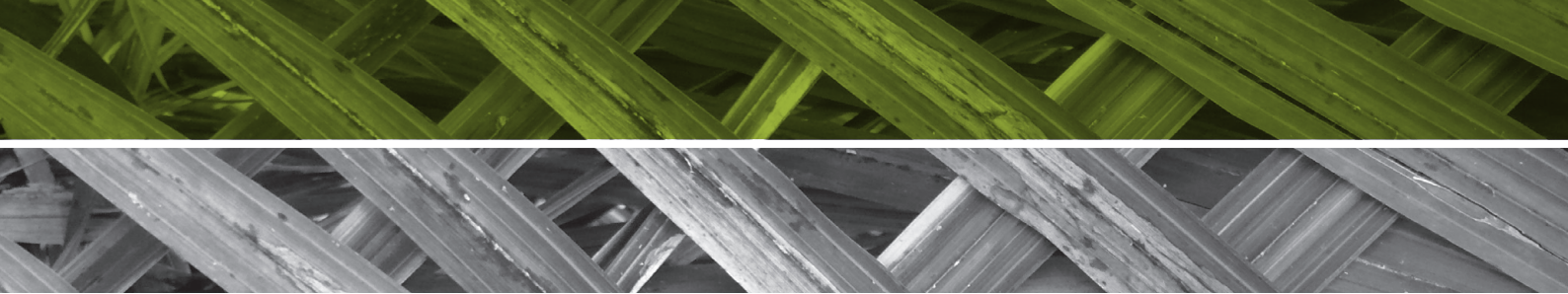


This review identifies historical data, published and unpublished sources, essentially to tell the perspective of *That's my Nan!* This review therefore is the voice of Te Puhi talking to her mokopuna and her descendents about her circumstances.

The title of this review *That's my Nan!* By the mokopuna is courageous in spite of the projections of *Rain of the Children* as the mokopuna writes in Mana Magazine "I never knew much about Nan's past, her upbringing, her life at Maungapōhata, things that may have happened to her. I didn't know (or really care) about how people perceived her and Uncle Niki. All I knew was that she was my mum's mum, she was my kuia, and Niki was my uncle, and that's all that really mattered".

The words of the mokopuna ring true; 'even in loss and grief there is life and victory for Nanny, and there are those who can reason, enlighten and explain and there are those who care. The lesson here is not new, for can it be considered a legitimate exercise for an 'outsider', dependent on 'outsider' sources to seek to interpret the Māori and the dynamic historical world of Tūhoe. Māori and Tūhoe over the last twenty-thirty years have expressed the words "Waiho mā mātau tonu e tuhituhi a mātau kōrero".

**Ai! He tika rā tā te mokopuna
That's my Nan! ▼**



Vincent Ward the acclaimed film-documentary creator has picked up an international cinema award in Poland and has received nine Qantas Award nominations for his film-documentary *Rain of the Children*. Since its screening in theatres around the country *Rain of the Children* has moved Māori and Pākehā audiences to a sense of awe, to enliven our memories of the men and women who lived during the period Te Puhi Materoa Tatu was born, and during her life time exhibiting times of ground breaking deprivation, hardship and withdrawal.

On the screen I was immediately struck by the company of Te Puhi, her face, voice, gait, way of walking, her physical presence and despite the despairing experiences portrayed in the film, her refusal to let go of one's hold on humanity in the face of the horrific conditions experienced. The film opens with Vincent Ward as the narrator and Te Puhi appears expending her fading energies on her beloved adult son Niki.

In creating *Rain of the Children*, those years of suffering for Te Puhi and her people in Te Urewera is another visible reminder of a dark chapter of Te Urewera, Tūhoe history through Te Puhi's inexorable losses of her six children from 1922 to 1931 and her remaining children adopted out, her hard-won triumphs to stay alive and sane. Te Puhi for me "challenges us to rethink that brutal, harrowing history of colonisation".

This film for me as a Tūhoe person in the 21st century is an eye opening, shattering historic commentary of the life and times of Te Puhi, created for all of us by the all too often link to colonisation. I recall sitting in the theatre in Palmerston North, my wife and I looking at the audience through the darkness and shadows of the theatre. There were tears, utter silence, and my overwhelming conviction, amazement at the strength of this kuia called Te Puhi Materoa Tatu. What a display of courage, a remarkable demonstration of the enduring spirit of this Māori women to tolerate suffrage. Her indomitable moral fibre, strong forbearance, unconquerable and resolute was inspirational.

Conversely there must always be some reservations when a film-documentary, biography is made and screened by an 'outsider'.

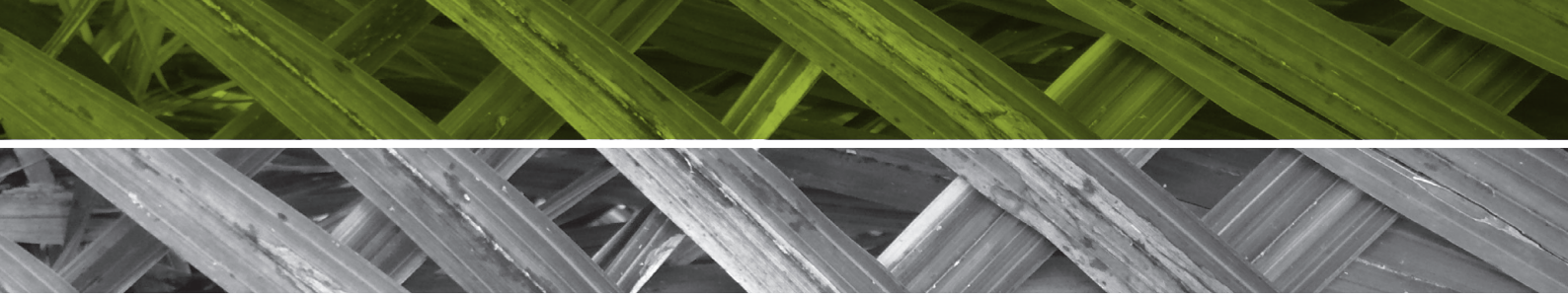
Barry Barclay a noted Māori film maker for many years devoted time and energy to producing Māori indigenous films to portray something of Māori life to Māori and to bring this form of film making medium to the attention of Pākehā film makers. Barclay acknowledged as the first Māori to direct a Māori feature film – *Ngāti* (1987), and his work in the *Tangata Whenua* TV series (1974).

In producing film-documentaries Barclay worked closely with Māori communities to gain their confidence, to produce documentaries that expressed the collective memories of those communities, and to transmit Māori knowledge and experiences relevant to them. Dr Don Selwyn, a close friend and associate of Barry Barclay's, produced the first full length Māori language film aided by the masterful translation into te reo Māori by the Tainui scholar Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones. The exactness of the prose-poetry in the Māori language supported Māori language revitalisation. There is also Mereta Mita's film *Mauri* (1988), a probing enquiry into concepts of culture, birth, marriage and death illustrating those smoldering moments of breaking free from colonial repression. The Māori response to these films positive and alive.

Barclay, Selwyn and Mita all fierce advocates against injustice, particularly what they saw as racism against Māori in the film industry and the barriers to telling Māori stories reclaiming the image. They presented a representation of film inculcated with culture, customs and spiritual beliefs not merely to entertain an audience, but to reclaim the image and sound because of the monocultural domination of the media and related industries. In 1990 Barclay made this statement which typifies Māori standing in the film industry:

"Every culture has a right and responsibility to present its own language, culture and traditions to its own people. This responsibility is so fundamental it cannot be left in the hands of 'outsiders', nor be usurped by them. Furthermore any culture living closely with another ought to have regular opportunities to express itself to that other culture in ways that are true to its own values and needs". ▼





The scenes of Te Puhī's devotion to her adult son Niki is well and true enough, heart rendering, a mother-child closeness and imminence. It was as though both had their secrets—a hidden world—accessible only to the two of them. Their cycle of life and expression, innate reo Māori from within their inner cycle show us their journey of survival. Nevertheless a story line, so it would seem of division and a seemingly inaccessible world.

The theme of *Rain of the Children* is to tell a story, to make this story accessible so that Te Puhī's voice and that of her son Niki, her six children who died and the others who were adopted out will echo in our wider communities, to which it has. Te Puhī has given us a glimpse of the times in which she lived, reflective of the dimensions of this profound Māori women's inner spirit which I feel we are privileged and honoured to share.

I came out of the theatre, going home in silence wondering how on earth this remarkable woman Te Puhī survived. What was that I just saw? Suddenly, suddenly for me the big screen in the theatre wasn't a window, it was a 'mirror about Te Puhī and me Tūhoe'. A mirror held before Te Puhī and her people to allow others to look into this mirror and form judgments based solely on the credence, reliability and authority of the film.

This was one of the major flaws of the film for me. The monocultural domination of the film ethic, style and rhetoric. The 'outsider' as Barclay would have it, telling the story of Te Puhī. I asked myself am I comfortable as a Tūhoe person following the related scenes, the process of retrieving a restorative history of heritage, pride, consciousness and my Tūhoe identity? Of course not!

Rain of the Children offered me life histories from the 'outsider' perspective and invited me to share in the dreams, hopes and vision that the 'outsider' had processed. My Tūhoe collective essence, history, spirituality, *tapu*, *noa*, *tikanga* customary oral traditions continuously under attack in this film. Sharing the podium, dreams and vision of the 'outsider' is an experience which detracts from one's true self worth.

The film was also equally irresponsible in its format, manipulated way with the repetitive use of the word *māku*tu, *curse*, which seemed to broadcast presumptuously that a violation of tribal, *hapū*, *tapu* and *noa* had occurred. This violation was constantly attributed to Te Puhī the subject matter of the film. This aspect of *Rain of the Children* irritated, annoyed and goaded me throughout.

Why was the word *māku*tu, *curse*, overstated and repetitive in the narrative of Vincent Ward? And from a filmic perspective when the word *māku*tu, *curse* was used in the narrative Ward would use close up frames of Te Puhī

and Niki in their solemn, sad forgiving moments which gave the viewing audience the perspective that something indeed a *māku*tu, *curse*, can in some way be attributed to mother and son and had no doubt afflicted to her descendents. Can it be that Ward used melodrama visuals and his narrative to structure, create, and reinforce this form of *māku*tu, *curse*, a tribal violation that supposedly can be linked to Te Puhī some how?

Further Ward's narrative and visuals in an instantly recognisable way made it sound and look like Te Puhī and her son Niki were displaced individuals, had suffered a sense of exile from their community. Footage, sound and cut away shots all bear witness to dislocation, and isolation.

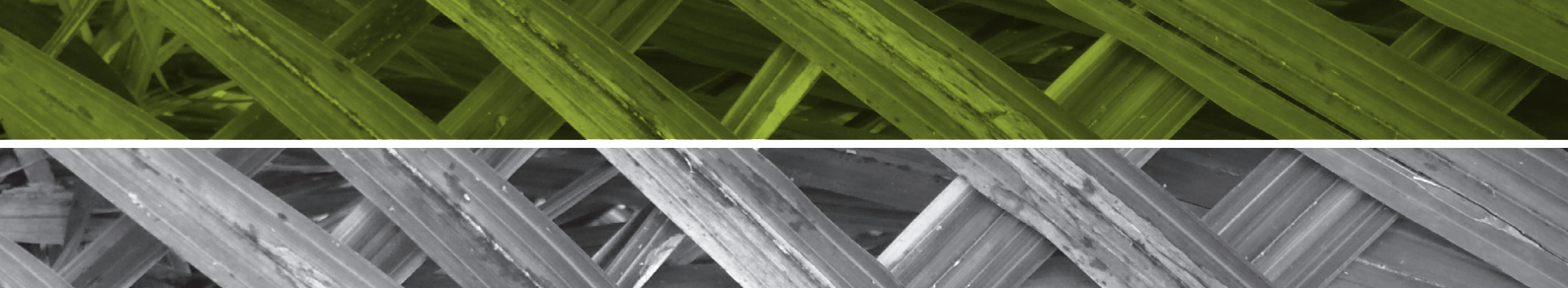
These ongoing narratives and scenes are quite wrong, wide off the mark unbalanced and grossly inaccurate. I would describe Te Puhī wanting to be alone, her aura in association with her solitude and tranquility. And solitude and tranquility in Te Puhī's case is the richness of 'self, values and experience' gaining mastery and insight into the mountain of thoughts born from within her.

Te Puhī had not lost touch with the kernel of her essential being and her community despite what we had seen on the film which cannot be made to be a 'true reflection' of Te Puhī.

People like Te Puhī and countless others of those tumultuous times have seen a quite different life from our own perspective, are nearer solitude and tranquility than those who have not gone through the school of pain and suffering. Ward misread, and misinterpreted her self-imposed dislocation as having a *māku*tu, *curse*, because Te Puhī herself said she was cursed. Te Puhī was hōhā (tired) with this imposition! Waiho au ki au! (Go away, leave me in my solitude and tranquility).

What I saw was Te Puhī protecting her beloved son Niki and herself from the outer world by forming a self-imposed screen which enabled her to preserve her solitude and tranquility. Don't we all do this to ourselves when we are tired of the outside world?

Vincent Ward's use of the word *māku*tu, *curse* for the Tūhoe viewer has a colonial overture, leaning more to a fictional, imaginary desire to explain something unknown to himself. The edited versions from Ward's selective primary sources (Tūhoe) looked to me to be 'deeply uneasy' about their comments that *māku*tu, *curse*, has been passed down from one generation to another. And this accounting for experiences generated from within the community as they speak about a past full of grief and shame. ▼



For me the use of the word *mākutu*, *curse*, is more aligned to a 'ghost story' which is what I suggest *Rain of the Children* is about, to reinforce something quiet unfamiliar to Ward's own internal anxieties to what he had stumbled upon. A 'ghost story' which would appeal to Māori and non-Māori audience.

Rain of the Children images echo a 'troubling undercurrent' as Ward tracks Te Puhi as the colonising narrator speaking in this case about Te Puhi, Tūhoe and Māori. Ward has found something all too mysterious, and unresolved.

All too frequently a plot of this kind, or this 'ghost story' is what Ward uses to 'displace' and 'exile' the colonised'. Unintentionally, and naively his narrative voice reinforces the perspective that the colonised race, that is Te Puhi and her people of Tūhoe possesses primitive powers, supernatural knowledge, and unbridled uncontrollable emotions.

I remember not long ago reading a fictional story, similar to the line in Ward's 'narrative voice' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature* where reference is made to fictional writings of the period 1890s and 1900s: 'ghost and mystery stories were a regular part of fiction published in annuals and magazines in the 1890s and 1900s' the period before and after Te Puhi was born: an example is 'The Disappearance of Letham Crouch' first published in the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* in 1901.

In this story Letham Crouch is a missionary who is 'mad about his priesthood' and is received by Māori as a 'new tohunga'. In order to tread their Māori pagan beliefs underfoot, Crouch lives in a tapu whare and after a period in which his eyes become 'sunken and wild' he develops a fanatical appearance, he vanishes, leaving the whare (house) in a state of destruction, to reappear as a Māori 'stripped for dancing' The narrator's comment show the extent to which the missionary has crossed the boundary.

Vincent Ward is not the missionary, but his intellectual curiosity and narratives throughout his film *Rain of the Children* has crossed the boundary by providing an oversimplification of the understanding of *mākutu*, *curse*. I am none the wiser. What I do know, that the perpetrator, the person responsible for the *mākutu*, *curse*, Ward has constituted throughout the film alarmingly is Te Puhi and her son Niki. This is grossly unfair, excessive and inaccurate.

The story telling elements of *Rain of the Children* is typical of 19th century colonial 'ghost stories' in its attribution to mystical powers to the heathen, in this case Te Puhi, her people, and Tūhoe that supports the continued representation of colonial power and oppression. If only Mr Vincent Ward had read his history correctly he would have encountered turbulent colonial attitudes to Māori and

in particular to Tūhoe in the period before and after Te Puhi was born, and during her life time depicting the notion of how to represent the distinctiveness of the colonial powers.

There is no escaping the fact that there is something amiss with the historical resonances that we had viewed in this film. Historically somehow, there was no entry point, or a reflective mode of the 'contested histories' portrayed by Ward. Why is this? Where are the parts of this 'contested histories' that would explain to the viewing audience about the turbulent landscape that had taken place in Tūhoe, Te Urewera before Te Puhi was born and afterwards?

Was *Rain of the Children* mainly produced without a Tūhoe audience in mind, and was it deliberate on the part of Ward to ignore, neglect and lock out how the government of the 1870s to 1900 fought a deliberate policy in Te Urewera to assert government supremacy and to destroy Māori and Tūhoe autonomy with military moves and British troops augmented by colonial and kūpapa forces.

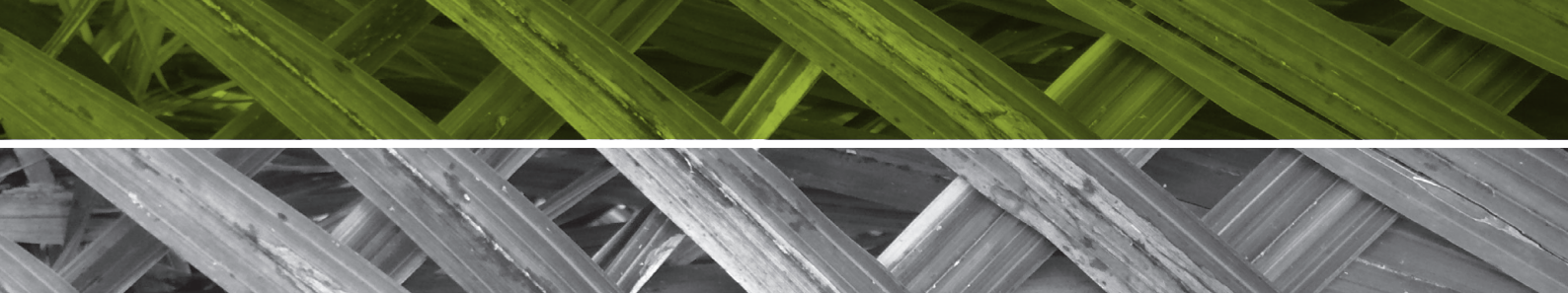
Before Te Puhi was born and during her time war and confiscation in Te Urewera left a destroyed economy and a lasting bitterness between government and Tūhoe. All of these key historical elements composed, written published sources, reports, are available to Ward. A living kōrero (talk) to bring him up to date.

You see for me and many other Tūhoe, these published sources, living kōrero, oral traditions are not only vehicles for understanding, but they transmit knowledge which shapes memory and therefore adds to community knowledge, scholarship, credibility and provides a profundity, an insightfulness of tribal truth, history that the film *Rain of the Children* displaced.

So the point the film should have made is that before Te Puhi was born and during her life time there was a colonial system in place, a government which brought war to Māori tribes and Tūhoe in order to dispossess them. The energies and human capital resources for Tūhoe, forced into war left these communities poorly placed to rebuild their economies and their community infrastructure.

As a young girl and women in Te Urewera particularly in Maungapōhatu, Te Puhi and her community of Maungapōhatu and other communities witnessed dispossession and criminal acts first hand.

The Maungapōhatu scene in *Rain of the Children* depicted Rua Kēnana and the community he founded in 1907. The footage and narrative of this volatile episode, painful acts of violence in 1916 did not go far enough to state the criminal acts by the police, more or less there was a preoccupation by Ward of Te Puhi. ▼



The viewing audience attitude with this 'assault' is skewed towards those testimonies who contributed an 'outsider' historical perspective.

Lets be quite clear here: this settlement was 'assaulted, and crushed'. And the assault left two young Māori youth dead, one of them Rua's son, Toko, and the other, the second son of one of his principal wives Pinepine Te Rika, Te Māipi Te Whiu, both shot at close range. According to personal and eye witness accounts Toko was dragged out from under the house and shot like a dog. Both these deaths remain totally, unsatisfactorily and poorly explained in the police testimonies, instead there is a clear litany of orchestrated voices in the evidence as the police officers of that 'assault' protected themselves against criminal charges.

In 1998, a demand for an apology from the police was articulated by representatives of the whānau who in turn asked the police for 'acknowledgement' that Rua's gunpoint arrest was wrongful as was the murder of Toko and Te Māipi Te Whiu. There is also a recent assertion of the rape of Rua's eldest daughter. These were all criminal acts not included in the film. Why?

The extent of the long standing legacy of distrust is best indicated by Tūhoe's stated belief (in the 1970s) that the police force was made up not of police but of their wartime substitutes, criminals. Rua Kēnana and another son Whatu and four others were imprisoned in Mount Eden while the government prepared its case.

Rua Kēnana is imprisoned in Mount Eden. In his cell a window located close to the sealing, a manu (in this case a kereru), lands on the window ledge; see line three of the *pao* (a topical waiata) on page 6. Kēnana hearing the kereru land is filled with feelings of 'te haumarumarū o te ngoikore' (debilitation and weakness), forced segregation composes this *pao* dedicated to his first wife, the 'most senior' of his twelve wives Te Ākakura, his community and his two sons killed by the police.

He reveals in the introductory lines of the *pao* a feeling of devastation, enforced separation from Te Ākakura and his community and creates the metaphoric line for the kereru to carry his deep affection, and his feelings of disconnection, loneliness to Te Ākakura, his community and the departing wairua (spirit) and images of his sons.

The *pao* also draws a strong link to his twelfth youngest wife, Wairimu who was his favourite, for she had born him a son. In line 5 he uses the words *tō pōriro*, which is an affectionate reference to his son. The use of the word *Īharaira, Israel* is a reference to his followers in Maungapōhatu. Since Wairimu was not of high rank, Kēnana's people did not approve of her being his favourite

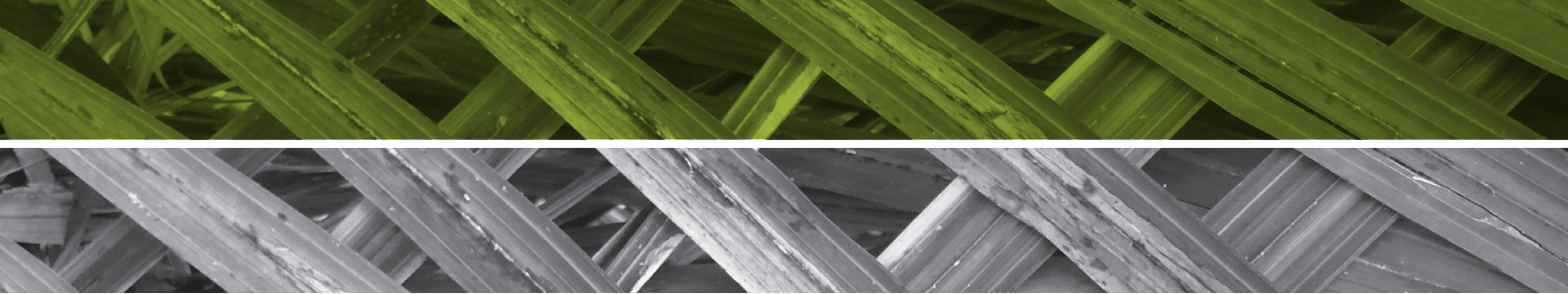
wife, and he tells Wairimu in the *pao* that she should not draw attention to herself, and so annoy them.

But this *pao*, on condition of the callous circumstances inhibits Kēnana and the *pao* has an effect, a just indemnity, a protection mechanism to lighten the harsh reality of separation of Kēnana from his community whereby this composition proclaims his inalienable rights in search of justice. Kēnana has no other recourse but *manawa pouri* (sadness), anxiety and depression not with the mind, but with floating emotions of the *manawa* (heart). The emotions of the heart and physical distress all adds to greater pronouncements of suffrage and the loss of human dignity and rights.

The preservation of these rights have been desecrated and despoiled which sits at the heart of his seeking a rationale for the deliberate 'unjust assault' of Maungapōhatu. The *pao* is a prevailing declaration, a constitution, a sovereignty right by Kēnana in formulating his own notion of 'justice' through this period of despair and challenge.



The presence of the kereru on the window ledge is employed as a symbol to take Kēnana's pious message, teachings to his 'crushed' community of widows, orphans, those suffering from flu epidemic, destitute and homelessness, his imprisonment, the devastation of Maungapōhatu, and the double slaughter of his two sons. ▼



Toko and Te Maipi were in no sense criminals, to be shot for their beliefs. Kēnana grieves, struggles to accept this debilitation, unable to sleep he composes this *pao*. (The sung style, melody employed in this *pao* is a waiata tangi, (lament) and waiata aroha (love song). Te Puhi of whom Kēnana names 'the special one' is now one of those young widows as the story goes she was a lover to Toko, shot by the police.

*Moe hurihuri ai taku moe i Mautini
Ko taku tau tonu kei taku manawa i ora
Whakaarorangi ai te rere mai a te manu
He karere mai koe na Te Ākakura i ora
Koi ana, Wairimu! Hunāia tō pōriro
Kai rangona nuitia e Te Iharaira i ora!
E rere, e rere rā ngā wai o Mautini!
Māku hei inu iho hei manawa rā i orā*



*I toss and turn in my sleep in Mount Eden
My darling always in my heart i ora
Straight towards me fly a bird
You my messenger from Te Ākakura i ora
Do well, Wairimu! Hide our affectionate son,
Least Israel hear much of him i ora!
Flow on the waters of Mount Eden
I will drink to sustain myself i ora!*

These articulated 'contested historical facts' evidence was missing from *Rain of the Children* Maungapōhatu footage.

Without doubt a biographical, film-documentary like *Rain of the Children* is a way of looking at the past through the lives of some of its principal people using written, oral and published sources as well as evidenced based researched accounts. Selection, research and writing are carried on in this enormously profitable field between the evidence left by the past and the questions put by the present, which is my contention.

A biographical, film-documentary should not be seen as static in time, or its 'contested historical facts' left standing in an isolated vacuum. New research, probing qualitative questions should have been explored by the 'draft script' before the film *Rain of the Children* came to air to unravel fresh evidence which in turn prompts further questions. The projection of the film reinforced and substantiated the plight of the powerlessness which in this case is Te Puhi and her people. They don't have a voice or supporting evidence to explain their part, so it would seem! This biographical, film-documentary should at the very least have used evidence based material to devise plausible, credible answers to our 'contested histories'. The lives of many hitherto people of Te Puhi and her people of Maungapōhatu remain obscured, the government of that time crowning achievement and *Rain of the Children*.

With the frontal assault of dispossession came wave after wave of rampant diseases and missionary zeal to convert the heathen with the colonial forces supported by kūpapa to reinforce and strengthen government legislation. These

stories and countless other stories have been told and retold on marae under the aegis of the Waitangi Tribunal, where Māori and Pākehā tribal historians, academics have opened the archives in the last twenty, thirty years to reveal the real meaning 'behind our contested histories'.

Herein Vincent Ward has made the entry point of 'contested histories' from the time Te Puhi was born, remarkable arrogance on his part. He has through his filmic imposition dismissed some forty-fifty years of dispossession, recrimination, and diseases previous to Te Puhi's birth and after.

If only, if only Mr Vincent Ward the acclaimed film maker had looked back into his New Zealand history, particularly Te Urewera history about fifty years, even less perhaps, before Te Puhi was born which is close at hand, real and present. A generation and a half removed from Ward himself he will have stumbled over a colonial system like the Native Land Court, Native Lands Act 1865 the court's operation set tribe against tribe, hapū against hapū, creating dissent within communities, and tempted leaders to act without consent of their people. These Acts and many others of the time were designed to promote and advance settlement of land acquisition.

Beyond any reasonable doubt *Rain of the Children* failed to tell the real truth that settler interests obliterated almost all considerations of Māori and Tūhoe welfare in Te Urewera. Te Puhi and her tamariki and all of those before and after Te Puhi are the victims, fatalities, traumatised by colonisation, and not as Ward would have us believe Te Puhi had a *mākutu*, curse. ▼

And indeed if Vincent Ward had read his history correctly as history is an important consideration here. History provides an expectation that there is a part of our lives which depends on the connections between the past and the present and the present with the future, particularly for Māori and Tūhoe. Ward would have found some of the answers, reasons for his overt simplification of the use of the word *mākutu*, curse, as he himself was convinced that Te Puhi had a *mākutu*, curse.

History, knowledge and understanding of the past give the present generation a new sense of *purpose*, *possibility* and *dignity*. The film in my view failed to take into account that the conditions Te Puhi, her adult son Niki, her six children who died between 1922 and 1936, together with the children adopted out, were linked to a 'trapped lifestyle of poverty brought upon them by deliberate dispossession by the Crown, and the effects of the Great Depression.

This aspect of this film is most disturbing and in my view unfounded and totally unfair on the integrity and character of Te Puhi. An intolerable sense of insult to Te Puhi, Niki and her living descendents. Here was Te Puhi, strong and spirited who quite naturally valued life, developed her own sense to right and wrong through *karakia* (prayer), to combat and understand her own harsh life experiences. Did Te Puhi have a *mākutu*, curse as the film continually stated. Of course not!

And why was Te Puhi *cursed*, did she violate a Tūhoe tribal lore or an individual? From what I could see on the film it was Te Puhi and her people who were subjected to violation, and loss of standing in her community. Hence the whānau that spoke for Te Puhi were 'clearly uneasy' as they spoke about a past full of grief and shame.

Let me be quite clear here: Te Puhi was not *cursed*, nor did she have a *mākutu* on her, her adult son, her six children who died between 1922 and 1936 and her other children adopted out.

My contention is that Te Puhi her tamariki and Niki and Tuhoë are the victims, traumatised by a colonial government waging war on Tūhoe and other tribes during that period to reinforce a systematic policy of depopulation, introduced epidemiological diseases and missionary zeal which occurred throughout the country, all added to accelerate dispossession. Ward was seduced by this unexplored venture by an 'outsider' and it could be said that Ward himself is probably a victim of our education system academic history which largely shut out Māori 'contested tribal histories and varied knowledge systems' from main stream education.

Rain of the Children is based on the constructions of the dominant society and its polity, wanting to display its own political affairs as being just and fair. Ward in this case is the saviour. This film is an example of a colonial past and present, and impositions of values that were once thought to be inclusive but which in actuality is 'totally blind' to our experiences and perceptions.

What would have been useful for this film was to bring forward Tūhoe methodological structuring for oral knowledge, remembering and depicting community leaders sources about the past and a means to understand the other version than those created by Ward.

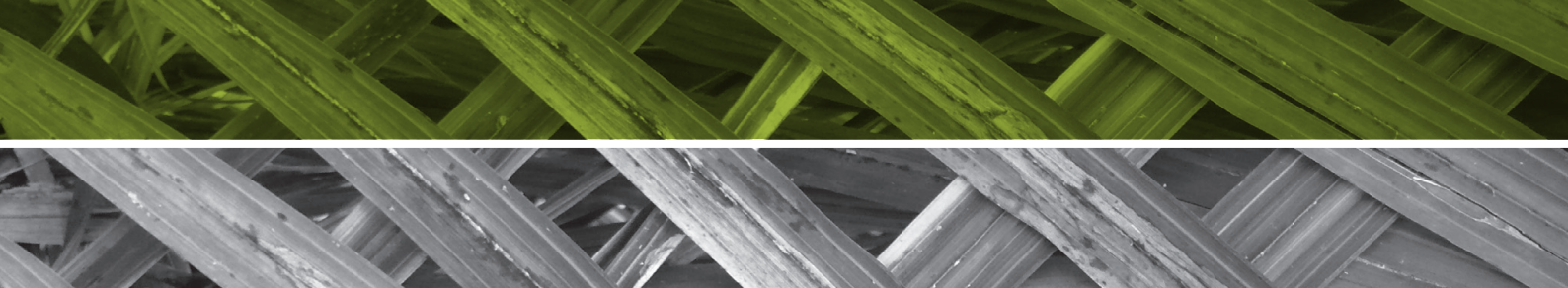
We saw scenes of Te Puhi, her back profusely bent over with her adult son. The more I saw Te Puhi and her bent back the more it unlocked the memory of colonisation. Te Puhi carried and brought forth so many associations of those painful encounters to formulate a totally transforming experience as we hear *iwi* after *iwi* presenting, describing before the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal those turbulent years.

Te Puhi and her people which at the time is the poor, disposed by ruthless government action, the minorities and the political powerless is obliterated from memory for the viewing audience in *Rain of the Children*. Was this deliberate by Vincent Ward? Ward would have us believe that the circumstances of dispossession were brought on by the people themselves.

What is important to bear in mind which is not all together clear in the context of the film *Rain of the Children*; during that part of the 19th century, there was a dramatic reversal felt by Māori with depopulation and near genocide from increasing waves of immigrants, introduced diseases, transient missionaries, government legislation, and fortune seekers. For Māori, and in this case Tūhoe, what followed was a forced change from tribal lifestyle inextricably bound to the natural environment, to a new reality dictated by the social and political inconsistencies of Victorian Britain.

The immigrants brought with them an element of chaos into a society hitherto characterised by order and orderliness. Alienation and dispossession was sanctioned in laws passed by settler government and was effected through three mechanisms: Confiscation, Crown land purchase and Māori land court decisions. Te Puhi and her Tūhoe people were subjected to these three elements and worse was to come.

Before Te Puhi was born some forty-fifty years Tūhoe opposition to forced land sales was countered by armed troops and the punishment was confiscation of tribal lands, legalised through two Acts of Parliament, the New Zealand Settlers Act 1863 and the Suppression of Rebellion Act in that same year 1863. ▼



Perhaps there is one small glimmer of historical creditability in *Rain of the Children*, a passing comment that would have gone completely unnoticed by the viewing audience; a reference made to the Scorched Earth Policy. Well then, lets put the Scorched Earth Policy into context here. During the late 1860s late 1870s Te Kooti Ārikirangi Te Tūruki escaped from the Chatham Islands and found sanctuary in Te Urewera. Te Kooti offered Tūhoe moral support, spiritual leadership and the hope of restitution of confiscated land.

Tūhoe paid dearly for this support of Te Kooti. Government forces supported by kūpapa conducted and employed the ruthless Scorched Earth Campaign in the invasions of Te Urewera, burning villages and houses, destroying food stores, crops, scattering and killing livestock in an effort to break the network that sustained Te Kooti. After these invasions many thousands of acres of Tūhoe land were confiscated, and Tūhoe were pushed back to the boundary of the confiscation line near Rūātoki.

The devastating Scorched Earth Policy campaign killed 160 Tūhoe men including women and children who starved in the winters of 1870-71 from food shortage and disease. Adults, elderly, children, and newborns in these small communities were annihilated.

Some years later in 1897 Elsdon Best author of *Children of the Mist* recorded outbreaks in Tūhoe communities of a number of epidemics, measles, influenza, whooping cough, typhoid fever, scarlet fever, mumps, tuberculosis, and there was suggestion of the bubonic plague.

At a tangi in the same year in 1897, shortly before Te Puhī was born Elsdon Best listened as the chief Tūtakangahau spoke 'this rapid dying of our people is a new thing. In former times our people did not die so... they knew no disease; they died on the battlefield or of old age. These diseases which slay our people are all from the Pākehā.

The ravages of these diseases is supported by the noted historian, the late Michael King's formative 2003 publication 'The Penguin History of New Zealand' where he cites, and uses the words '*the curse of rampant diseases*' to give reason for the rapid dying of Māori as he points out, is the effect of pathogens to which Māori had insufficient immunity claimed a high toll of lives in Te Urewera. Dr Māui Pōmare, and Dr Te Rangihīroa in their medical reports to the Māori MP at the time Tā Timi Kara (Sir James Carroll) reported frequent outbreaks of diseases in Te Urewera and Rūātoki hence the visit by Prime Minister Seddon and Tā Timi Kara in 1894.

Seddon described Tūhoe as 'living in absolute poverty, not having sufficient food, not having the comforts they ought to have'. These communities already demoralised by the effects of war and dispossession lead to poor nutrition and

grossly substandard accommodation in areas subject to confiscation.

Following hard on the heels of these *cursed diseases* were the early missionaries who came into Te Urewera and in different tribal areas around the country moving quickly and reprimanding their converts for not praying hard enough, and lost no opportunity to remind the sick that sin and disbelief were the fundamental causes of illness. (Remember the scenes of Te Puhī, eyes closed in prayer in the van and at home).

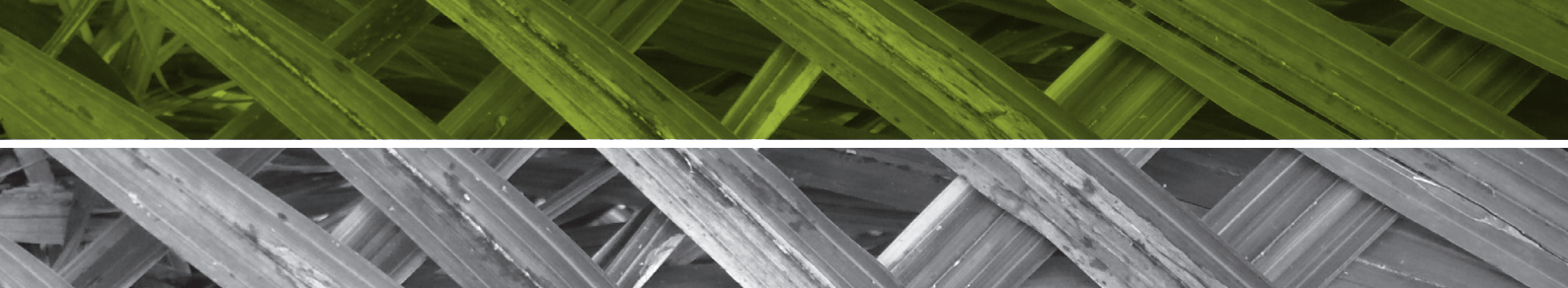
Missionaries in Te Urewera and elsewhere around the country had this double approach to disease. On the one hand they regarded illness and loss as the will of God, an inevitable consequence of immorality, *i hara koe* (you have committed a sin).

Yet on the other, there were missionaries in Te Urewera who were advocates for medical science and provided elementary health care and built schools. In 1917 the Presbyterian mission built a school in Ruatāhuna under Sister Annie Henry and later on in 1918 under the Rev. J.G. Laughton another school was built in Maungapōhatu with the approval of Rua Kēnana and Tūtakangahau. Perhaps Ward could have added some semblance of balance and objectivity to his film-documentary by focusing on Laughton's tactful, thoughtful and sympathetic handling of this otherwise difficult situation with Kēnana, Tūhoe leaders and other missionaries throughout Te Urewera.

Published sources and comments by those who knew Laughton openly state that he was a remarkable man, and had there been many more like him, there is little doubt the relations between Tūhoe and Pākehā would have been far better. With the influence of Laughton a new phase took place with the participation of teachers in Maungapōhatu.

One particular teacher Ms Irene Paulger devoted unselfish commitment, advancing and playing a major role in teaching and health care; she integrated the two into the Maungapōhatu community and received the support of Tūhoe tribal leaders at the time. Irene Paulger adopted and cared for Te Puhī's three children whom she gave a Private School Education at Turakina Māori Girls College Marton and Wesley College Paerāta.

Ms Irene Paulger also cared for many other children and continued to maintain a watchful eye over other young mothers in Maungapōhatu. More notable, Ms Paulger established a small group of leading Tūhoe women in Maungapōhatu, which represented a significant move at the time for a Pākehā, and a women, to encourage Tūhoe women to include their expertise in traditional knowledge to support and provide opportunities for discussions ▼



and instruction in the proper care and feeding of babies, the preparation of meals, maintenance of their whare and the benefits to be derived from fresh air and sunshine. Ms Paulger was an accepted advocate of her community's gain without cultural impoverishment.

For a moment the entry into the 20th century for Tūhoe in Te Urewera in Maungapōhatu, Ruatāhuna, Waimana, and Matahī came under the influence of Sister Annie Henry, the Rev. J.G. Laughton, and Ms Irene Paulger. There were also other notable Tūhoe leaders who stood by these three individuals who were able to gradually arrest population decline, improve life expectancy, devise a capacity for recovery and optimism to bring about a slow change from a seemingly desperate situation for Tūhoe of poor nutrition, inadequate sanitation, tuberculosis, and infectious diseases.

These approaches by the hāhi (church) Perehipitiriana (Presbyterian) represented a bold, intrepid and courageous initiative. But the earlier reoccurring theme of the brutality of muru raupatu, depopulation, disease and dispossession and the influence of earlier missionaries had already made its engrained cruel mark for Māori and Tūhoe whereby converts were urged to demonstrate greater levels of commitment to the Christian God.

The generations before and after Te Puhi, began to accept that their unfortunate circumstances were some how linked and became convinced that the epidemics which confronted them were a visitation from God, and as a consequence placed themselves in the hands of missionaries.

Of course this aspect of missionaries linking epidemics to sinful existence can be traced to other parts of the country. For instance in 1840 not long after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in response to threats that East Coast Māori might abandon the teachings of the church because of a large number of childhood deaths. William Williams the early missionary based in the East Coast comforted a grieving father by explaining that 'the cause for which sickness came is sin' and dismissed claims that it came from the Pākehā god. Instead blame was shifted to Satan the atua Māori which *mākutu*, curse, was the outcome.

Elsdon Best also commented around that period early 1900s that Māori Council and local committees were dismissive, if not hostile to suggestions at improving the situation for Tūhoe. Following the Te Urewera land wars food shortage was evident and severe frosts had destroyed potato crops in Rūātoki and Ruatāhuna, 'widespread famine' was responsible for closing schools at Te Whāiti, Te Houhi now called Galatea.

Kāti kia hoki ake ki tēnei kuia aroha ki a Te Puhi.

Te Puhi (the special one, named by Rua Kēnana) born from within the effects the turbulence of her time is much more *remarkable* now than we care to realise, appreciate and value. The true character of Te Puhi is not easy to discern and distinguish from *Rain of the Children*. When Te Puhi was born and throughout her life time she witnessed the dawning of ever changing legacies of injury, persuasions and pressures upon her life time in Te Urewera.

Multifaceted experiences together with generations before and after who witnessed several layers of injustice and manipulated chronicles of history. *Rain of the Children* in its entirety is absolutely and totally wrong in its claim that Te Puhi had a *mākutu*, curse, on her.

For it is important for all of us to remember Te Puhi and many hundreds of our tīpuna before she was born and afterwards, and current today suffered appallingly in the 'holocaust' of muru raupatu (unjust land confiscation) visible on the landscape of our motu today as the coloniser still occupies vast tracts of Māori land.

Therefore muru raupatu is the only clear aspect responsible for the crystallisation, the key principals and elements attributed to *mākutu*, curse, in *Rain of the Children*. It is this litigious link to muru raupatu that destroyed the constitutional sanctions of tikanga (protocols and customs), tapu and noa, language, traditions and the rightful heritage of land ownership, social, cultural economic development for Māori and Tūhoe. Those that suffered and continue to suffer because of muru raupatu their destiny and vocation actually took place before they were born and the judgements, events, circumstances of their life, before and after is historically bound to the hand of deliberate depopulation, introduced diseases, missionary adversarial advocates, land dispossession which has become all too familiar today in the volumes of words; Waitangi Tribunal reports with the jurisdiction to investigate raupatu, muru whenua claims and make recommendations for settlement.

If anything *Rain of the Children* with the resourceful Te Puhi and her intellectually curious son Niki has opened the door for all of us and invited us to sit by their fireplace as Te Puhi gathers the embers of the fire at her home in Matahī. As we look closer into the simmering flames of her ahi kōpae (small undulating fire), the deep red embers tell us a story that spans a life time of momentous change, strikes a chord with our consciousness of the enduring commitment of Maungapōhatu and Te Urewera, about the struggle for justice in which her people were engaged from the time

their lands were confiscated in 1863. Every family in Tūhoe has its own account of this commitment, this history, but out there, beyond us all there is a public record.

Te Puhi's life and struggle has not ended for she lives on in her many mokopuna in their journey of searching, finding, shedding tears and making sense of these events with their own interpretations, their own circumstances with a feeling of compassion, a labour of love.

This *noble, dignified* kuia heralds the dawning of each new day, has awoken us from our sombre, to be made aware of the nourishment of life we experience now for which Te Puhi could not fully share in. Nonetheless her strength and determination to give a means to the possibility, to grapple against all odds, reminding us of muru raupatu, her life, her mountain Maungapōhatu and Te Urewera temporarily suspends us from the narrow confines of our own perceived realities as Te Puhi's tīpuna Hinepūkohurangi lifts her shrouded veil of mist ever so slightly to allow us to witness the dawn of time-so destiny has decreed.

Ai! He tika rā tā te mokopuna *That's my Nan!*

*Moe hurihuri ai taku moe i Mautini
Ko taku tau tonu kei taku manawa i ora
Whakaarorangi ai te rere mai a te manu
He karere mai koe na Te Ākakura i ora
Koi ana, Wairimu! Hunāia tō pōriro
Kai rangona nuitia e Te Iharaira i ora!
E rere, e rere rā ngā wai o Mautini!
Māku hei inu iho hei manawa rā i orā*

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Taiarahia Black
10 November 2008

*I toss and turn in my sleep in Mount Eden
My darling always in my heart i ora
Straight towards me fly a bird
You my messenger from Te Ākakura i ora
Do well, Wairimu! Hide our affectionate son,
Least Israel hear much of him i ora!
Flow on the waters of Mount Eden
I will drink to sustain myself i ora*