TE WAHAROA

Whiria ngā tangata: Weave the people together

We gather at the waharoa. Many of us spill out onto the street, chatting, giggling. Every 20 seconds or so, our eyes flit to the mahau, to check if the kaikaranga has appeared; the pōwhiri cannot begin without her call, the opening, the welcome. Soon, a skirt- and pounamu-wearing figure emerges from the shadow of the wharenui into the light, and she makes her way past the mahau to the space just in front of the maihi. The chatter diminishes, and we transition from our conversations to stand at the ready. The kaikaranga momentarily composes herself: she closes her eyes, deeply inhales through her nose, and her hands start to wiri. Her eyes blink open, lips part, a short but deep breath is drawn into her mouth, and the voice of her ancestress nestled inside her calls, cutting through the silence:

Haere mai rā e ngā manuhiri tuarangi e, o ngā hau e wha e,
Nau mai rā ki Te Whare Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau, e.
Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai rā.

(Draw near distinguished guests from all over, from the four winds,
Welcome to Auckland University of Technology.
Draw near, draw near, draw near.)

The kaikaranga spearheading the ope manuhiri replies in the voice of her ancestress, and as she does so, we edge in behind her, urging her forward. The voices intertwine, dancing above us. The union of the voices permits us to enter across the marae ātea, and into the whare. The karanga identifies and places us in relation to one another—she is haukāinga, and we are manuhiri—and gives us a way of belonging and being together now as in the past.

The papers that follow emerged from a performance studies-centred conversation about pōwhiri as ritual and performance, past and present. It is important to begin this series of articles with a short karanga, as pōwhiri—upon which this series hinges—cannot commence without it. Hēmi Kelly's article entitled "The

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Performance of Whaikōrero" highlights the use of the whole body in the delivery of whaikōrero by the most accomplished reo speakers. Valance Smith then writes about traditional waiata in an article called "He Wai! Let's Sing! The Place of Waiata in Extrapolating Tūrangawaewae", followed by Maree Sheehan's consideration of the ways "Contemporary Popular Waiata Provide a Sense of Belonging". In "Recalling Tūrangawaewae", Jani Katarina Taituha Wilson focuses on the representation of pōwhiri in New Zealand fiction feature film, which leads to Robert Pouwhare's offering, "Hui E! Tāiki E!", where he argues for the transportability of pōwhiri and its enduring efficacy no matter where it is performed.

Written first to be presented as part of "Performing Belonging in the 21st Century", the 40th annual conference of the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies (ADSA), hosted by Auckland University of Technology in June 2017, these papers were designed to go beyond introducing international delegates to one of the central (if not *the* central) tenets of Māori culture. At stake was a quest to create a collective understanding of the power of pōwhiri, as a whole and in its constituent parts, to construct and communicate, to rehearse and maintain, a sense of tūrangawaewae. In this, the discussion began by recognising that belonging, like identity, is a matter of ongoing performance: on stages and in the streets, in community halls, clubs, sporting arenas, churches and parliaments. In "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging", Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) observes that "belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'" (p. 197). She later notes: "The politics of belonging includes also struggles around the determination of what is involved in belonging, in being a member of a community, and of what roles specific social locations and specific narratives of identity play in this" (p. 205).

Belonging may be deeply felt, but it is also manifestly constructed and capitalised upon—a matter of collectivity and communality, of inclusion and also of exclusion. We, whoever "we" are, make ourselves into an "us" by marking others as "them"; we say *we* are of this place and *they* are not. Belonging is thus also a matter of desire, as much of longing to be as it is of being per se. Where the original call for papers by the ADSA organisers echoed Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis (2013), who urge their (predominantly European and American) readers to "rediscover the sense of belonging as a viable alternative to fragmentation, atomization, and the resulting loss of sensitivity" (p. 12), the papers that follow assert that, for Māori, pōwhiri continues to provide a means to reawaken and revitalise connections, communality and a sense of purpose going forward.

We exit the whare, Te Purengi, a little stiff after sitting through the series of whaikōrero about the purpose of our meeting and waiata kīnaki but exhilarated, chatting and giggling (again). We multitask, continuing our conversations while slipping on our shoes, and checking our phones. Slowly, we make our way to the wharekai; we must share in food and drink to cleanse ourselves of the tapu we brought with us onto this marae. Once we enter the house, we bow our heads as the kaiminita hits the table with the back of a spoon, to indicate the blessing of the kai. He does so in a low, gentle tone: "Nau mai, e ngā hua e hora nei . . ." ("We acknowledge the fruits/produce laid before us . . ."). The aroma of coffee invisibly decorates the room, and a buffet of simple, bright-coloured food on the table parting the room is before us. The kaiminita lifts his voice: "Tūturu whakamaua kia tina" ("A call to reality and action"), to which we reply "Tina!" ("Action!"). His tone ascends one more step: "Haumi ē, hui ē!" ("Join together, gather!), and we all assert, "Tāiki ē!" (Unite!). As we partake in the provisions of our generous hosts, the tapu leaves our body. We are no longer waewae tapu. We too, belong to this marae. We too, belong to this people.

Glossary

haukāinga	local people of the marae
kai	food
kaikaranga	ceremonial caller
kaiminita	person responsible for blessings and prayer, like a minister
karanga	traditional call
mahau	verandah, porch
maihi	carved bargeboards on the front of the marae
manuhiri	guests
Māori	Indigenous New Zealander
marae ātea	courtyard in front of the whare
ope	group of people, entourage
pounamu	greenstone
pōwhiri	ritual of encounter
reo	language, voice
tapu	sacredness, prohibition
tūrangawaewae	place of one's standing
waewae tapu	newcomers
waharoa	gateway, opening
waiata	song/s
waiata kīnaki	relish song that follows the whaikōrero
whaikōrero	ceremonial, traditional speech
whare	house, building
wharekai	eating house
wharenui	meeting house
wiri	tremble

References

Bauman, Z., & Donskis, L. (2013). *Moral blindness: The loss of sensitivity in liquid modernity*. Brisbane, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *40*(3), 197–214.