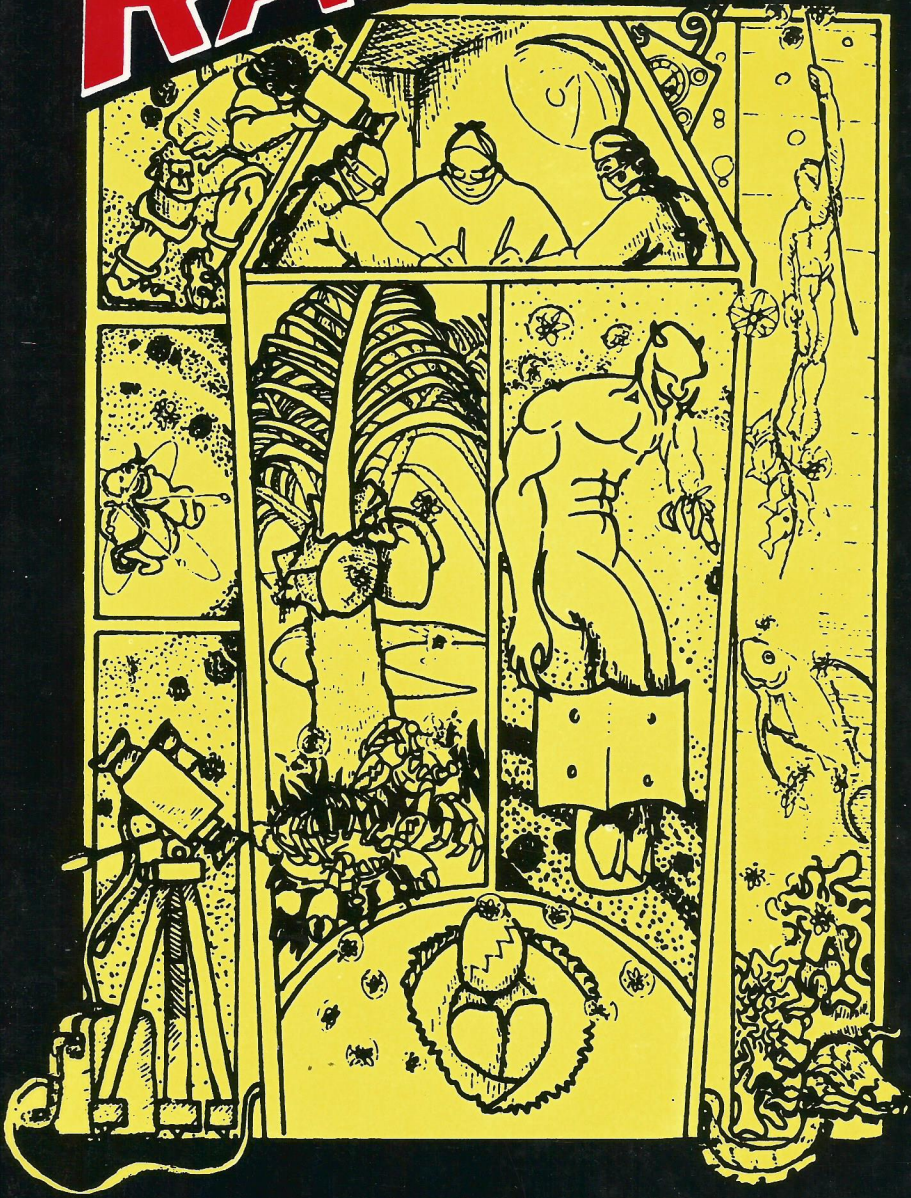


# DREAMS OF A RAINBOW

Kauraka Kauraka



DEDICATION  
for  
my Papa and Mama

DREAMS OF THE RAINBOW  
— Moemoea a te Anuanua —

Poems by  
KAURAKA KAURAKA  
Illustrated by  
IMAIKALANI KALAHLE

Mana Publications  
1987

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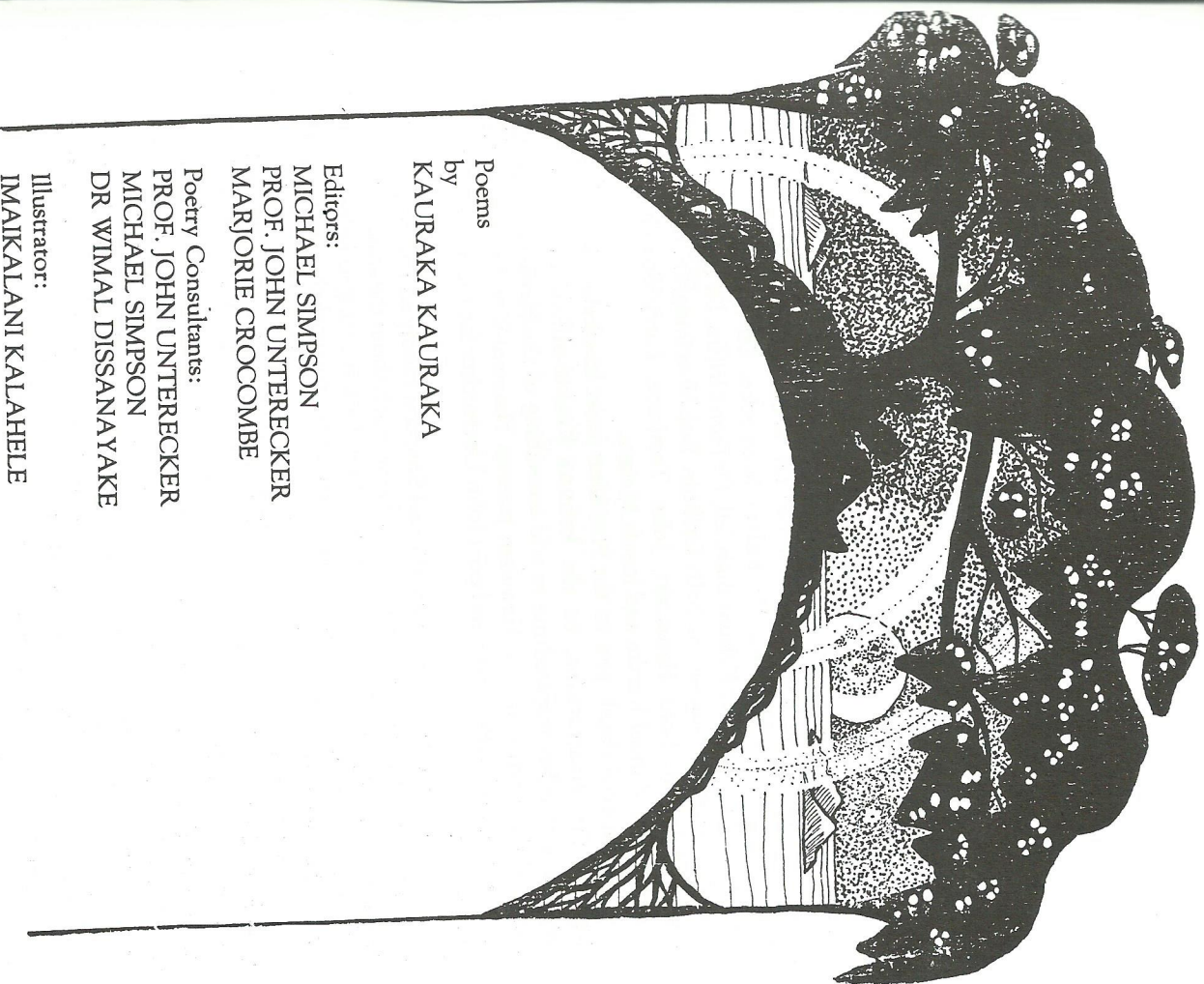
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Poems

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Anyone reading for the first time the poetry of Kauraka Kauraka will be struck by the preponderance of tropical flowers and foods — the blossoms of pandanus and particularly gardenias; the sweet taro, the edible seaweed, and all the coconuts. Even more, perhaps, that reader will find a poetry of sea and land animals—spiders, silver snakes, flying fish — and of the natural forces themselves, wind and sea and mountains, that necessarily dominate an island landscape.

But those natural forces and the plants and animals they nurture will never be seen in isolation, for in Kauraka's world the natural and supernatural are interwoven, inextricably dependent on each other. Every inhabitant of his island landscapes, including its men and women, is guided, threatened, or literally inhabited by spirits that shape action.

Unlike the high Greek gods—Zeus, say, who presides over a whole squabbling pantheon of heroic figures high atop Mount Olympus — the spirits that inhabit Kauraka's poetry are close to earth and its creatures, more often than not physically part of them. So a "four-foot red and golden" fish, once caught and killed, suddenly erupts into giant maggots and emits such a stench of death that the teller of the tale and his brother have to dump it overboard, sink their canoe, and swim for land as the reborn fish of forbidden waters follows them with angry eyes.

If the material of Kauraka's poetry reflects the ancient beliefs of the Pacific, it also reflects the contemporary cultural forces that have shaped his own life. Born in the capital of the Cook Islands, Rarotonga, of a mother who is a descendant of Tefangaitu Ariki of Manihiki and a father who is part Manihiki, part Manganai and part Chinese, Kauraka has spent much of his in travel — to New Zealand for seven years of high school and college, back to Rarotonga, then to Japan as a professional singer and musician for the Betela Dance Troupe, then on a scholarship to study at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and another to the University of Papua New Guinea where he continued his BA studies. After graduating in 1980 he became the Language curriculum adviser to the Education Department in Rarotonga and at work on

his books *Tales of Manihiki* (1982) and *Legends from the Atolls* (1983), both of which are published in Manihiki Maori and English. His first book of poetry, *Return to Hawaii*, was published in 1985, also in Manihiki Maori and English. At that time, he was granted a scholarship to attend the East-West Centre in Hawaii to work on a Master's Degree in Anthropology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The travel broadened his horizons and shaped his English, but his main concern has been with the threatened extinction of his Polynesian culture. Although his voice is cosmopolitan and the scenes of his poems range from Hawaii to New Zealand, all are informed by the spirit-reality of the persistent sea and sky of the village of his parents, Tauhunu on Manihiki atoll, and of that village on Rarotonga where he was born:

"I was born at about 10 to 11pm on Wednesday the fifth of September, 1951, at our house in the village of Avatiu" Kauraka writes. "My placenta and umbilical cord was buried there a few yards from the house and the place of burial marked by a coconut tree which is still growing today. That tree represents me in the plant world. It is one of my connections to the earth. We are all children of mother earth and father sky. Our grandparents are the sun and the moon."

This modern/ancient, free-verse/song-like poetry has the eloquence of direct speech and the symbolic force of an art that refuses to compromise with the destructive artificiality of our time. The gardenias, the coconut trees, the silver snakes, the owls, the lizards, the ava plants, the eels, the sharks, the flying fish, the spiders, the crabs, the dolphins, the whales and the turtles are tangible as your flesh or mine and as intricately interwoven as our own with the enduring wind, the rainbow, the encircling living sea and the mountain powers that are within nature that shape everything.

by John Untereker

## EDITOR'S NOTE

I am honoured to have acted in the capacity of Poetry Consultant and Editor during the composition of this book. Kauraka is a Maori, from Manihiki atoll in the Polynesian group of islands called the Cook Islands, and I am of the Tsalagi (Cherokee) tribe, whose roots are in the Great Smokey Mountains of the South-Eastern United States of America. Being of such indigenous peoples, we share many traditional images, ideas and awarenesses about living closely to the earth. Our primary cultures were, and to some degree, in their modern forms, still are simple, organized to be in harmony with the natural environment and the basic nature of the people.

This collection, done at the East West Centre during our spare time, is a reflection of the experience we share as poets and scholars. Without the support of friends, the book would have been more difficult to complete. What this book attempts to do is to bring people and ideas from many places together in a unique synthesis of the mind and the heart. The images and metaphors are essentially Polynesian but the underlying concepts convey the shift many people are now making from the simpler world of our ancestors to the diverse and complex world of the present. This work thus expresses the heartfelt thoughts and experiences of movement towards the integrated planetary culture that is to come if human civilization is to continue.

Michael Simpson

## HILO RAINS

Hilo rains  
Keep me moist in the lava heat  
With your drops of red water  
To my lips of burning red  
To my feet in smoke and ash  
Like a huge watermelon being squeezed  
in the hand of the sky giant  
Into the glow of his monstrous mouth  
Your sweet fiery liquid dribbled down  
The sounds water down leaves  
Making sleep music for rats and cats  
The feeling of peace from hot wings  
Flapping through greened branches  
Hilo rains

## TE UA O HILO

Te ua o Hilo  
E akaanuunu iaku i roto i te toka vera  
Ki to au topata vai kura  
Ki runga i toku va'a muraia e te a'i  
Mei te mereni maatamata tei romiomiiia  
E te nga rima o te rupuupua o te rangi  
Ki roto i te vera o tona va'a maatamata  
Toou vai vene reka kua ta'e ki raro  
Te tangiangi o te va topata mei runga i te rau  
Kua akamoe i te au kioretoka ma te au kiorengiao  
Te marekanga o te ngakau mei te au peau vera  
Kua rere mai na roto i te au atava rakau matie  
Te ua o Hilo

## TAUNGA OF THE GREAT MOKO

Oh Taunga of the Great Moko  
Immense calabash of mana  
Your sacred ground guarded  
by long-rusked boars  
from profane fingers of man  
Oh Daughter of the Sun who directs light  
into the cave where black spiders live  
Oh Lover of the rainbow who obeys  
the commands of water and fire  
Oh Proud rider upon the back  
of the great white shark  
The blind chanter to entertain  
Tangaroa at his deep sea banquet in Kauai  
The four winds carry news  
of your korero like lightening  
Today our canoe landed  
and your great white herons  
led us from the beach  
through the spider webbed cave to your marae  
at the foot of Anahola hills  
but we dare not step upon  
your sacred ground without invitation  
least we disturb the wild moko  
Oh Taunga of great powers from Havaiiki Nui  
according to foreign nostrils  
you stink of decaying corpses  
but from where we stand  
the smell of your sweet maire and ava  
increases with time spent  
waiting upon you

## WIND OF FATE

Confident as the hurricane  
in demolishing islands.  
she blows fresh words  
through passive ears  
numbed with corrupting idleness  
Her white dress twirls into a dancing tornado  
All have to take notice  
many lulled by the magnetic music  
of her metallic voice  
as she dances her way into their souls  
Now she has imprisoned their attention  
their faces sweating under her lusty breath  
loving every sound and sight of her  
She moves in for the kill  
a sudden breeze to freeze  
and shrink them to palatable size  
then instant reverse to superhot breathing  
The strong remain clothed in faith  
the fools stripped naked  
their souls burnt to ashes!  
Where to now? Wind of fate!

## MATANGI O TE ORA

Ngakau ekokokore mei te uria  
e takinokino i te enua  
kua pupui aia i te au tuatua ou  
na roto i te au taringa muteki  
tei kona i te au manako puapingakore  
T ona pona teatea kua takaviri kua ura  
mei te puaiolo kua akara te tangata  
kua keiaia to ratou manako  
e te reo imene o teia vaine  
tei ura ma te taparu i to ratou vaerua

I teia nei kua mouauri to ratou manako  
to ratou koringo mata kua vera i tona ao  
kua mate i te inangaro i teia vaine  
kua rere tika mai aia no te ta  
Kua pupui i te matangi anu  
kia emi to ratou kopapa kia mama te kaianga  
i reira kua pupui mai i te matangi vera pakapaka  
Kua autu te aronga tei ki i te akarongo  
kareka tetai pae kua kiriri i to ratou kakau  
to ratou vaerua kua ka i te a'ii  
Ka rere kiea i teia nei? E te matangi o te ora!

## RAINBOW PRIEST\*

Guardian of white light  
that makes golden rainbows  
You chant to the gods  
for special berries  
to paint the colours  
of the rainbow  
Difficult to capture  
your face burns  
like the desert sun  
Yet you can be trusted  
to create colour and wonder  
Tonight you will meet  
your brother from Hawaiki-Po  
the guardian of black light  
that makes silver rainbows  
He chants to the gods  
for special rains  
to change the colours  
of your rainbow  
His face is easy to recognize  
because it shines  
like the shadow of the first moon

\*I wish to acknowledge the help of the New Zealand poet Alistair Campbell who commented on the draft of this poem.

## TAUNGA O TE ANUANUA

Ko koe te tiaki i te marama teatea  
e maania ana ei anuanua kooro  
Kua pe'e koe ki te au aitu  
no tetai au ua rakau  
ei peeni i te au kara  
o te anuanua  
E mea ngata te opu  
i toou marama no tona kaka  
e te vera mei te ra o te metepara

Inara mutukore toou tiratiratu  
i te maani kara kia umereia  
I teia po ka aravei koe  
i toou tuakana no Hawaiki-Po  
koia te tiaki i te marama kerekere  
e maania ana ei anuanua ario  
Ka pe'e aia ki te au aitu  
no tetai ua tuke  
ei tieni i te au kara  
o taau anuanua  
Kare i te mea ngata te kite iaia  
no tona tutu mata kua kaka  
mei te ata o te arapo mua