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"My Summit Where I Sit": Form and Content in Maori Women's Love Songs

Margaret Orbell

It is still widely assumed, despite the writings of Ruth Finnegan (esp. 1977:73-87) and others, that the composition of oral poetry necessarily involves improvisation. But most traditional Maori songs, for example, were prior-composed, and their texts were fixed, in that a song might be memorized and sung in the same form over a period of many years (though on other occasions the words would be adapted to fit new circumstances, and the process of oral transmission might also bring about some changes).

A second assumption has concerned the occurrence in oral poetry of set themes and expressions. Influenced mainly by Albert B. Lord's classic work *The Singer of Tales* (1960), scholars have regarded the presence of these traditional components as a consequence of the method of recomposition-in-performance. In the South Slavic tradition of heroic song which survived into the 1930s, and which Lord describes, a bard would learn from another singer the outline of a narrative song and then go on to perform it himself, finding his words as he went along by drawing upon his knowledge of a common stock of set expressions or formulas, verbal "building blocks." In this way he was able to maintain a constant flow of narration and fit his words to the meter. Since the themes employed—the groups of ideas—were similarly part of a common stock of poetic building blocks, he was also able, in response to the reactions of his audience, to lengthen or shorten a particular performance by adding or subtracting minor themes. In this poetic tradition, and other similar ones, no two performances were identical, and the method of composition clearly required a common stock of set themes and expressions which could be used in this way.

But there exist other traditions, such as that of the Maori, in which songs were not improvised yet were constructed largely from set themes and expressions. The oral-formulaic theory in its present form cannot therefore *fully* explain the presence in oral poetry of set components, and a further explanation must be sought. I suggest that poets in all oral traditions make a greater use of traditional themes and expressions than do

poets in traditions in which writing is employed; that this phenomenon is a consequence of a greater stability in the thought-patterns of people living in oral communities, together with the effect on poetic language of a repeated melody; and that it necessarily involves the close association of ideas and language.

The extensive use of set components in oral tradition, in both poetry and prose, is of course well recognized. As well as the studies of scholars interested in the oral-formulaic theory, there are the many works devoted to the analysis of the set themes present in oral prose narratives (for example, Thompson 1955-58). The question of the close association of thought and expression in oral poetry has attracted attention at least since 1930, when part of Milman Parry's definition of the formula as it exists in the Homeric poems was that it was regularly employed "to express a given essential idea" (1971:272). And Walter J. Ong has brilliantly elucidated the role in oral societies of formulaic language as a mnemonic aid: "Fixed, often rhythmically balanced, expressions. . . can be found occasionally in print. . . but in oral cultures they are not occasional. They are incessant. They form the substance of thought itself. . .. The more sophisticated orally patterned thought is, the more it is likely to be marked by set expressions skillfully used" (1982:35).

To this important point one can add that in oral societies a number of other factors—among them the small size of the community, the generally slow rate of technological and social change, the face-to-face contact which oral communication involves—also made for a high degree of patterning of thought and expression (and a consequent subtlety and sophistication within the conventions employed). In orally composed *poetry*, further patterning is provided through the use of a melody as a structuring device. With this feature comes a still greater degree of fixity and sophistication of language—though the character of the language produced in this way will certainly be, as John Miles Foley (1985:68-69) has cautioned, tradition-dependent and genre-dependent: in differing traditions and genres it will take different forms.

The Maori Texts

Traditional Maori songs, as we have noted, were mostly prior-composed, there was a very considerable degree of fixity in the texts, and poets made extensive use of set themes and expressions.[1] The songs

[1] For an introduction to the musical structure, performance characteristics, and functions of Maori song types, see McLean and Orbell 1975:15-22; their language is discussed in the same work (23-30), with some reference to the use of set expressions. For another short introduction see Orbell 1985a.

Unlike the other writers in this issue, I have no firsthand experience of the oral

recorded in the middle years of the nineteenth century are of indubitably oral origin, having been dictated or written down from memory by Maoris in the years immediately following their acquisition of literacy and conversion to Christianity; encouraged by interested Europeans, they sought to preserve their songs and prose narratives in this new, powerful medium, and the Europeans insured the survival of the manuscripts they produced.[2] They wrote down so much—uncounted thousands of songs, many of them recorded on several occasions—that there is abundant material available for comparative studies: the set themes and expressions in their poetry can be traced from song to song, allowing the literary historian to recognize them as traditional components and study their use. As well, there are a great many early European works which discuss traditional Maori society, thought, and language; although the eyewitness

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tradition I write about. I have had mentors and informants, and some encounters with old people who still sang *waiata* (in transitional style); but this experience, while of great general interest and value to me, has had little direct bearing upon my studies of the earliest Maori texts, and the mid-nineteenth-century records of Maori life and thought which allow one to place these texts in their social contexts. The paradox is that to study genuinely and wholly oral poetry in Polynesia, one must go back to the very earliest nineteenth century *written* records. Since this time the different genres in different parts of Polynesia have undergone rapid and continuing change, and no one has composed *waiata aroha* in the traditional style since, probably, about 1900. Some people still sing them, in very different contexts from the original ones and sometimes with only a partial understanding of their original significance; but the actual creation of songs belonging to this genre stopped some 90 years ago, and obviously Maori life and thought are vastly different now. In fact it takes a very considerable effort not to allow oneself to be distracted by the present, and to realize just how different the past was. My own work is thus that of a literary historian.

[2] Most of the Maori became Christian in the period between 1830 and 1845, when in most respects their culture and society were still largely intact. The missionaries, being chiefly Protestant, placed great importance upon their converts' ability to read the Bible, and the Maori rapidly acquired this magic-seeming skill. Immediately afterwards, in the years from about 1849 to 1855, a large number of manuscript compilations of songs and prose narratives were written or dictated by Maori authorities; thus the George Grey collection in the Auckland Public Library, mainly formed during this time, consists of nearly 10,000 pages, mostly of poetry. A great many more manuscripts were produced during the remaining years of the century. Because of such cooperation between the indigenous people and the invading colonists, this body of oral tradition was, therefore, recorded at a time when the society had only recently begun to change substantially, and many memories went back to the pre-Christian era. Material collected under such circumstances is less influenced by changes associated with the effects of literacy than are the early writings which have survived in countries where the people recorded their traditions unaided a considerable time after the introduction of literacy.

Some of the manuscripts preserved in New Zealand libraries are entirely unpublished, while others have been published in part but require re-editing and re-translation. There are also many texts of songs and narratives in Maori-language periodicals dating from the second half of the last century. When songs were published in early collections, they sometimes appeared in Maori only. More recent collections, with annotated texts and translations, include those by Ngata (1959), Ngata and Te Hurinui (1961, 1970), McLean and Orbell (1975) and Orbell (1978).

accounts of individual performances of songs are not as detailed as those an anthropologist or folklorist might have provided (had such persons then existed), here too there is an enormous amount of incidental information. Together these two bodies of writings, Maori and European, make it possible to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between the songs and the society that produced them.

Maori poetic genres were mostly rhetorical; there was no narration, except occasionally in a highly compressed and allusive passage. A few major concerns, or ideas, were incessantly repeated in these songs, for they reflected basic preoccupations in Maori society and culture. Each of these concerns found expression in a number of set themes, as well, occasionally, as in new themes devised by the poets, and each of these set themes was partially conveyed in set expressions. I consider that in many situations the Maori thought and experienced life in terms of these concerns, themes, and associated expressions, and that to the extent that this is so, we can say that in their poetry thought and expression were inseparable.

It is difficult to demonstrate a relationship between thought and expression, since we have direct access only to the words employed. One particular subgenre, the *waiata aroha* (women's love song) is examined here. A broad approach is initially adopted: after a brief account of the society which produced these songs, the *waiata aroha* is viewed in the context of the other poetic genres, and is shown to give expression to major preoccupations in Maori life and thought. There is then a concentration upon some points of detail: selecting a group of common themes in *waiata aroha*, ones in which the poet in various ways "sets the scene" by placing herself in a landscape, I attempt to show that these passages occur so often because they reflected pervasive patterns of thought and behavior, and that because they were so common, so basic, they were frequently associated with clusters of set expressions. The main purpose is to demonstrate through the use of these examples the persistence in these songs of set themes and expressions, and to relate them to Maori experience. There is also an attempt to convey something of the sophisticated poetic art employed, the freedom with which set expressions are used and new ideas and expressions introduced—though a full consideration of this technique would require separate discussion. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the attitudes and devices which made for constant innovation in the songs, and the balance between set components and invention that resulted.[3]

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[3] Material relating to *waiata aroha* comes mainly from Orbell 1977. The brevity of these songs (from 2 lines to about 24, with 8 to 14 lines common) makes it possible to compare a large number of texts. The translations in this paper are my own.

Maori Society and Poetic Genres

First, then, let us consider the society and the circumstances in which this subgenre evolved. In the late eighteenth century, when Europeans began arriving, there were perhaps some 125,000 Maori in New Zealand. They gathered wild food plants and shellfish, fished, hunted birds, and in favored localities grew some crops, mainly sweet potatoes. Their tribal system was loosely organized and very flexible, partly because it was not possible, in the hilly terrain and with the available technology and resources, for a single ruler to seize control of a large area. There was much feuding, with constantly shifting patterns of alliance between related and rather small tribes, which for many purposes acted independently of each other. Within a tribe, the chief was dependent upon the approval of the leading men, warriors whom he had to persuade rather than order to a course of action; if they were not happy, it was quite common for them to transfer their allegiance to another tribe with which they had connections. The Maori were a confrontational people, much given to impassioned oratory, and a mastery of rhetoric was an essential accomplishment for chiefs in particular. At tribal councils the only speakers were men of some consequence, but in some circumstances women were able to express their views forcefully and publicly on matters that concerned them.[4]

In oratory and in songs the Maori complained about their circumstances more than they celebrated them, frequently addressing the persons held responsible for their difficulties. Often they were ironically self-deprecatory: thus visitors being welcomed with a lavish display of hospitality might hear the food-bearers sing songs claiming that there was no food in the village, that they would all starve. Nearly all genres were highly rhetorical. On musical grounds, they may be grouped into two general categories. Those which were "recited" rather than "sung" had rapid tempos, were through-composed rather than possessing a repeated melody, and were generally accompanied by dancing or other actions. These recited songs were essentially expressions of group sentiment, though the first person singular is often used, and they were generally addressed to a number of listeners; often they were performed when one social group confronted another, and an element of challenge was involved. Sung songs, on the other hand, had slow, intricate, repeated melodies, were not accompanied by much in the way of gestures, and were primarily expressive of an individual's concerns. The most important kind of sung

[4] There is no full study of the traditional oratory; for contemporary oratory, see Salmond 1975. In most tribal areas women do not now take part in formal, traditional oratory. However, it is clear that formerly, when public speaking occurred in a greater variety of contexts, women did sometimes address their people on personal and even political issues. For instance John White, in a novel (1874) written to convey the great knowledge of Maori life he had acquired, describes many such occasions.

song was the highly elaborate *waiata*.[5]

It's a fine thing, husband, that you've left me!
There's no one who wants me now.
Who was it that turned away?
I am forgotten, and put aside.[6]

All *waiata* took the form of rhetorical complaints. There were two main subgenres. *Waiata tangi* (weeping *waiata*) were composed equally by men and women and were usually laments for the dead, though they might lament the loss of land or crops, illness, or some other loss. They were sung by individuals and by groups of people at funerals, and afterwards when it was appropriate to remember and mourn the person who had died; frequently as well they were later sung, sometimes in adapted form, to mourn other deaths. The second of these subgenres, *waiata aroha* (*waiata* of love, or longing), were composed exclusively by women and usually complained about unrequited love, the refusal of the poet's family to let her marry the man of her choice, or an absent or neglectful husband; occasionally too they lamented the poet's separation from relatives. They were sung in the first place by the poet, whose name and circumstances are sometimes still known, and they might later be sung by others, sometimes in adapted form. These others might be singing the song simply for entertainment, or in memory of the woman or the man she had loved; or

[5] In modern Maori the word *waiata* has become a general term meaning "song," but it was originally the name of a single genre and in this sense, as used here, it cannot be translated. There are several other subgenres apart from the *waiata tangi* and the *waiata aroha*.

[6] The music, words, and translation of the first lines of a *waiata aroha*. The musical line is bipartite. The translation is by Mervyn McLean (McLean and Orbell 1975:270).

they might see themselves as being in a comparable situation to that of the original poet, and adapt the words of her song to fit their own circumstances.

It was not only women who adapted these love laments to make them apply to their own situation. Men did so too, in the course of oratory: for example, a chief who regretted the absence of a man he wanted as a political ally might sing a well-known *waiata aroha*, thereby identifying himself with the poet and the other man with her absent lover. These "secondary" functions of the *waiata aroha* greatly extended the range of circumstances in which the songs were an appropriate means of expression. Only by taking them fully into account can one understand Maori attitudes towards *waiata aroha*, and the hold which these songs had upon their imagination.[7]

Between them, then, the *waiata tangi* and the *waiata aroha* lament and comment upon the experiences of separation through death, and separation in life. There is quite a close correspondence between the two subgenres in the concerns expressed: in each case the poets speak mainly of their distress, and of the separation from a person (occasionally, persons) which has caused it. They are likely to refer to the accompanying circumstances, giving reasons for what has occurred. Frequently there is praise or blame: in *waiata tangi* the poet may praise the person who has died, attack and threaten enemies responsible, reproach the deceased for leaving, or blame himself or herself for not dying as well, while in *waiata aroha* the woman may complain bitterly about gossip and slander, and blame either the man or herself for the events which led to her present situation; sometimes too she asks her listeners not to blame her for her actions. These ideas reflect and give expression to major preoccupations in Maori society and thought. As already noted, it was a society in which persons of consequence were likely to complain publicly when they were in unhappy circumstances, and to name those responsible. There was also a concern with separation which was apparent in many different areas of life and thought.[8]

The composing and singing of an effective *waiata* was always a

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[7] Secondary functions would, however, require separate discussion. They are briefly described in Orbell 1977:II, 29-31. The use of songs in oratory is described by Shortland (1856:186-92) and Grey (quoted in McLean and Orbell 1975:30), and is exemplified in a collection of addresses presented to the governor of the country on his departure (Davis 1855). *Waiata aroha* sung by orators were not always adapted for the purpose. Often the names of persons were left unchanged, being understood as representing the persons whom the orator had in mind.

[8] F. Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson (1983) discuss some of the implications of the concern with separation. One relevant factor in the shaping of this concern must have been the looseness and flexibility of Maori social organization. For example, patterns of residence in marriage were ambilocal, with the lower-ranking spouse generally going to live with the higher-ranking one. It seems, too, that many marriages broke up.

positive act; as well as serving to relieve the people's feelings, it enabled them to make an appropriate public statement and earn the appreciation and respect due to an eloquent poet. It is noteworthy that while a death could be lamented by both men and women poets, the separation of spouses or lovers was generally lamented in poetry only by women.[9] But while these women spoke of their unhappiness, they were often, in a socially acceptable way, being in fact highly assertive. In many situations the Maori wept as a way of extending an emotional greeting to a person, so a poet speaking of her tears might be making an overture to the man in question—and appropriately so, for women often took an active role in courtship. Sometimes, too, a complaint about unrequited love was really a mock lament, not seriously meant. When the poet was really in difficulties, she was arguing her case and seeking to win her point, or at the very least save face, through the persuasive power of her passionate, clever song.

Setting the Scene: Some Conventions

Waiata aroha are the stylized expression of *aroha,* love and longing. There were socially sanctioned times and places for the expression of *aroha*, and in many of these songs a poet "sets the scene" by speaking of herself, often in the first lines, as being in an appropriate situation of this kind; while the songs were certainly also sung on other occasions, they must often have been sung in the circumstances to which the poets refer. Because these situations were conventional, set expressions were used in speaking of them. For example, unhappy people often wept at sunset or at night,[10] so poets would sometimes begin by referring to the setting sun, or addressing it. In the following song the poet does this, then speaks directly of her sorrow; lastly she addresses the man from whom she is separated (Grey 1853:396):

E tō ra koia ko *te rā*,
E *āhua* iara ko *te whakangaro* ee.
Ka hara-mai *roimata, ka maringi* ee.
He koke ko koe, kia rere mai ee,
Kia tāpapa he maru tangata!

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[9] I know of only two songs by men complaining of the loss of a wife (Orbell 1977:I, 161-62). These are quite different from *waiata aroha*; they were probably recited rather than sung, and the men sound much more aggressive and resentful than the women.

[10] See, for example, Orbell 1985a:59. Generally in Maori thought, light and the east were associated with life and success, and darkness and the west with death and defeat (Orbell 1985b:67-68). When the setting sun is addressed, there is sometimes the further implication that the poet wishes to leave the scene of her unhappiness and with the setting sun make her way down to the underworld, and death.

Oh the sun is sinking down there,
How it hastens its departure.
Tears come, and they spill down.
If you were a dart, to fly towards me
So a man's protection would shelter me!

The darts mentioned were light rods, some three feet in length, employed in a game. The words italicized in the first two lines of the Maori text occur often in *waiata aroha*, though usually in two sections making up the first line. Usually, too, the sun is addressed (Orbell 1977:II, 383):

E tō, e te rā, āhua te whakangaro.
Sink down, sun, hasten your departure.

In most *waiata* the melody consists of two musical phrases, the first rather shorter than the second, and the words are fitted to these musical units. Often, as here, two set expressions will occur together, combining to form an entire line; this pattern is especially common in the highly conventional first lines of songs. Or the first section may be set, and the second section take the form of a variation on a predictable idea:

E tō, e te rā, tō atu *ki te rua*. (Grey 1853:261)
Sink down, sun, sink into the abyss.

E tō, e te rā, rehu ki te rua. (Williams 1971:334)
Sink down, sun, go hazily into the abyss.

E tō, e te rā, ki' whaka*rehu*a iho. (Williams 1971:334)
Sink down, sun, be made to go down hazily.

E tō, e te rā, e wawe te *rehu* atu. (Grey 1853:103)
Sink down, sun, quickly go hazily down.

There is much variation, also, in the length and structure of the musical lines. Not all are bipartite; some are indivisible, and some tripartite. Some *waiata* have longer musical lines than others, and some have lines of varying length. All this makes for variability in the length of set expressions and their position in the line.

Many other natural phenomena were referred to as a way of setting the scene. The moon or stars, for example, may indicate the direction in which the distant beloved is living; or the woman may ask them to take her far away with them; or she may wish they were her lover. Sometimes the moon serves as a focus for emotion with no reason given. A night with a full moon was often the occasion for singing and dancing, so *waiata aroha* must frequently have been sung then. When an unknown woman fell in love with Te Tomo, who was living near the hot springs at Tauwhare, she set the scene in her song by speaking of a moonlit night and by implication contrasting the general merriment with her own unhappiness. She then

blamed the hill which—she claimed—obstructed her view of the steam from Tauwhare's hot springs, and she spoke of her emotions (personified as *Roto*, Within). Lastly she addressed Te Tomo, telling him to return to his wife and warning that the wife would otherwise become angry (that is, there would be great waves in the streams at Omoho, although it is far from the sea: as we might say, his wife would "make waves"). In this case the shaping of the language indicates that there was a tripartite musical line rather than the more common bipartite one (Orbell 1977:II, 379):

E titi koia e te atarau, tīaho i runga ra.
Hinapōuri ka ahu mai ai au, ka ruru ki te whare,
Te *roimata* ka hua *maringi* nei kei aku kamo.
Mōkai pae nāna *i ārai, tē kite atu* au
Puia tū mai ki Tauwhare, he wawata na Roto—
Kei raro iti iho ko Te Tomo, *e aroha nei au!*
E hoki koe ki tō wahine, kei ako mai ki te hae,
Kei tū noa mai ngā tai Ōmoho kei roto.

Moonlight, shine down brightly from above.
Darkness comes upon me, and I shelter in my house
With the tears gathering and spilling from my eyelids.
Hateful ridge that bars the way so I cannot see
The steam rising at Tauwhare, yearned for by Within.
Te Tomo is just below there, the one I long for—
Go back to your wife, or she will learn to hate me
And inland at Omoho the waves will rise right up!

In accordance with poetic convention, the address to Te Tomo follows directly upon the mention of his name. This poet may not have been so very unhappy; she may have had an affair with Te Tomo but been unwilling to accept the lower status accorded a second wife. Her song, which she may well have sung originally on a moonlit night, was a forceful and witty way of saying that the two of them must part.

A scene of this kind at the beginning of a song is generally followed by a line or two speaking of the poet's distress, then a passage giving the reason for this distress (usually, her man has left her); after this there may be a concluding passage in which the poem moves towards a final statement. The reference in the above song to tears (*roimata*) spilling down (*maringi*) may be compared to a similar line, in a similar position, in the first of the songs quoted above. The set word *mōkai*, employed in the fourth line, tends to cluster with the other words italicized in that line. In another *waiata aroha*, a woman longs for a daughter living far away (Orbell 1977:I, 521):

Tērā Matariki pikitia i te ripa.
Whea nei, ē, Mere, ka tauwehe i taku kiri?
Mōkai Tararua, nāna *i ārai* mai ai,
*Tē kite*a *atu* ai taku piringa poho.

Nāku te tahakura i whakamoho i te ahiahi.
Kei tai ki reira, kei mihi mai ki te iwi!

There are the Pleiades, risen over the horizon.
Where now is Mere, who is parted from my body?
Hateful Tararua that bars the way
So I cannot see the one who clung to my breast.
I met her in dreams, deceived in the evening.
Arrived there, send greetings to your people!

The heliacal rising of the Pleiades was a time conventionally associated with the expression of grief for those who had died, or were separated from the mourner. In the third and fourth lines the woman answers her own, rhetorical question; in blaming the Tararua mountains, she is also indicating the direction in which her daughter is living. There are then references to two kinds of union which (it was felt) could be established over the distance: the poet speaks of their ambiguous meetings in dreams, and she asks her daughter to send greetings from the remote region where she is living.

An appeal to send greetings is a set theme which often provides closure. In an early transitional song, the woman speaks of shaking her lover's hand in the English fashion, using English words (Orbell 1977:II, 505):

'Rā te marama ka mahuta i te pae—
Nā runga mai koe, *ko au hei raro nei*
Tiro noa atu ai ki waho ki te moana,
He purenga poti mai nāu, e Tapora,
E ahu ana ia te tai ki Ngāmotu.
Ko au te eke atu, te tēra o waho!
Mōkai Taupiri, nāna *i ārai* mai,
Tē kite atu au te wā ki a Pēhi!
Toro mai tō ringa, harir, tāua.
"Wara wara, taikiha!"

There's the moon coming up over the horizon.
You'll move on above, and I'll be below here
Gazing right out to sea,
For you're pulling on your boat, Tapsell,
Coming through the waves at Ngamotu—
I'll go on board, by the outside sail!
Hateful Taupiri that bars the way
So I cannot see the place where Pehi lives.
Stretch out your hand and we'll "how do you do."
"Very well, I thank you!"

It is common for a poet to speak of a neighboring chief and claim that he will take her far from the scene of her unhappiness; in this song, an early European trader fills this role. Then a mountain is blamed: in the seventh and eighth lines there is again the cluster of set expressions *mōkai. . . i*

ārai. . . tē kite atu, along with the names of the obstructing mountain and the lover who lives beyond it. If the woman were in fact by the harbor at Ngamotu, as she represents herself as being, Mount Taupiri would have been much too far away to be visible; but since it is a highly prestigious and sacred mountain, it was an appropriate one to name as a way of indicating the direction in which her man was living. If the first line of this song is compared with the first line of the preceding one, it will be seen that in the second sections of these lines two different expressions, of the same length, are used to express a single idea.

Another conventional occasion for the expression of love and longing was described by Edward Shortland, an early European settler (1856:192-93). He speaks of an idea frequently to be met with in the poetry of this people—the imaginary connexion between two places established through means of the wind blowing from one to the other. . .. So prevalent is the influence of this poetic fancy. . . and so powerfully are their sympathies excited by the simple circumstance of the wind blowing from the country where an absent beloved person is staying, that a wife or lover may frequently be seen, on such occasions, seated with her face fully exposed to the breeze, while she gives vent to her affection in the peculiar wailing chant of the country.

This was no "fancy" but a universal belief. Since the wind and wind-blown clouds could be thought to come from an absent lover, a poet often refers to (or addresses) one or the other in the first lines of a *waiata aroha*; usually she then speaks of the man in question. As well, a wind blowing towards a loved one, rather than away from him, could be thought to take the poet's love with it. Again this was not merely a poetic fancy; there was also, for example, a belief that if a man's wife had run away and he wanted her back, he could consult a religious expert who, when the wind was right, would recite a spell that would be taken to her by the wind and arouse such longing that she would immediately set out to return to him (Orbell 1985b:67-68). In the song that follows, the clouds' journey serves to introduce a reference to the woman's contrasting situation. The set expression *ko au hei/ki raro nei*, "I will be/am below here," which occurs in the second line of the last song quoted above, is found as well in the second line below (Grey 1853:384):

E rere e te ao, ko koe hei karere.
Ko au ki raro nei, koro ai ki te tere.
Te mōkai puku nei, māna rawa e hoatu!
Tē kite hoki au i Awatere rāia.
Ko te wā tonu ia e kore au e kite ii.

Fly on, clouds, you will be messengers.
I am below here, wanting so much to travel.
Hateful belly, so anxious to follow after!

I cannot see Awatere over there.
Oh it is a place that I will never see.

The belly here is the seat of emotion; it is the source of the longing she is experiencing. Poets often blamed their emotions in this way, frequently beginning with the set expression *te mōkai*, or simply *mōkai*, which we have already seen used in passages where the poet blames an obstructing mountain:

Mōkai ngākau, rangi ra i a au! (Grey 1853:233)
Hateful heart that burns me!

Mōkai whakawhenua i taupurua iho! (Orbell 1977:II, 39)
Hateful restraint that confines me here!

It is not surprising in such a mountainous country that hills have so often provided reference points for poets, a way of locating absent persons and introducing references to them. Lookout places on hilltops, *taumata*, were important for emotional as well as practical reasons. Where possible, people making their way along a ridge would stop to rest in a place where there was a good view of the lands below. People who were abandoning their tribal territory might climb a hill to gaze upon it for the last time; persons mourning their dead sometimes sat weeping upon hilltops (Elder 1932:196); and women who were greeting a wind from their beloved would often sit on a hilltop, for this allowed a view of landmarks associated with him, a form of visual contact which was significant in itself. We have seen that the poets often complain about mountains which "bar the way" to their beloved, and that such complaints are a means of indicating the direction in which he is living. Another way of doing this is to represent oneself as being able to see a mountain, or other landmark, near which the man has his home. When a poet speaks of this situation, the expression *(kia) mārama (au) te titiro*, "and clearly see," frequently occurs. Often, though not always, it is followed by *kei raro,* "below is," then *e aroha nei au,* "the one I long for," with proper names and other expressions inserted between them.

A woman named Hariata was in love with Iwi, who lived at the village of Manga-hinahina. Looking down from the high point of Te Karaka, Hariata could see, or nearly see, his home. A song was composed for her by "a friendly poetess, Kowhio."[11]

Ākuanei au ka piki ki Te Karaka rāia
'*A mārama au te titiro* ki Manga-hinahina ra—

[11] Guthrie-Smith 1953:75-76. Although information of this kind is seldom available, it seems likely that persons needing to express themselves in song did quite often receive assistance from specialists. For a woman who was helped to compose a *pātere*, a recited reply to insults, by the learned men of her tribe, see McLean and Orbell 1975:147.

Kei raro iho na ko taku atua *e aroha nei au*.
Taku hinganga iho ki raro ra, ko turi te tokorua.
Te roa noa hoki o te pō, tuarua, e Iwi.
Oho rawa ake nei ki te ao, hopu kau, kāhore ei.

Soon I will climb up there to Te Karaka
And clearly see Manga-hinahina.
My spirit is just below, the one I long for.
I fall down, and my two [legs] are bent.
Oh in the long night you came to me twice, Iwi,
But when I started up in the world, I felt about in vain.

Hariata begins by envisaging herself as sitting on Te Karaka hill and gazing across to Manga-hinahina. She then refers to the cause of the trouble: Manga-hinahina is the home of her "spirit," the person who affects her more than someone of ordinary flesh and blood could. She complains of the distress he is causing her (bent legs were traditionally associated with grief), then speaks of their ambiguous meetings at night: in the dream-underworld Iwi visited her a number of times ("twice" has this meaning here), but in the morning she was alone again. This last theme gives the poet an opportunity to introduce the name of her beloved, then address him. Although she ends by speaking of separation, in reality her song may have been successful in attracting a response from him.

The theme in which a woman envisages herself as gazing across from a hilltop can also occur in the body of a song, as when an unknown poet wanted to leave her husband for another man. She had first to persuade her kinsmen, especially her brothers. After asking them not to be angry with her (an appeal of this kind is a set theme), she spoke of her longing, then made her public announcement: instead of her present husband she wanted Ngawhare. (*Taku iti*, literally "my littleness," is a set expression, an ironically self-deprecatory reference to herself—"little me.") Finally, the poet speaks of her distress: she is pining away, and the implication is that her relatives have to do something about it (Orbell 1977:II, 320)

E Hura mā ē, Karaone mā nei,
Kaua ngā riri e whakatoa mai ee!
Nohea te aroha e wawae ake nei?
No Roto rawa koe ī! Ka mutu te manako
Ki te tāne ra, ē, i ako ai ki te mahi ee.
Ko Roto e hao ana kia noho taku iti
Ngā puke tū mai, ē, o Te Kura kei raro,
Mārama te titiro ki Waihou ra ee—
Kei raro Ngāwhare, *e aroha nei au*.
āti nei ko te reo ē. Ka hara-mai tēnei,
Ka whakapahoho au, ka takoto kei te whare ia.

Hura, Karaone, and you with them,
Don't bring your anger to bear upon me!
This longing making its way upwards, where is it from?

Oh you come from Right Within! I no longer want
The husband who taught me those things.
Within is eager that my littleness should sit
On the Te Kura hills over there in the north
And clearly see Waihou in the distance—
Ngawhare is below, the one I long for.
That's all I'll say. It's come to this,
I am weak, I lie in the house.

There is a Waihou river, and probably in this case it, rather than a mountain, was the landmark associated with the absent lover.

Sometimes in such passages the idea is introduced with the set expression *taku taumata (tonu)*, "my summit is (always)." This phrase can set the scene in the first line, but more often occurs in the body of the song (Orbell 1977:II, 527):

Taku taumata tonu ngā hiwi teitei kei Tauaki ee,
Mārama te titiro, pae ka riakina kai Rāwhiti ee.
Kai raro a Tawhiti, te awhi tipu a tō wahine ee!

My summit is always the high ridges of Tauaki
So I can clearly see the hills lifted up in the east.
Tawhiti is below—the true love of your wife!

While a passage introduced by *taku taumata (tonu)* can develop in various ways, the expression *(kia) mārama (au) te titiro*, "so I can clearly see," seems always to follow at some point (Orbell 1977:II, 428):

Taku taumata tonu ko Te Tuhinga rāia,
Kia mārama au me titiro ki tawhiti
Ki te tae roto kohu na rā waenga mai,
Whakapaunga mihinga, e Kahu, ki a koe.

My summit is always Te Tuhinga over there
So I can clearly see into the distance,
And the patches of mist coming straight towards me—
Where I send all my greetings to you, Kahu.

A small variation in the phrasing of the second line of this passage, the unusual substitution of the particle *me* for *te*, emphasises the poet's sense of purpose in sitting upon her hilltop.

Because this cluster of set expressions was so well known, an ingenious poet could take liberties with it, at first defeating her listeners' expectations. Since people who were the subject of gossip were commonly said to be lifted up on the edge of lips, this woman complains about gossip by naming *te kupu kōrero*, "spoken words," as her summit. But she goes on to assert herself (Orbell 1977:II, 402):

Taku taumata tonu e noho ai au
Kei te kupu kōrero, patu ai ora nei,

> Kia tau ki raro ra. Kia eke atu au,
> *Mārama te titiro* te puke ki Te Kurī
> Whakatarawai ana ia!
>
> My summit where I always sit
> Is on spoken words, which attack my life
> So that I sink down. Let me mount up,
> And clearly see Te Kuri hill
> A speck on the horizon!

The poet at first represents herself as overcome by gossip, but then declares that despite these attacks she will climb to the top of a hill from which she can see, in the far distance, a famous landmark (near which, it is understood by her listeners, her lover is living). This statement is a positive act, a public assertion of her continuing love for the man from whom she is parted. Much of its forcefulness and effectiveness comes from the way in which she at first denies then finally satisfies the expectations aroused by the first words; having introduced an unexpected idea, she then, in the last sentence, completes the theme in a conventional way, employing in so doing the set expression (*kia) mārama (au) te titiro*, which normally follows at some point after *taku taumata (tonu)*. She has therefore expanded the usual pattern rather than broken it.

This witty play upon convention does not stand alone, however, for another woman, complaining of her longing, similarly creates a personification: her summits are those of Exhausted Thoughts—that is, all her thoughts and emotions are fully directed towards the person in whose direction she is gazing (Orbell 1977:II, 369):

> Ka waia te kanohi i te tirohanga atu
> Ngā taumata koe o Whakapau Mahara.
> He manu koā nge au, e taea te rere atu—
> E taea te hokahoka he parirau mōku?
>
> My eyes water from gazing out
> From you summits of Exhausted Thoughts.
> Am I a bird, able to fly away?
> Can I fasten wings to myself?

This is wordplay of a rather different kind, and the expression *taku taumata (tonu)* is not employed. But it is clear that there were complex ideas and images relating to lookout places, and that each of these poets has made use of this conventional imagery in her own way.

Conclusion

What can be said about the interplay in these songs of set components

and innovation? We have seen that the set themes we have examined occur in the songs with such regularity because the patterns of thought and behavior to which they refer were equally common in reality. As well, the singing of these very popular songs must have reinforced and shaped social attitudes and individual behavior; art and life must have been interrelated in complex ways. Or perhaps we should say rather that there was no clear distinction between art and life—between poetic and social convention—since song was an essential, ever-present means of communication. As a product of Maori society, the *waiata aroha* closely reflected certain of its main concerns and also, with other poetic genres, served to maintain them.

So there was a close relationship between social, emotional, and poetic behavior; and it has been argued further that people thought in terms of the songs' set themes and expressions. At the same time, however, there was constant innovation in the content and language of the songs. Although the full extent of their complexity and range of expression is not apparent here (the emphasis has necessarily been upon closely related themes, similarities of phrasing, and songs which are short and readily intelligible), it can be seen that while set expressions were very persistent, there was much flexibility in their use. Within the conventions of the *waiata aroha* there was endless scope for invention (that is, originality) in the approach adopted, the interpretation of themes, the language and imagery. Elaborated and variant versions of conventional expressions and images were highly regarded, along with fine phrases invented by the poets. Why and how, then, did this complexity develop?

The complexity and sophistication are there because they were needed. Given the shortness of these songs, their basically predictable concerns, and the purpose of persuading the listeners and engaging their interest (also the element of competition between poets which no doubt existed), the poets had to display ingenuity, to vary and extend the existing patterns in surprising and pleasing ways, if their performances were to be effective.

Thinking as they did in terms of these inherited conventions, the poets could extend existing patterns without impediment, creating subtle and intricate songs and sometimes themselves adding to the common stock of traditional components. Since they did not have to improvise, their use of these elements was not always bound by metrical constraints. They could manipulate traditional expressions freely, combining them with new material, thinking up variations, and sometimes reinterpreting them in complex wordplay. All these approaches were themselves traditional. Often a set expression does occupy a musical phrase, although the varying length and shape of the musical line was another factor that made for

flexibility.[12] Many set expressions, however, do not correspond to a musical phrase; some consist simply of a word or two introducing a sentence which is then completed in any appropriate way, and others are short phrases employed in any position. Most of these songs have clever ideas and expressions that are not recorded elsewhere, or that occur in only a few recorded texts.

The traditional elements, as we have seen, made the poetry possible, and they allowed many persons to compose it. Their presence meant also that the poets' audiences could understand and enjoy even highly complex songs, so that they learned and remembered them, sang them often, and passed them on. As well, they helped to make the songs persuasive; the set expressions, in echoing the language of other *waiata aroha,* gave added significance to the present song, just as a repeated proverb brought with it the certainties of the past. And because their general character was so familiar, songs could be readily adopted by other singers who saw themselves as being in situations comparable to those of the poets. It was the subtle balance between set components and invention which gave this poetic tradition its authority and continuing interest.

University of Canterbury, Christchurch

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[12] The variability of the length and shape of the line is discussed briefly above. This variability may have arisen in part, at least, as a consequence of the shortness of *waiata* and the fact of their composition prior to performance. The poet-composers could afford metrical as well as lexical variety, and it seems they often sought it.

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