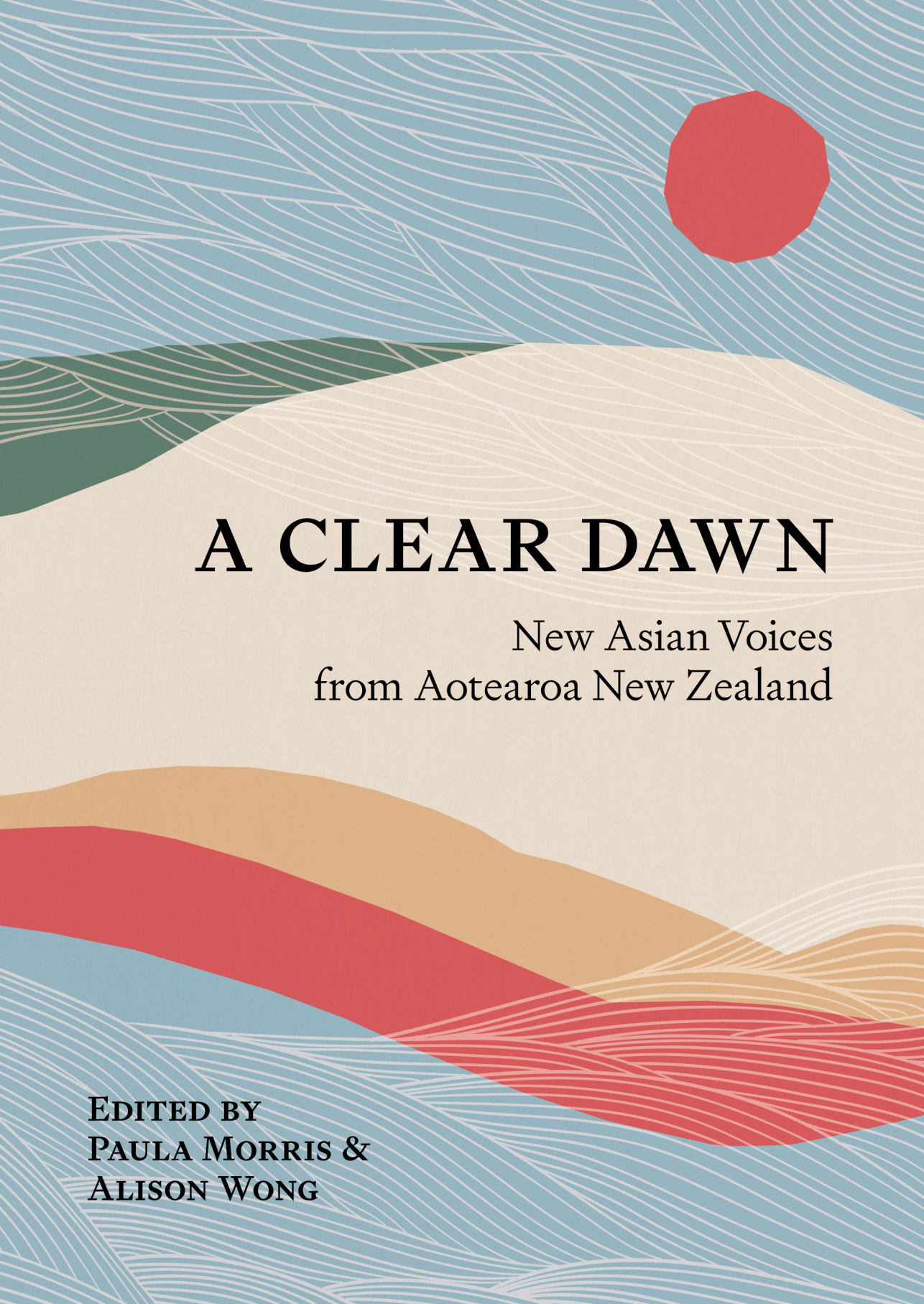
A CLEAR DAWN
New Asian Voices
from Aotearoa New Zealand
Edited by
Paula Morris &
Alison Wong

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AUCKLAND
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

To all those who made the journey and opened the way.

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Introduction

Diasporic identity is re-imagined by each individual and each new generation in each new place. Like writing, identity is an ongoing act of discovery. And so too is reading.

We began reading for this book to discover and explore the work of emerging Asian New Zealand writers. Our editorial collaboration took up K Emma Ng's challenge, from her 2017 long-form essay *Old Asian, New Asian*: she suggests reframing the biculturalism central to our social and political contract from a relationship between Māori and Pākehā to one between tangata whenua and tauiwi. For this anthology, we came together as tangata whenua (Paula) and tauiwi (Alison). Our work here is a karanga that opens up a space for other voices so that many different currents can flow into one meeting place.

That notion of 'opening' was an essential aspect to our work as editors. We looked for windows into the unknown so we could enter the experiences, imaginations and points of view of a diverse range of contemporary authors. Our editorial process included voracious reading, cold calls, persuasion, discussion and reconsiderations, as well as open submissions and outreach through established writers and their networks, universities, teachers, community programmes, festival directors, avid readers, and the editors of print and online journals. The result is this collection of poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction (personal essays and memoir excerpts) by seventy-five writers – the first anthology of Asian writers in New Zealand.

All anthologies must have limits. We did not include plays, children's literature or work in translation. Our kaupapa here was 'new' voices – emerging writers who had no more than two full-length publications at the time of selection, and who have not achieved prominence as writers in another field like drama, screenwriting or journalism. The focus on emerging writers meant no one had automatic right-of-entry based on status or publishing history. While we always considered diversity – including ethnic, geographic and stylistic – in making our final selections, all the writers here were chosen for the quality of their work.

Many of these writers exist on the edges of our literary culture. Some – including those more often associated with the visual or performing arts – are publishing their written creative work for the first time. A large number are still at an early point in their writing lives, whatever their age. (The writers in this anthology represent every decade, from teens through to those in their eighties.)

After all the reading, a prediction: New Zealand literature will be utterly transformed over the next twenty years by the burgeoning talent and accomplishment of our Asian writers.

'Asian' is a 'Level One' ethnicity identifier in the New Zealand Census. Another Level One ethnic grouping is 'Middle Eastern/Latin American/African'. In editing this anthology,

we had to draw geographic lines, often as crude as the census categories. Our working definition of Asia stretched from Indonesia to Japan, from the Philippines to the Indian subcontinent. Because of space considerations, we did not employ the broadest possible definition, reaching all the way to Istanbul.

The major Asian groups in the New Zealand population are Chinese, Indian, Filipino and Korean, in that order. But the multiplicity of heritages within the Asian New Zealand 'identity' means current government and council statistics offer a confusing picture: in a census, respondents can choose more than one identity, and more than thirty different Asian identities are listed as options.

Many of the writers in this anthology have multiple national and ethnic affiliations. Himali McInnes was born in Sri Lanka, grew up in Papua New Guinea and moved to New Zealand as a teenager, working in Sri Lanka for some years as an adult. Mustaq Missouri went to high school in Singapore and university in Australia, and established his professional career in Shanghai. Romesh Dissanayake was born in Kazakhstan, moved to Sri Lanka when he was five and to New Zealand when he was eight. His mother is Koryo Saram (Korean-Russian) and his father is Sinhalese. Neema Singh grew up in Christchurch, speaking Gujarati interspersed with Swahili, because her grandparents raised their families in Kenya and Uganda.

Aotearoa New Zealand is growing, in numbers and diversity. This alarms some people. The term 'Inv-ASIAN' – coined in the 1990s – has been used as a term of abuse. Many of our writers have been perceived – and insulted – as foreigners, asked where they are from, or told to 'go back' to a country where they allegedly belong. 'Auckland is majority Asian now': we've heard this, as a complaint, from both Māori and Pākehā. It's untrue, and suggests the racism that Asians in New Zealand have often faced. The 2018 census counted Auckland residents 'who identified with an Asian ethnicity' as 28.8 per cent of the supercity's population. Those who 'identified with a European ethnicity' were 53.5 per cent. Twenty-three per cent of people who identified with at least one Asian ethnic group in the 2018 census were born in New Zealand. When will they be seen and accepted as New Zealanders? When will they not be perceived as a threat to whatever is understood to be New Zealand's national identity?

The largest and earliest populations of non-Māori or Pākehā immigrants to New Zealand were Indians and Chinese. Although often referred to as 'Hindoos' or 'Hindus' in early government and newspaper reporting, Indian migrants also included Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees. Early accounts include a Bengali ship-jumper around 1809 who went to live with Māori. Many of the trading ships of the late eighteenth century had Indian crew members – referred to as lascars (sailors) and sepoys (soldiers) – some of whom settled here. Among the Indians who worked in the goldfields from the 1850s was Edward Peters ('Black Peter') who located Otago's first workable field.

Post-1890 immigrants were Sikh and Hindu men from a small group of villages in Gujarat and Punjab who, like the early Chinese, worked to send money home to their

families. They cleared bush, and built roads and railway lines. Most lived in the North Island, with clusters in the King Country and in market gardens south of Auckland. Some of the latter went on to open small greengroceries and, later, dairies. This was where many non-Asian New Zealanders had their first interactions with Indians, like the Bhana Brothers on Ponsonby Road in Auckland. Bhana and Manilal Fakir arrived in New Zealand from Gujarat in 1906, and opened their shop in the 1930s. This image of Indian immigrants as dairy owners persists, dramatised in Jacob Rajan's wildly successful 1997 play *Krishnan's Dairy*.

Early Chinese New Zealanders were almost exclusively from a few counties in the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong. The first documented Chinese arrival was in 1842: Appo Hocton jumped ship in Nelson, where he became a well-liked farmer and exporter. In the 1860s, Chinese gold miners in Australia were invited by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce to rework abandoned gold mines and revive the Otago economy. Numbers grew – from Australia and Guangdong – but as the goldfields depleted, the majority of these migrants appear to have returned to China. New migrants from Guangdong arrived in Auckland and Wellington, particularly from the 1890s, working in market gardens, hawking vegetables and running greengroceries, groceries or laundries, some moving to smaller towns and cities. From the late nineteenth century there were established Chinatown areas around Greys Avenue in Auckland, and Haining and Frederick Streets in Wellington. One of the oldest Asian groceries in New Zealand was established in Dunedin by the Sew Hoys in 1869; the shop continues to this day.

As the number of Chinese and Indians grew, so did racism. Legislation directed exclusively against the Chinese included the now-infamous poll tax, imposed in 1881 and raised from £10 to £100 in 1896; although it was waived from 1934, it was not abolished until 1944. The right to naturalisation was suspended from 1908 until 1952. The families of some of our writers, including Eva Wong Ng, Emma Sidnam, Chris Tse, Belinda Wong and Grace Yee, were affected by this historic discriminatory legislation. In 2002, Prime Minister Helen Clark formally apologised to poll tax payers and their descendants.

Indians were British subjects and suffered less legislative discrimination than the Chinese. After the 1899 Immigration Restriction Act imposed a standard application form in English, 'cramming schools' were set up in Fiji for Indian immigrants en route to New Zealand. Chinese were exempt, because existing legislation was initially considered sufficient, but from 1907 had to take a more stringent on-the-spot English reading test on arrival.

Indians and Chinese were excluded from the pension, regardless of New Zealand birth or naturalisation, and from 1920 an opaque permit system was used to maintain a 'white New Zealand' policy. In *Being Chinese: A New Zealander's Story*, Helene Wong notes that until the 1960s, Certifications of Registration were required to re-enter New Zealand by 'any British national of wholly or partly Indian or Chinese race' – that is, even if they were born here.

From 1894 many newly formed anti-Chinese and pro-white societies received broad popular support. Native Minister Apirana Ngata initiated the 1929 Committee of Enquiry

into Employment of Maoris on Market Gardens, which heard extensive testimony from the White New Zealand League, and framed intermarriage between Māori and both Chinese and Indians in terms of 'racial contamination' and the creation of an unwanted 'hybrid race'. Despite such fearmongering, many Māori and Asians still worked together – some married, like Kiri Piahana-Wong's Chinese grandfather and Māori grandmother – and found a certain solidarity. Māori, along with Chinese and Indians, were segregated within or excluded from some white facilities and businesses as late as 1959.

The abuse and violence Asian New Zealanders have suffered is reflected in Chris Tse's poetry collection, *How to be Dead in a Year of Snakes*, which gives voice to Joe Kum Yung, murdered in Wellington in 1905. More recently, we have witnessed heightened racism during the Covid-19 pandemic and, as Tan Tuck Ming explores in his essay 'Seven mournings of the Chinese gooseberry', seen humiliations enacted on the TV show *Border Security*.

Because of racist legislation and polices, historically, Asians in New Zealand were overwhelmingly men. In 1935, the Chinese Consulate estimated that out of a population of fewer than 3,000 Chinese, there were only 100 families. From 1939, the government admitted temporary war refugees: 249 wives and 244 children of Chinese men who lived here. They and subsequent children born in New Zealand were eventually allowed to stay permanently, creating for the first time a significant community of Chinese families. After World War II, through government-aided programmes such as the Colombo Plan, students arrived from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Pakistan, and later Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore. Private fee-paying students arrived from Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, extending in 1974 to Laos, Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines and Hong Kong, and in 1979 to China.

From the mid-1970s the fallout of the Vietnam War and the 'killing fields' of Cambodia and Laos led to New Zealand accepting refugees and granting residency to students, with later migrants arriving through the family unification scheme. Some refugees of Indian ethnicity were admitted in the 1970s. Neema Singh's father came to New Zealand as a refugee after Uganda expelled its Asian population.

Like New Zealand's first Asian Governor-General, Sir Anand Satyanand, some of the writers here have roots in the Indian diaspora in Fiji. Manisha Anjali's heritage includes the Girmitiya – indentured labourers – who from 1879 worked in sugarcane plantations. After the 1987 coup in Fiji, thousands migrated to New Zealand.

Ethnic turmoil and a shortage of places at university, especially for non-ethnic Malays after 1969, prompted many Chinese and some Indians from Malaysia to study and work overseas. Vanessa Mei Crofskey and Nina Mingya Powles' Chinese-Malaysian mothers arrived as students, both eventually marrying Pākehā New Zealanders. Nina's mother rose to become a senior New Zealand diplomat and public servant. However, in 1976, when 83 per cent of private overseas students were from Malaysia, the majority of them ethnic Chinese, the New Zealand government imposed an annual quota of 300 Malaysian students. A fee was also imposed 'in certain cases'. This was specifically used to limit the number of Chinese students from Malaysia and was not revoked until 1986 when foreign

students were also able to seek residence. Among our writers who came from Malaysia is Sugu Pillay, whose Tamil family originated in Sri Lanka.

Enforced assimilation, discrimination and violence against ethnic Chinese prompted many to leave Indonesia. Angelique Kasmara's family came to New Zealand in 1972 as refugees, sponsored by the Catholic Church. She returned to live in Jakarta in the late 1990s, but her relatives insisted she leave again for her own safety. The anti-Chinese race riots there in 1998 prompted Natasha Lay's family to move to New Zealand.

From the late 1960s, a shortage both within New Zealand and in traditional 'white' source countries of academics, medical practitioners and other professionals led to a gradual loosening of immigration policies towards professionals from countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. In the 1980s, significant numbers of Thai and Filipinos began arriving. Rupa Maitra's parents were both academics from West Bengal who came to New Zealand via positions in Uganda. Tze Ming Mok's parents were Singaporean-trained medical graduate interns. Maryana Garcia's father was a barrister who became New Zealand's honorary consul for the Philippines and this country's first Filipino MP.

The hard work and sacrifices of older generations in Asian communities enabled opportunities for those who followed, including many of the writers in this book – in education, professional careers and creative endeavours. In her 2017 essay, 'What's in a name?', Melanie Kwang – represented here with another essay – recalls a conversation with her Taishanese-born father, home after working in the family fish-and-chip shop. She asks him if he minds their Christchurch friends mocking him as 'Tofu Ken'. 'People can say whatever they want,' he tells her. 'I'm the one who managed to put two kids through university.'

In 1987 New Zealand removed immigration barriers based on race and country of origin, and in 1989 the full-fee student policy was introduced, admitting larger numbers of Asian students (and soon becoming one of New Zealand's major export earners). By the 1990s these changes, together with booming Asian economies, led to a rapid increase in New Zealand's Asian population, with many families seeking a less competitive, cleaner and greener lifestyle.

Significant numbers of Korean and Taiwanese migrants began to arrive, including the families of Joanna Cho, Grace Lee and Ya-Wen Ho, alongside the increasing numbers from China. Uncertainty over the future of Hong Kong after the 1997 handover to China led to more emigration. The families of Sharon Lam and Ting J Yiu were among those who came to New Zealand at this time. Although an English language test introduced in 1995 and the 1997 economic crisis slowed migration, it was boosted again in the early 2000s by New Zealand's long-term business migration scheme.

Challenges with the English language, employment, establishing businesses, racism or the strength of ties in 'home' countries sometimes led to so-called 'astronaut' families, with mothers and children living in New Zealand while fathers moved back and forth. Karen Tay, who arrived from Malaysia in the mid-1990s, describes the hypocrisy of the *New Zealand Herald*'s attitude towards so-called 'parachute kids' like herself. The practice, she

argues, is 'basically the equivalent of middle-class white Britons sending their children to boarding school'.

Sigred Yamit writes in her poem, 'The F word':

> my Asian tongue can't keep up
> with my half-white mind
> trying to recite Byron
> with a mouth just
> fresh off the boat is
> an arduous task

A number of our writers have lived in multiple countries, or have moved back and forth between New Zealand and 'countries of origin'. Jessica Lim and Natasha Lay's childhoods were spent in both New Zealand and Indonesia; Sharon Lam returned to Hong Kong. Others choose to study, work or live long-term overseas, as many New Zealanders do – Manisha Anjali, Wen-Juenn Lee, Grace Yee and Xiaole Zhan in Australia; Tan Tuck Ming in the US; Cybonn Ang in Canada; Modi Deng, Natasha Lay, Nina Mingya Powles and Yoshiko Teraoka in the UK; and Serena Chen and Ting J Yiu in Europe. Many writers and artists now embrace the word 'Asian' and the flexible identities – and possibilities of community – it suggests.

Today Asian New Zealanders make up around 15 per cent of the total population, largely concentrated in the North Island, particularly in Auckland. In the year to March 2020, the single largest group of immigrants to New Zealand was from India – followed by China, South Africa, the Philippines and the UK. The languages now spoken here include Mandarin, Hindi, Cantonese, 'Chinese not further defined', Tagalog, Punjabi, Korean, Fiji Hindi, Japanese, Gujarati, Tamil, Thai, Malayalam, Malay, Urdu, Vietnamese, Sinhala, Bahasa Indonesia, Min, Telugu, Marathi and Bengali. These languages, and the cultures they communicate, enrich New Zealand, and suggest how many different experiences and writing traditions are transforming what this country is, and what it might become.

Asian writers are under-represented in our national literature. This is not atypical: immigrant communities around the world, past and present, prioritise economic survival. Some Asian immigrants to New Zealand never achieved the fluency, confidence or support to produce writing in English. Many wrote, and continue to write, in their own languages, publishing in community publications such as the *NZ Chinese Growers' Monthly Journal* (1952–72) or in their countries of origin.

While our focus in this anthology is emerging writers, we want to pay tribute to Asian New Zealand authors who have achieved prominence or forged new paths. Some with considerable reputations have had their work translated into English and other languages, and published internationally, including the acclaimed Chinese modernist poets Gu Cheng (顾城) (1956–93) and London/Berlin-based Yang Lian (楊煉), visiting

scholars at the University of Auckland at the time of the Tiananmen Square protests. Both received residency, and Yang Lian became a New Zealand/British citizen. Stephen Chan, an influential publisher and political radical in 1970s Auckland, is now a professor at the University of London. This is from his poem 'Watch How the Chinese Walk', published in 1975 in *Landfall*:

> watch how the Chinese walk
> out of kung fu movies
> every six foot 200 pound pakeha
> keeps respectful distance

Groundbreaking writers include Jye Kang (1944–2016), the first Chinese New Zealander to publish a novel, *Guests of the New Gold Hill* (1985). The scientist Jill Chan (1973–2018), born in Manila, was also a prolific creative writer, and the editor of online journals *Subtle Fiction* and *Poetry Sz*. Ming Cher is best known for his 1995 novel *Spider Boys*, set in 1950s Singapore, and its 2015 sequel.

A fourth-generation Chinese Pākehā New Zealander who spent much of her childhood in Papua New Guinea, Lynda Chanwai-Earle writes for stage and screen: *Ka-Shue* (1998) is considered the first Chinese New Zealand play for mainstream audiences. Paediatrician Renee Liang is also best known as a playwright, touring seven plays, and writes poetry, nonfiction and opera libretti. Renee won the 2012 Royal Society Manhire Prize in Science Writing for Creative Nonfiction, and was awarded an MNZM in the 2018 New Year's Honours.

Helene Wong's memoir *Being Chinese* received major press coverage when it was published in 2016. An actor, theatre and TV/film director, screenwriter, script consultant and film critic, Helene – born in Taihape – was awarded an ONZM in 2018. Together with Ant Sang, she co-authored the 2017 graphic book *The Quiet Achievers: From Gardens to Gold Medals*. Sang, one of New Zealand's best-known comic-book writers and illustrators – particularly for his work on the TV series *bro'Town* – is also the author of the graphic novel *Shaolin Burning* (2011), a finalist in the 2012 NZ Post Children's Book Awards.

Other Asian New Zealand novelists who have emerged over the past decade include Rajorshi Chakraborti, who grew up in Kolkata and Mumbai, and lived in Canada and the UK before moving to Wellington. The great-grandson of Bengali editor and writer Hemendra Kumar Roy, Chakraborti is the author of six novels and a story collection. His 2018 novel, *The Man Who Would Not See*, was longlisted for the Ockham NZ Book Awards. Brannavan Gnanalingam – a Wellington lawyer and writer – has published six novels to date, including *Sodden Downstream* (2017), a fiction finalist in the Ockham NZ Book Awards.

The contemporary New Zealand writer with the greatest international commercial success is Nalini Singh, a Fijian-born Aucklander, who writes romance, paranormal romance, fantasy and science fiction. A *New York Times* bestselling novelist, Singh has sold more than six million books, and her work has been translated into more than twenty languages. Both Singh and Gnanalingam have talked about the absences into which they

write – Gnanalingam of Sri Lankan characters in New Zealand literature, and Singh of Indian author names in genre fiction.

Many contemporary Asian New Zealand writers work outside mainstream publishing, like fiction writer Ann-Marie Houng Lee, and fantasy writer, comic artist and illustrator J(ennifer) Rackham, author of *A Dash of Belladonna*. A significant figure in New Zealand genre writing is Lee Murray, award-winning writer and editor of science fiction, fantasy and horror. Murray's Chinese family has lived in New Zealand for nearly a century and one of her Pākehā ancestors was a translator for the Treaty of Waitangi.

Established poets include Ivy Alvarez, author of four poetry collections and the verse novel *Disturbance* (2013), and Saradha Koirala, who has published three collections of poetry and the YA novel *Lonesome When You Go* (2016). Like many of the writers in this anthology, Alvarez and Koirala move between New Zealand and Australia, with ever-expanding networks of peers and influences.

Asian writers are beginning to feature in New Zealand book awards. Eva Wong Ng, the eldest writer in this anthology, was a finalist in the NZ Post Children's Book Awards in 2006 for *Chinatown Girl: The Diary of Silvey Chan, Auckland, 1942*. Weng Wai Chan won the Junior Fiction award in 2020 with her Singapore-set novel *Lizard's Tale*. But progress feels slow. In our national book awards, the Jessie Mackay Award for first book of poetry was established by PEN (now the NZ Society of Authors) in 1945: Lynda Chanwai-Earle (1995) and Alison Wong (2007) were both shortlisted, but only in 2016 did an Asian writer, Chris Tse, win this award. (Gregory Kan was shortlisted in 2017, for both the best first book and main poetry award, for *This Paper Boat*.)

No Asian writer has yet won the Hubert Church award for first book of fiction, established in 1940. Mo Zhi Hong was shortlisted in 2009 for his novel *The Year of the Shanghai Shark*, set in China during the SARS epidemic of 2003. The novel won best first book (South East Asia and South Pacific) in the 2009 Commonwealth Writers' Prize. In fifty years of book awards in New Zealand, Alison Wong is the only Asian writer to win our national prize for fiction – in 2010, for her novel *As the Earth Turns Silver*.

The Auckland University Press *Anthology of New Zealand Literature*, edited by Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, was published in 2012. In a book of over 1,100 pages, featuring work by 200 authors, only three Asian writers are included: Chris Tse, Alison Wong and Jacob Rajan. The editors said the 'full arrival of a multicultural literature, as found in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia or Canada, has yet to occur'. This may have been true in 2012, but even then there were more writers and works to consider for inclusion. Many reviews of the anthology focused on omissions, but none interrogated the absence of Asian writers.

In 2019 the *Atlanta Review* published a twenty-fifth anniversary anthology, selecting a few poems to represent each of their editions throughout the years. All three poems chosen by the editors to represent New Zealand were by Asian New Zealanders: Ivy Alvarez; Jiaqiao Liu, whose work appears in this anthology; and Alison Wong. This suggests that

the issue of what constitutes a 'New Zealand writer' is less problematic, perhaps, when viewed from the outside.

'Not knowing when the dawn will come / I open every door', Emily Dickinson writes, and this spirit of discovery and inclusion informed our work as editors. Our anthology takes its title, *A Clear Dawn*, from Ya-Wen Ho's translation of a Tang-dynasty poem by Li Po/ Li Bai (李白).

曉晴

野涼疏雨歇，春色偏萋萋。
魚躍清池滿，鶯吟綠樹低。
野花妝面濕，山草紐斜齊。
零落殘雲片，風吹掛竹溪。

A Clear Dawn

The bush is cool, the light showers have stopped – a panorama of Spring.
The clear waters boil with leaping trout; birds chirp, the fern fronds droop.
The bush flowers dapple their dewy petals; the hill tussocks give a crisp salute.
Above the cabbage tree and creek, wisps of cloud gently scatter in the wind.

The famous Arthur Waley translation of this same poem from 1922 uses 'fields' not bush, and 'mountain grasses' rather than hill tussocks; there is a 'stream' rather than a creek. Ya-Wen Ho's translation locates the poem in a different English idiom, and in a New Zealand setting. Tradition is re-interpreted and re-imagined; art is made in a new place. Explorations of culture and identity, of imagination and ways of interpreting the world, have no 'authentic' point of origin and no fixed final destinations. The writers in this anthology roam.

Subject matter in the selected work ranges from the rituals of food and family to sexual politics; from issues around displacement and identity to teen suicide and revenge attacks; from political chicanery to social activism to childhood misadventures. Funerals, affairs, accidents, friendships, crimes, jealousy, small victories, devastating losses, transcendent moments: all are here, of course.

Some work is set in New Zealand, some in other places around the world. Not all writers have Asian characters or 'Asian subjects'. Like artists of all backgrounds, the writers here should not be confined by expectations around representation and authenticity.

Poetry forms the largest group within the anthology, a reflection of the strength and variety of the work. Some poets' names may be familiar to readers – Chris Tse, Gregory Kan, Nina Mingya Powles – because of the critical acclaim for their collections; some may be known for their work in poetry performance and/or theatre,

like Aiwa Pooamorn, Gemishka Chetty, Manisha Anjali and Natasha Lay. Some of the poets here are very young, like E Wen Wong – winner of the 2020 National Schools Poetry Award – or Han Mai Nguyen, a university student, publishing here for the first time.

Fiction includes novel excerpts from published work – Sharon Lam's debut novel *Lonely Asian Woman*, longlisted for the 2020 Ockham NZ Book Awards, and Mo Zhi Hong's *The Year of the Shanghai Shark* – as well as from novels-in-progress by Cybonn Ang, Angelique Kasmara, Mustaq Missouri, Sze Ning Ooi and Sherry Xu. Short story writers also range from the authors of collections, including Nod Ghosh, Rupa Maitra and Latika Vasil, to university students like Russell Boey, emerging via the secondary school division of the Sunday Star-Times Short Story Award, and Emma Sidnam, a rising star on Instagram.

Some of the longest pieces here are creative nonfiction. These include an excerpt from Rose Lu's acclaimed 2019 essay collection *All Who Live on Islands*, and pieces by Luo Hui and Serena Chen, publishing their own creative work in print for the first time. Amy Weng is featured here as a writer, but she is also the founder of contemporary Asian culture site *Hainamana*; in 2017 she organised the inaugural Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui. Like Angelique Kasmara, Anuja Mitra, Kiri Piahana-Wong, Nina Mingya Powles, Rosabel Tan, Chris Tse, Janna Tay and Sherry Zhang, who all appear in this anthology, Weng is one of the new mavens of New Zealand's writing scene, creating opportunities for other writers, and working to re-invent the cultural spaces in which new voices and diverse points of view can be seen, heard and read. Other places to find new work include zines *Mellow Yellow Aotearoa* and *Migrant Zine Collective*; online journals such as *Oscen*; small poetry press Bitter Melon 苦瓜; and the vibrant Asian arts, performance and theatre scenes which include Agaram Productions, Creative Creatures, Hand Pulled Collective, Indian Ink Theatre Company, Prayas Theatre and Proudly Asian Theatre.

In *A Clear Dawn* we embrace the word 'Asian', however general and imprecise it may seem. In a world challenged by existential threats, nationalism, prejudice and conflict, including among Asian nations and cultures themselves, this anthology of New Zealanders living in Aotearoa and scattered around the Earth celebrates our diversity and shared humanity. 'Each leaf sings an opera' (每片叶子上都有一台歌剧), Chinese millennial poet Cao Seng (曹僧) writes in his poem 'Back Garden' (后花园), translated by our own Luo Hui. Here we have seventy-five voices, each performing their own opera.

The two of us, this book's editors, call our welcome to the writers gathered here. Our karanga opens the way. Then our voices fade, drifting in the air. The speakers step forward. A new conversation begins.

— Paula Morris and Alison Wong