



## Captain Cook in the Underworld

By Robert Sullivan

Auckland University Press, New Zealand, 2003. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 223 x 196 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. Captain Cook in the Underworld is a book-length poem by a gifted Maori poet, an archetypal exploration of Western mythology and legend as it discovers itself in the South Pacific. The poem was commissioned as the libretto for a new work with composer John Psathas for the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Wellington's Orpheus Choir. Captain Cook in the Underworld offers fresh perspectives on the familiar story of Cook's Pacific explorations; it has a broad bi-cultural (European/Polynesian) frame of references; and Sullivan employs a bold risk-taking approach. The book is a highly stylised, operatic account of the voyages, with similarities to the musical structure of Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner, and opera. As the poem unfolds, European myth (Orpheus, Venus, etc) has to make space for Polynesian myth (Maui, Reinga, etc). In the final pages, Cook is required after his death to face up to the damage his expeditions have inflicted on the indigenous peoples of the Pacific. This theme of European guilt and recognition will have a strong and shocking impact.



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