

Apirana Taylor

Poem Notes

I write about many things between an ant and a mountain. My poetry ranges from playing with the music of words, personal identity, cultural alienation, love, family, nature, war, man's inhumanity to man, the beauty of nature and spiritual searching.

Tihei Mauriora

In this poem the words *tihei mauriora* are explored. These two words are some of the most important words in the Māori language. They mean the first life breath or sneeze. Māori speakers begin all speeches with this. The term and its additional meanings and phrases are explored and explained here for future generations to explore and hold on to.

Waewae Pakura

This literally means red footsteps. It's a Māori weaving pattern used to adorn the walls of the Māori ancestral houses (*whare tipuna*). The pattern is usually red and resembles footprints of the swamp hen. This poem is partially a journey of the swamp hen placed there by the weavers who preserve the stories.

Maungawhau

Maungawhau is the Māori name for Mount Eden. An extinct volcano. I was taken for a walk up its slopes and saw much evidence of pre-European, Māori occupation in pits and middens. It was a site which must have been full of free and highly industrious people. One sees this if one walks up these slopes but misses them if one drives up or gets to the top via tourist buses. As I looked out over the site I noticed Mount Eden prison in the distance where many Māori are now. Which got me thinking and writing this poem.

Poet Notes

Apirana Taylor from the Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-a-Apanui, and Ngāti Ruanui tribes, and also Pākehā heritage, is a poet, play writer, novelist, short story writer, story teller, actor, painter, and musician. His poems and short stories are frequently studied in schools at NCEA and tertiary level and his poetry and prose has been translated into several languages. He has been a writer in residence at Massey and Canterbury Universities, Rangi Ruru, Saint Andrews College and Hagley High School. He has been invited several times to India and Europe to read his poetry and tell his stories, and to National and International festivals. He travels to schools, tertiary institutions and prisons throughout New Zealand to read his poetry, tell his stories, and take creative writing workshops. He is published nationally and internationally. Apirana lives in Paekakariki with his whānau.

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Tihei Mauriora

tihei the first sneeze of life
the quintessential breath
tihei tihei tihei
the first life breath
tihei ki te taiao
the first breath
at the first glimmering of the light
tihei ki te whaiao
to the growing
the first breath at the gaining of light
tihei ki te ao mārama
to the birth
to the world of understanding
tihei tihei tihei
to the first breath
the eternal force
Tihei Mauri Ora

Waewae Pakura

footprints of the swamp hen
weaving pattern tukutuku
across the criss cross patterns
woven into the panels
of the house
where the swamp hen
presses its feet into
the mud forever
leaving imprints tracks
of red toes in the ooze
where the flax weavers dreams
of the people are woven
into the whare tipuna
between the ancestors
who dance with the stars

Maungawhau (Mount Eden)

on top of Mt Eden
you can see the ancient
kumara pits the ramparts
the bowl of the volcano
it feels tapu
a place where
the people were free
and you can look out and see
Mt Eden prison
where the people languish now