



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0

Apirana Taylor

Poems

south west Taranaki

where the wild wind whips your ears
and hauls away at your scarf
where driftwood lies strewn
on black sand like stranded whales
where the rocks bathe like beached seals
in pools of dying light
where night falls, one minute after midday
shadows reach out from the foot of sentient cliffs
where red veins bleed down the tear ducts of *whakapapa*¹
the creeks charge heedlessly to the ocean
where waves froth and smash themselves
on the shore
where the under tow washes you away
forever
speaks the *mana*² of *Turuturumokai*

*Pohutukawa*³

untopped by the storm
the roots of the *Pohutukawa*
spread wide and delve deep
the summer blossoms
are red as blood
the trunk is gnarled and weather worn
like an old man
the branches give shelter
from the burning sun
when the bulldozers chain snapped
trying to uproot the mighty one

¹ *Turuturu Mokai* is an ancient Maori fortified village known as a *Pa*. There was a great battle here.

² *Whakapapa* is ancestry; *mana* means power, prestige.

³ New Zealand coastal evergreen tree (*Metrosideros excels*).

and succeeded
 only after it's third attempt
 something more than just a tree
 was lost, torn and uprooted from
 the earth's heart

Ruamoko

i rage in the molten
 heart of this earth
 i shake the mountains
 i drive tsunami
 across sea
 i smash your
 mighty cities
 i am *Ruamoko*⁴

rank

where once the mighty *totora*⁵
 grew, the *rimu* the *ngaio*
 and *puka*, now stands
 rank upon rank like soldiers
 an army of pines amassed
 in the valley and on the hill
 soon the man will fell
 King *Pinus Radiata* leaving
 a deep gouge on *Papatuanuku*⁶

Apirana Taylor is a nationally and internationally published Maori poet, storyteller, playwright, novelist, actor, painter and musician. He was 1996 'Writer in Residence' at Massey University and 2002 'Writer in Residence' at Canterbury University. His poetry and short stories, are studied in secondary schools (for NCEA Levels 1 and 2) polytechnics and universities, and have been translated into German, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian and Russian. He has twice been invited to India to read his poetry, and is frequently invited to Europe

⁴ The Maori god of earthquakes and volcanoes.

⁵ *Totora* (*Podocarpus totara*), *rimu* (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), *ngaio* (*Myoporum laetum*) and *puka* (*Meryta sinclairii*) are evergreen trees endemic to the forest of New Zealand.

⁶ In Maori tradition she is the mother earth figure.

to tour and read his work at festivals, schools and universities. In 2012 he was invited to South America to present his work at the Medillen International Poetry festival in Meddilen, Colombia. He has written several books of poetry and short stories, a novel, and several plays, and won awards for his poetry and short stories. His work has also been published in most major New Zealand anthologies, and broadcast on radio and television. Apirana visits schools, prisons, libraries, universities, and tertiary institutions, doing poetry performances, storytelling and taking creative writing workshops.

haka@paradise.net.nz