

Tracy Watson

Poem Notes

To me, poetry is the language of the mind. It is there that we have the most fascinating of conversations. I hope that one of these voices (in the form of one of my poems) connects with you. A poet only starts the dialogue, and the reader fills in the gaps – such is the relationship. You will find I have helped in the understanding by sharing my explanation around each poem.

Koauau (NZ Māori Flute)

This poem tells of the flute as a family heirloom that's passed from generation to generation. It's loosely based on the journey of one of our family pieces called Mahu-Tai-Te-Rangi, a tiki which was crafted from inanga (a very pale greenstone) for the great chief Tahu Potiki (the founder Kai Tahu) who gave it as a tribal exchange for Hamo-Te-Rangi, his older brother's widow (who was Porourangi, the founder of Ngāti Porou). Tahu had loved Hamo-Te-Rangi secretly. The tiki has journeyed through 25 generations since the time of Tahu. It now lies lovingly within the protection of my family.

Kōpū (Venus)

To some, the full NZ Māori name is Kōpūparapara which describes the planet Venus/morning star/evening star. I wrote this little ditty in April 2010 sparked around a childhood memory I have of my grand-uncle explaining how the Māori measured distances. I initially wrote Kōpū as an oriori (children's lullaby) for my youngest child who is four years old. As you can see, it shines as a poem too.

Rākau Rangatira (Noble Trees)

This bilingual poem is about rejuvenation, preservation, and sustainability. I explain it through the whakapapa of nature and its connection to humanity as one does not exist without the other. It's about remembering the agreement between the two which so far seems to have been forgotten – a betrayal of sorts. As a side note, I first released it as a poi composition but it now breathes better as a poem.

Poet Notes

E ngā kanohi o te ao ko tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa.

Along with my three children, I reside in a small seaside village in the Moreton Bay region of Queensland, Australia. I am of Celtic-NZ Māori descent with tribal affiliations to Te Atiawa, Raukawa, Kahungunu through my dad's side, and Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi, and Kai Tahu through my mum. I settled in Australia 20 years ago eventually building a specialist background in 'change' where I have managed large scale IT, clinical and HR reform projects and programs on the national, state and local levels. I actively share my skills 'pro bono' to the local Māori community as well as workshop Toi Māori wherever and whenever required. On the poetry side of things, I have run Māori poetry workshops intermittently since 1994 across the South East Queensland region. I have a long history of participating in community events and also continue to provide cultural advice to organisations, committees and university programs. From time to time I also teach our young kapahaka, as well as facilitate parenting workshops. I recently completed an engagement producing two weekly radio programs with the local station and now, give fulltime commitment towards postgraduate studies in Writing, and Business Management.

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Koauau (NZ Māori Flute)

Light to the touch
I raise you to my nostrils and take in your wooded scent
Familiar...of musty almond

My fingers wrap around your flesh
like the hongī
in honour of each other's presence

Ancient marks are memories
a tāmoko tapestry
blueprints of yesteryear

Bellowing a chiefly sound
Your notes waiata stories of old
That penetrates six generations

Page after page, note after note
The shrill pitch transcends form
A pōwhiri to, your new owner, the seventh keeper I am.

Kōpū (Venus)

Kōpū, North Star, large and bright
Lingering in the sky tonight

Those on Earth look up and wonder
at your greatness we tend to ponder

Are you the one who brings in the day
Allowing us to jump and play?

Of course you are I must be blind
bringing near end to this rhyme

You are the dust and the dawn
Your name is Kōpū the star first born.

Noble Trees

I was born to Tane Mahuta and
Rerenoa
And begin my life among the tree
tops
When I fall I grow deep down
On the forest floor
My nectar heals
My inner bark heals
Yet my shell is taken by man
I bought the people of the Horouta
canoe
I am Rata...noble tree

I love the sea breeze
Some of me are sacred
Te Rerenga Wairua guards the entry
Of the special cave at Muriwhenua
Through which the spirits pass
On their way to the next world

Tangi te Korowhiti at Kawhia was
used
In ceremonial warfare
And to mark a special child born
When I blossom, I mark the seasons
I am Pohutukawa...noble tree

We have given your people much of
us
And protected with our loving shelter
We share your air
We share your World
We share your past
But what of the future?
We have been forgotten
Rata and Pohutukawa

As children of Tane
We wail and whisper
Cherish us
Water us
Earth us
Like the garden of times gone by

We are the gatekeepers to the
knowledge of the self
But you hear us no more
Your world remains brittle
To the elements of time

Rākau Rangatira

I whānau au ki a Tāne Mahuta rāua ko
Rerenoa
Ka tīmata taku oranga i roto i nga kāuru
Tāheke au ka tipu hōhonu
I runga i te pae ngahere
Ka ora taku ngongo reka
Ka ora taku kiri o roto
Ka tangohia e ngā tāngata taku kiripaka
I homai au ngā iwi o te waka Horouta
Ko Rata ahau...rākau rangatira

Ka pai ahau ki te hau moana
Ētahi o au e tapu
Ko Te Rerenga Wairua te kaitiaki o te
urunga
Ki te ana i Muriwhenua
Mā roto e rātou e kuhu ai
I tō rātou haerenga ki te ao wairua

Ka mahia a Tangi te Korowhiti i Kawhia
Hei tikanga pakanga
Me te tohutohu te whānautanga mai o te
tamaiti motuhake
Inā puawai ahau, ka tohungia ngā wā o te tau
Ko Pōhutukawa ahau...rākau rangatira

Kua hoatu ki a koutou iwi, te nuinga o mātou
Me te whakamarutia te paatuutuu aroha o
mātou
Wāhanga mātou o koutou hauora
Wāhanga mātou o koutou ao
Wāhanga mātou o koutou wā o nehe
Ka pēhea te wā kei te haere mai?
Kua warewaretia māua
Rata me Pōhutukawa

Ngā tamariki a Tāne
Ka tangi me kohumuhumu mātou
Āwhinatia mātou
Ringihia mātou i te wai
Paiherea mātou kia Papatūānuku
Kia rite ki ngā maara o ngā wā o mua

Ko mātou ngā kaitiaki kuhunga ki te
mātauranga ake
Engari kua kore koutou e whakarongo kia
mātou
E kōtīhetihe tonu tō ao
Ki ngā āhuatanga o ngā wā

Slowing behind our beat

Oh...come closer
Ah...climb my limbs
The joining of the breath
We hum again
Tap out the sound of nature's heart
Spring to life through
Intertwined minds
Seeds of new wonders
Jewels bestowed by the heavens
Raining forth to a new time

The sting of our tears, pool the earth
We rebirth with a new sparkle
And reawaken
To the maiden light of the dawn

Āta haere i muri i ō mātou taki manawa

Aue...kia tata mai
Ahaha...kake mai i āku kaupeka
Te hononga o te hā
Ka hamumu anō mātou
Pātōtō te tangi o te manawa mahorahora
Whakaara ora mā roto i ngā
Whirwhiringa hinengaro
Ngā kākano o ngā mīharo hōu
Ngā kahurangi i tuku iho te rangi
Ūaina ki te wā hou

Te kakati ō mātou roimata, koopua te ao
Ka whānau hou mātou me te tiaho hou
Ka oho anō
Ki te mārama hou o te haeata