

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman

Poem Notes

Dreaming of Te Rauparaha.

This was written to remember that the Thistle Inn in Wellington, Te Rauparaha's favourite pub in his latter years.

E kōrero ana ki Ngā Tama Toa/talking to The Young Warriors.

This was written as a mihi to the work of the young men and women who spearheaded the Māori renaissance in the 1970s. I met Ted Nia at Canterbury University in the early 1970s and later became close friends with Te Taki (Wally) Tairakena, who, sadly, was killed in February 22nd earthquake in Christchurch when the CTV building collapsed.

Poet Notes

Jeffrey completed his BA Hons in English and a Grad Dip Arts in Te Reo Māori at Canterbury in 2001, and began a PhD in Māori Studies in 2002, which he completed in 2007. He is now a Senior Adjunct Fellow in the School of Humanities. He also tutors at the Hagley Writers School, and reviews and publishes poetry in a variety of outlets. This year he is Writer-in-Residence at the University of Waikato, working on a new collection of poetry and a memoir.

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Dreaming of Te Rauparaha

I was dreaming of Te Rauparaha:
we were drinking in his favourite bar
in the old Thistle Inn
on the shores of Wellington -
he was knocking back a glass of rum
telling me of Kingdom Come
moko on his nose and chin
on the shores of Wellington -
he said, “e hoa, te Pākehā –
you know this was Te Aro Pā, the pā
was under where we are!”
He took another slug of rum
and gazed at the sea where danger
comes, where warriors when he was young
would haka, kill and sing their songs.
He stood there in his sailor’s coat
this mighty chief from up the coast
and mists of Kapiti I saw that gathered
in those ancient eyes. “E Pākehā!
He rama mōu, he rama tāku, kei te pai!”
& in that boozy eye I saw the worlds
come swaying where he was, the days
go spinning down to earth, where he lay
beached like a great canoe, a rotting waka
tawhito that took him once where he would go
to kill and conquer, trick and trap, the dreams
beneath his sailor’s cap, the old dried blood
all turned to sand. I was dreaming
of Te Rauparaha, drinking with me
in his favourite bar, the Thistle Inn
in Wellington, where it stands today
and dreams of him.

E Kōrero ana ki Ngā Tama Toa/Talking to the Young Warriors

Ivy claws in the background wall
framed you when I met you Ted -
Afro over tweed sports coat and jeans
uncomfortable in Canterbury cloisters.

E aue, hi! E ruku ana ngā tohorā ki raro,
ki ngā hohonutanga ki waho, mai i Hawaiki
ki Kaikoura, e peke ana i ngā poka e!

You went one way I went the other
it was like that then behind invisible
walls of skin that kept you out and
did their worst to keep me in.

E aue hi! E karanga ana ngā tīpuna i ngā reo
ngaro, mai i tua o ngā arai, tuia mai i te pō
ki te awatea, e whakaoho ana i ngā uri kei runga e!

Wally was all for hitting the streets with guns
wairua high with Elridge Cleaver but just on
trigger finger he did a born-again U-turn and
next time you met, weeping, you turned away.

E aue hi! E rere ana tētahi kōtuku ki runga
i te kikorangi, he mā ana parirau, he kōwhai te ngutu,
ka hunaa tōna kohanga whakapeke kei Okarito e!

Tame pitched his tent right on the front lawn
of Big Norm's stone whare and marched inside
to have a kōrero with the main man and the gangs
arrived to try and steal all the warrior women.

E aue hi! E pukuriri ana ngā tauwiwi
ki a koutou, me te kī, "Ehara te tangata,
te tangata, te tangata i te mea nui o te ao!"

This morning's sun is halfway across the sky
and all over the whaleback country murmurs
a language being born, caught in a net by cheeky
kids who won't shut up and let it die.

E aue hi! Ngā tangata whai mana! Ngā tangata whai reo!
Ngā tangata whai ora! Ngā Tama! Ngā Tama Toa!