

Speech for Hinemoana's book launch:

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Ko te mea tuatahi, e mihi ana ki te mana whenua. Ko te mea tuarua, e mihi ana ki nga tupuna. Ko te mea tuatoru, e mihi ana ki te reo rangatira.

I don't know what the Maori word for poetry is. But I believe that the name Hinemoana would be the perfect synonym for it!

We're here today to celebrate the launch of Hinemoana Baker's second book *Koiwi, Koiwi*. Hinemoana's asked me not to go over the top with this speech because she says, it's a second book. Now, many of you will already be familiar with her first book, *Mātuhi/Needle*. And many of you were probably at the magnificent launch party for *Mātuhi/Needle* and *Puāwai*, Hinemoana's debut cd in Paekakariki back in 2004.

But anything that invokes bones, and ancestors the way a title such as *Koiwi, Koiwi* does, deserves ceremony. I'm not sure I'm the right person for the job, but I am touched and honoured by Hinemoana's invitation to launch what I've found to be an achingly moving collection.

David Eggleton, in his review of *Mātuhi/Needle* described how Hinemoana "reconjugates the obvious, making it surprising all over again." I am confident he'd say the same of *Koiwi, Koiwi*. Structured in three parts, "head bone", "tail bone" and "bone bone," the poems combine feather light descriptions of material reality with the mournful gravitas of historical and personal memories; they balance incisive social commentary with a wry, quiet humour; they are anchored by Māoritanga while they are buoyed by international, cross-cultural and humanist engagements.

I have so many favourites from this collection, already, but I think the first poem really does set the tone (and I'd ask you to reflect on that word "tone" and its resonances with the bone imagery that provide the skeletal frame for this collection)...In "fossils" Hinemoana begins the poem on a bus, moving through passengers, to the driver, to the bus depot manager, and the shareholders of the bus company...she constructs a whakapapa linking them all, and the kicker is, they are linked by their consumption of fossil fuels...and as the remnants of pre-historic organisms and life forms, the fossil fuels are basically part of that same family tree. Reconjugating the obvious and making it surprising all over again.

To return to tone and its resonance with bone, I'm going to be literal here—it's a fault that Hinemoana's tried her best to rid me of, but it has its benefits, especially when you're a teacher as I am! If *Koiwi, Koiwi* reminds us of bones, and ancestors, it does so, I believe, in the manner of a bone flute or koauau (in fact, there as the central icon of this otherwise wonderfully kiwi kitsch-filled book cover is an intricately carved and organic wooden version of a taonga pūoro).

And it's a koauau's tones which inevitably seek out and find echoes in cousin cultures and countries of the Pacific. A reference to Rarotonga in "dismantling the crane", a poem for Tusiata Avia's daughter, Sepela, with "eel", an extended reflection on my home country, in "our children have run away to fiji." The tones of the bones, reverberate inside me as I've been reading; I have no doubt you will find your own resonances and echoes with Hinemoana's *Koiwi, Koiwi*.

Now, Hinemoana will be leaving next month to enter the University of Iowa's prestigious international writing programme. In the last two years she has already completed two writers' residencies—last year she was the Queensland poet in residence, and in 2008 she held a residency at the University of the South Pacific. For both of these, Hinemoana was extremely generous in her outreach...and did way more cultivating of other people's writing skills than most would expect of a writer in residence. Imagine, if Hinemoana could produce *Koiwi, Koiwi* out of the impetus of the USP residency, and the epic landscape sonic poem *Gondwanavista* out of the Queensland stint, imagine what she could produce if she didn't have so many demands on

her time and energy! We are all hoping that this Iowa residency will allow Hinemoana to give a tonne more time to herself and her writing. And to close this inadequate attempt at ceremony...I offer Hinemoana the only thing I could think of as an appropriate exchange for bones: tapa, or in this case, siapo. It's from Samoa, not Fiji, because I'm hoping that as surely as the world is going to discover and seek connections with Hinemoana Baker, that she will continue to want to explore her historical and ongoing connections in the Pacific.

The design is of 'ulu' or breadfruit, one of the most abundant and bounteous food sources of the Pacific. The 'ulu' has a reproductive life of over 50 years, so can feed over two generations. With this tapa/siapo, we remember the bones, the fossils that feed our roots, and enrich the ground for fertile lives and imaginings!

Nga mihi nui ki a koe e hine, taku hoa, taciq, lo'u uo, lo'u uso pele!

Teresia Teaiwa