

He tītī me te waihoka pōhutukawa

Ka taki te tītī
ka taki hoki ahau
He tītīhākorekore ko roko nei
He tohu, he tohu
ko taki te pō
He taki tē taea te karo

He taki, he kupu
Whakaahua i te ao ki tua
I te kapika o karu
He taki miri toka
He oro papaki tai
O wawata, o mahara, o manawa

Parea kā taero aukati tai
kia waipuke ai a waikamo
ki kā riu i whaoa, i whakairotia
E tō rikawhero e
He raki paruhi
te mata whenua nei

Ko tō tō rā
Ko tō tō rā
Ehara tēnei i te rā haka noa
Ko tōia iho rā
Ki tōna rua whenua

Mutton birds and red wine

The tītī cries
and so do I
I've heard the robin's call
a sign, a sign
the night has sung
the call can't be ignored

a cry, a word
that animates a world beyond
the close of eye
a cry that strokes rocks
a sound that slaps tides
of hopes, of thoughts, of desires

clear all that blocks the surging floods
so the eyes' tears may overflow
to the valleys chiseled and engraved
at your chiefly hand
and what a fine full face tattoo
that now adorns our land

your sun has set
your sun has set
and this is no ordinary sun
it has been dragged down
to its earthly den

Tē whiti mai anō

and it will not shine again

I te takiritaka o te ata
waraki tou kā manu korihi
he mōteatea, he maioha
E taki ana te parakēki
Mā wai rā e whakaō
I ō puna ōhākī?

yet when dawn breaks
the morning birds still sing
verse upon verse, affectionately cast
the spirit's voice is calling
but who is there to reply
to your parting words?

E te ōī, e te manutāikōo
Whāia ō manutai e
Hotu noa te moana,
Hotu noa te manawa
i te mōteatea nei
Waiho mā karu, mā rehu
Tō roko e kawē nei

oh black petrel, our sentinel bird
follow your ocean flock
the sea can but heave
the heart can but sob
as it sings its laments
leave behind your waves and spray
to carry forth your fame

Tukuna te waihoka o Pōhutukawa
Ki ōna huanui kāika e
Anō te reka, te hūnene
Kai te kauae te hinu o tītī rau
Mariki kau noa e
Ki te au o mahara e

let flow the nectar of pōhutukawa
on the roads it knows so well
how sweet, how luscious is the taste
the fat of a hundred tītī upon your chin
drips effortlessly down
to the waters of memory

Au moana, au kōrero
Ehara i te haka he au noa
Kai te kahuraki o Takaroa
Kia au tō moeka roa
Ki te poho o ō tūpuna
Ko taki rā
Ko taki rā
Ko taki rā te pō

a sea current, a haze of words
this is no ordinary tide
oh noble jewel of Takaroa
rest now in your endless sleep
at the breast of your ancestors
it has cried
it has cried
the night has sung its call.

Muttonbirds and Red Wine

He sat there reading from *Piggy Back Moon* with a red wine close at hand. A cold Christchurch night embraced the marquee plopped into the middle of Victoria Square. And there he was, beret on his head, his soft voice echoing across the crowd, laughing, joking, frail but still resonating with passion.

I was shocked to see he had aged. I still held the picture in my head of the first time I had seen his photo as we studied his work at school. As a teenager in the out of place world of a northern Māori boarding school, his poetry made me dream of a world much closer to home. He would speak of the coasts that my ancestors roamed and describe for me the lands I belonged to, but had never seen or touched.

He took me on journeys of heart and mind and helped me escape the walls of limited expectation. A Māori poet, a master of words, shaping them, meddling with them and doing things with them I didn't know could be done. And people didn't laugh at him, they didn't pull it all apart, instead they celebrated each line, each verse. They held him up as a talented poet, a pioneer. This idol of my youth sat there before us, reading to us, flicking through the pages. In the flesh he spoke to the audience of muttonbirds and red wine.

And I bought his book, *Piggy Back Moon*, and waited patiently in line. I greeted him in Māori and he looked up, I introduced myself speaking of my southern links, and his eyes lit up and he licked his lips, as I spoke of Moeraki and Awarua and the impact that his poetry had made on me through the years. He smiled, laughed, sipped his wine and spoke of the virtues of mutton birds.

Na Hana O'Regan