Sad joke on a marae – Apirana Taylor   
  
Tihei Mauriora I called   
Kepe Paikea Te Kooti   
Rewi and Te Rauparaha   
I saw them   
grim death and wooden ghosts   
carved on the meeting house wall   
  
In the only Maori I knew   
I called   
Tihei Mauriora   
Above me the tekoteko raged   
He ripped his tongue from his mouth   
And threw it at my feet   
  
Then I spoke   
My name is Tu the freezing worker   
Ngati D.B. is my tribe   
The pub is my marae   
My fist is my taiaha   
Jail is my home   
  
Tihei Mauriora I cried   
They understood   
The tekoteko and the ghosts   
Though I said nothing but   
Tihei Mauriora   
For that’s all I knew

Tihei Mauriora – means ‘breath of life’

The Maori list is of Maori ancestors – note the capital letters. The use of the list suggests there are many ancestors.

The use of ‘I’ personalises the situation to the man, Tu. ‘Them’ creates a separation and distances Tu from his ancestors.

‘wooden ghosts’ represents his ancestors.

Strong verbs – ‘ripped,’ ‘raged’ and ‘threw’ – all suggest anger

Personification – used to make the ancestor seem alive and angry. We can identify now with how the ancestor feels.

The ‘threw it at my feet’ links to the challenge issues in Maori custom. He is challenging Tu to find his culture.

Repetition of ‘is my’ proves the point that everything he is, is not Maori.

Structured like a mihi – an introduction. Everything he identifies with is not Maori, which further emphasises his separation from his culture.

He is almost a stereotype.

The use of ‘cried’ suggests a desperation, a longing for help, perhaps a cry for forgiveness.

‘They understood’ shows that his ancestors understand.

‘All I know’ is repeated – shows that he has lost his culture and with it, part of his identity.