

# corespondence

Issue One

Terry Craven and  
Joan Fleming

AGAINST THE END /

Faith Wilson

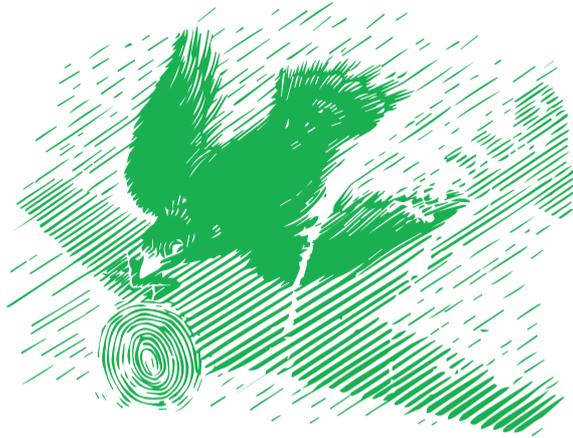
I JUST WANNA  
P\*RTY TIL I D\*E

Kirsty Dunn and  
Kommi Tamati-Elliffe

Tongue || Tide

Shivanjani Lal

The story lost, before  
the story remembered



November 13, 2021

Tēnā tātou.

This is *Correspondence*; a place where the relationships that enable our creative labours and unevenly shared struggles are made legible.

Like a snail's slimy trail, or kererū's drunken slipstream, the cover design of this first issue renders the transits between the friends and mentors in this publication visible in print for a moment. The experiences of mass extinction, intergenerational migration, transcontinental genealogies, and reclaimed language shared by this volume's contributors take to the page as, and in response to, their ongoing artistic practices. It reminds me how our lively bodies—and bodies of work—can never be cleanly separated.

The editorial model of *Correspondence* (inviting contributors to make work in correspondence with another contributor of their own choosing) prioritises the communities that artists work within, above the presumed authority of editors to determine who speaks on the pages we resource, and who reads them. These relationships become forces upon me and my labours. Like the Ngāi Tūāhuriri whenua that holds me, they are conditional offers I am called into reciprocity with. I take on the editorial task as one that implicates me and my porous Pākehā body in the work that appears here. So I keep an eye on myself; power no-longer invisible but enunciated and struggled with, on and on.

In these pages, the fugitive slime of knowledge and identity is shared, kept safe by the relations that have realised its viscous reality. These same relationships will return to the page to form Issue 2.

Until then, look after one another.

Hamish.

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Terry Craven and Joan Fleming

# AGAINST THE END /

(Joan) Thank you for sending me the extinction lists.

*desert bettong : capricorn rabbit-rat : lesser stick-nest rat :  
broad-cheeked hopping mouse : nevis rice rat* [Terry]

I find them unbearable.

...

Hello how are you we are in the sixth mass extinction.  
We are the only species to be keeping scrupulous track of  
our own willing hurtle towards the end.

What does extinction require of us? You drop a black dot  
on a white page and try to feel the loss.

(J) Reading gives the facts a home in the brain, but what about  
the body? What about the shadow? The shadow we are.

...

(J) It is impossible to be exact about the numbers.

...

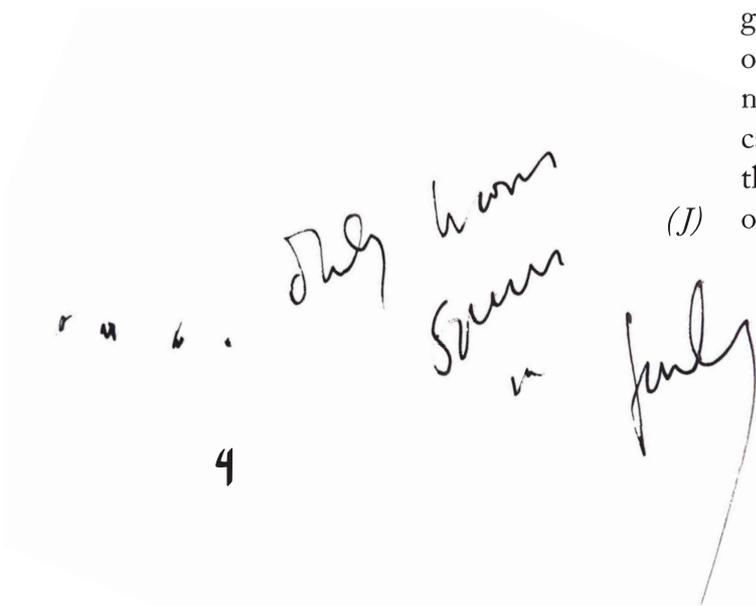
[LK Holt] "The darkness is greenish with creation and behaving like particles."

...

Last night, rats stripped the broad bean plants. Every leaf  
gone. They were already waist-high. This morning, as I sat  
on the back porch drinking feral tea and murmuring the  
name of my life, there was a moment when my vision  
caught. I couldn't trust my eyes. Along the fence where  
there used to be green fruiting, there was now just a row  
of green spikes.

(J)

...



**“What obligations do we have to hold open space in the world for other living beings?” [Thom van Dooren]**

...

*Black canvas. Starting point:  
writing/scrawling the names from the extinction lists.  
Layers. A concrete covering/grave for them?  
Perhaps. I am not yet sure whether the names will be legible.  
But perhaps I can print them out and have them alongside.*

Yes. [T]

...

I want to be exact about the numbers. One site says 25 million native birds are killed every year by rats, possums, and stoats.

(J) We say pest. Say pest and sneer. We don't say who brought them.

...

(J) Dom handles the rat traps gingerly when he sets them, wearing gloves, and smearing peanut butter or ham onto the trigger plate. If they smell our human smell, they will avoid the traps. We have not caught any.

...

(J) Have you heard about the drowning hope experiment?

...

*If I were to draw this out as an infographic,  
what would each point say of the ending?  
Only the way by which we can (mis)know it? [T]*

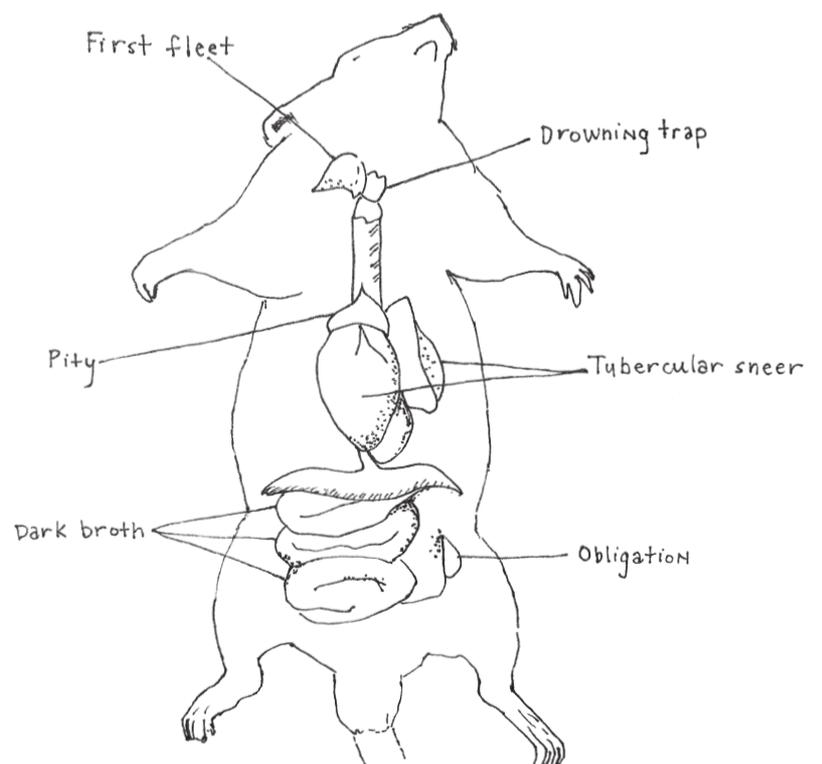
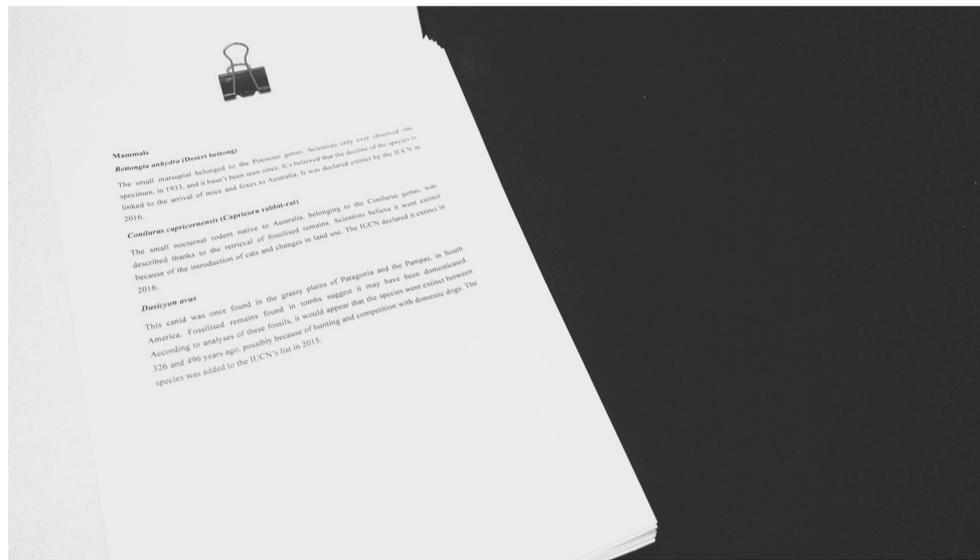
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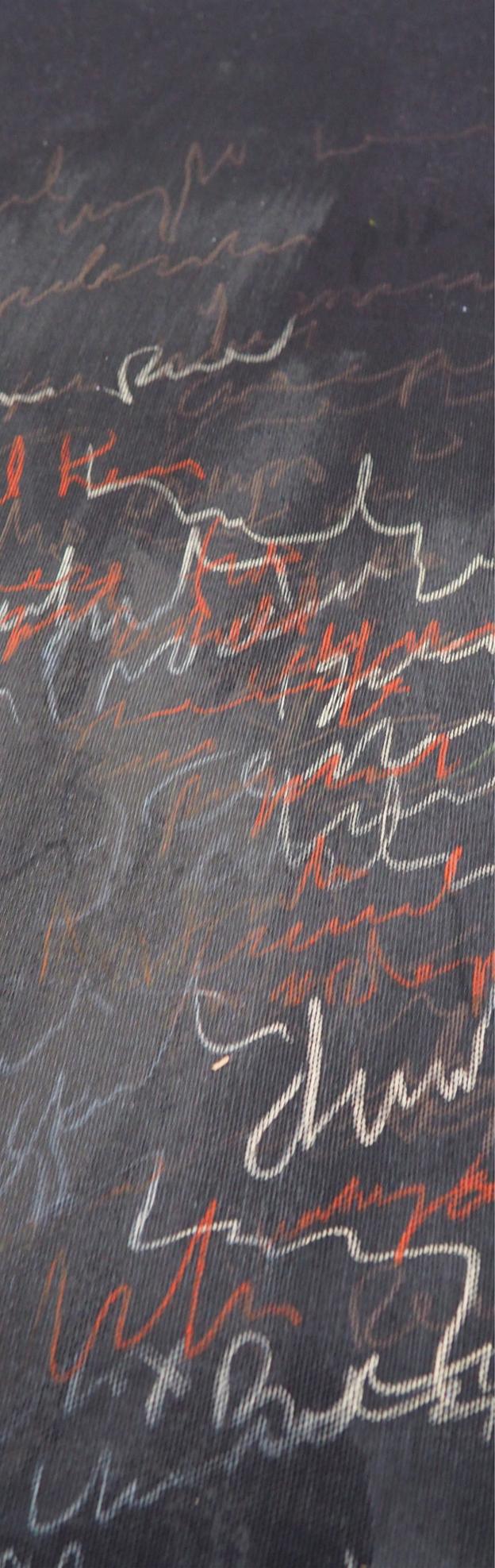
Many historians have argued against the fact that the Dodo became extinct because she was delicious. Poor Dodo. She lived on fallen fruit. So easily captured or beaten with sticks.

(J) The Dutch East India Company is still the largest megacorporation in human history. They dealt in silks, metals, porcelains, soybean, sugarcane, tea, livestock, and human slaves. Hungry sailors. They particularly savoured the Dodo's stomach and breasts. The black rats—accidental on their ships—also predated on the Dodo, but humans were the apex predator. And we wrote about her. She was the first species whose extinction was conceded, in writing, to be caused by humans.

...

*guam reed-warbler : bermuda saw-whet owl : o'ahu 'akialoa:  
rodrigues blue-pigeon : rinsch's duck [T]*





...

Do you know what I mean when I say “thickening”? Is it possible to thicken a page with our not-knowing? Make texture from a loss that is impossible to conceive.

(J) There is something I have been trying to say and I haven’t found a way to say it. I have wanted to write in order to take the fact of these extinctions into my body, because The Great Dithering—this historical moment we’re in—takes its power from its own abstraction. I have wanted to make it real, to take it into my body like a dark broth.

...

*Why watching a documentary like The Anthropocene was like watching science fiction.*

*Can we even understand now, in our bodies, this greater thing, the common?* [T]

...

(J) And I find I like all her names. Black rat, roof rat, ship rat, *rattus rattus*. (Thought loops, thought loops.) It is possible she is not the monster.

...

*Layering black ink on black acrylic on black pastel and I had this strong impulse to add lighter tones, white smears, red names, brown names, green names.*

*Some “beautiful” trace.  
With black on black might a viewer not ask:  
Is there anything there at all?  
Am I not betraying something here?* [T]

...

(J) Dom has made a fresh drowning trap from a Coke bottle strung across the mouth of a bucket filled with water. The Coke bottle gets smeared with peanut butter and when Rat walks onto it, the Coke bottle spins, and she will not hold her balance. He found the instructions online.

...

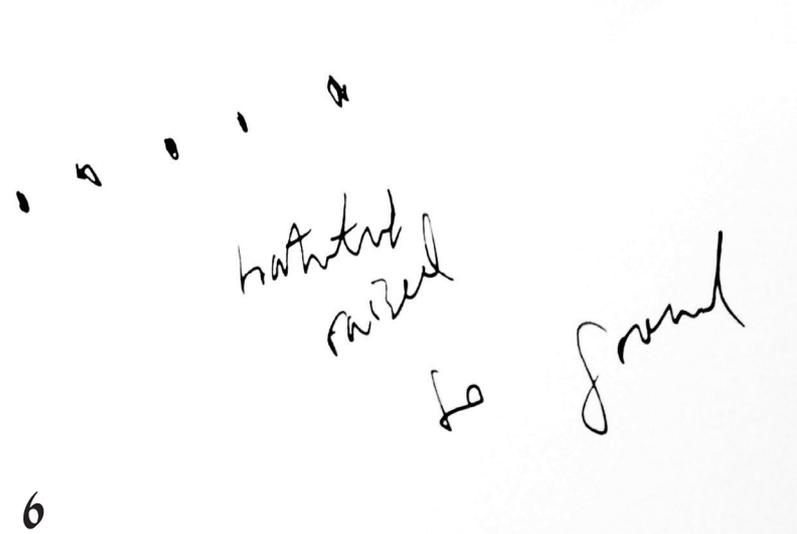
[Alice Oswald]

“There are so many birds and most of them mean nothing...”

...

*White canvas. Starting point: The black dot.  
Meditation on the extinct for each dot.  
Finding the place in the body.  
Building up. What feeling/s will emerge?  
From the/se feeling/s what line/s?* [T]

...



(J) So this is what Catherine told me. A set of scientists discovered that rats could swim in water for eight minutes, and in the ninth minute, they drown. So the scientists put Rat into the water, let her swim to the edge of drowning, and before the ninth minute they took her out, dried her off, gave her food and water and rest, and then put her back in the bucket. They found that Rat would keep swimming right up to the edge of drowning, again and again she would swim valiantly into the ninth minute, and this was proof that Rat had hope.

...

**“Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people—to give them hope—but I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic.”**

[Greta Thunberg]

...

This morning the Coke bottle was muddy with prints and activity, but nothing was drowned. No-one was drowned. Rat might have left the peanut butter to Possum, who is too large to drown in a bucket.



[Donna Haraway]

(J) Worlds are not containers. They are **“risky co-makings, speculative fabulations.”** For some one surely, the empty bucket is a proof of hope.

my pest  
my pet  
my metaphoric

more than good?

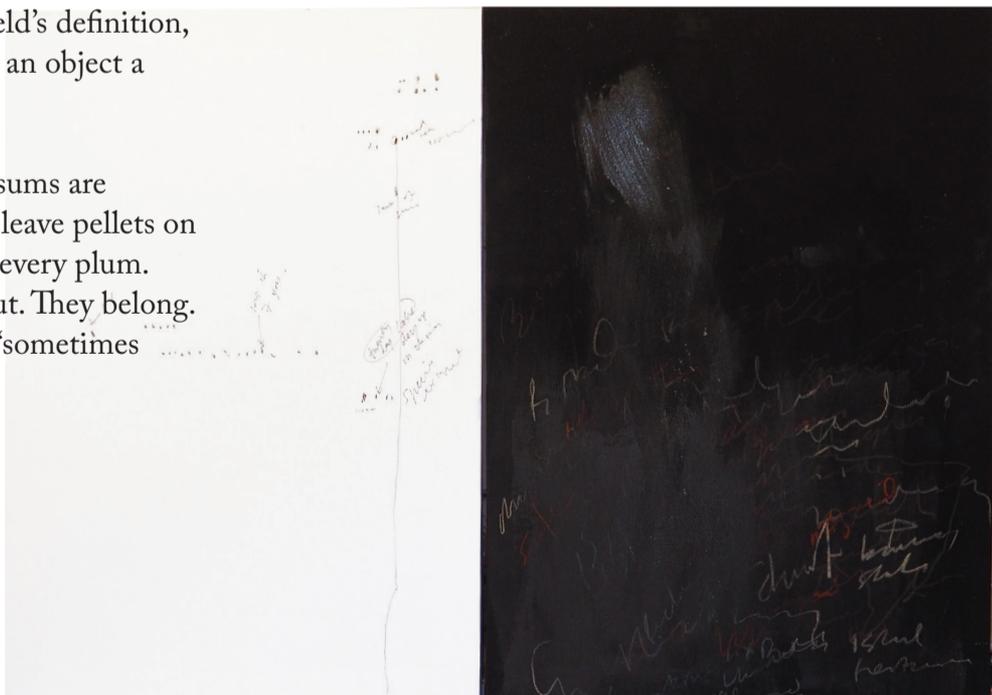
...

(J) You know, I was shocked the first time I observed you licking Kitty’s head. Now I think about it all the time: that small gesture towards becoming animal, instead of reducing everything animal to a human mark. **Black dot.**

...

In Aotearoa one often encounters the fact that possums have tuberculosis. It thickens our repulsion, because they strip the bush and blitz the nests and overreach their entanglement in every particular. It must soothe us to think that the possums are sick because they make the land sick. For us, they are dirt: in Lord Chesterfield’s definition, “matter out of place.” If we happen to touch an object a possum has touched, we sanitise our hands.

(J) Here on Wurundjeri country, ringtailed possums are original. They run along the powerlines and leave pellets on our drying sheets. They take one bite out of every plum. The Melbourne Zoo wants to fence them out. They belong. They’re a problem. *Psuedocheirus peregrinus*: “sometimes confused with the Black Rat.”



...

*rattus rattus* : generalist omnivore : complex pest : plague  
reservoir : resilient disease vector : famous for the Justinian  
Plague : typically builds a spherical nest : a sampler :  
fine disperser of fungal spore.

(J) In the carrier bag of her blood, the range of disorders she  
can distribute with no harm to herself is astounding.

...

*Binge on dots. Dissolve dot to tongue, dot.*

*Fuck the existence of dot.*

*Make each ending a dot, dot, dot. [T]*

...

If you had to say where power lives in your body, what  
would you say? Hands? Wrists? Head? Root?

If you had to say where craving lives—is it the same place?

(J) In Nichiren Buddhist cosmology, the lower paths are hell,  
hunger, anger, and animality. Heaven is also on the lower  
path because rapture is passive. When I used to smoke, I  
would feel the craving in my wrists and in my jaw. My jaw  
is where I hold the power of a nightmare after waking.

...

*For me the fear retches up from my solar plexus  
to the back of my throat.*

*"Have you tried medication?"*

*I have been asked this so many times. [T]*

...

In last night's nightmare, the afterlife was a kind of  
purgatory where, in petty social groups, we played out our  
worst selves in circles. The only escape was Space. I could  
propel myself into the dust and yaw between the planets,  
and in the dream, there was nothing peaceful or connected  
about that. It was an active terror.

(J) Dom's determination to exterminate grows by the day. It  
feels fucked to be composing-with while not wanting to be  
living-with, as twisted as coddling the dog while feeding  
him pinkish strips of pig meat.

...

*Kick the anti-cockroach spray further under the desk,  
away from the guests. [T]*

...

~~BACK KIND LIKE ALL HER NAMES~~  
~~RATTUS RATTUS RAT~~

through the cups

IT IS POSSIBLE SHE IS NOT THE MONSTER

What can an egg or a fledgling do against Rat's capacity?  
Rat can go anywhere. She can climb trees.

Only three percent remains untouched.

(J) Our species climbs every tree.

...

*I added too much paint here and now I can't remove it.  
There was a time when, still drying, it would have been  
possible. Now I'm trying to pick it off.*

*Cover it over.*

*The mark is so crude it's painful to look at.  
I appreciate the irony: trying to feel extinction and  
getting hung up on a single painter's mark. Hubris?  
Cognitive dissonance?*

*Underneath lie the erased names. [T]*

...

I have always known my dominant lower path was hunger.  
Endless craving.

(J) Cheap nature is over.

...

*As I work I keep thinking, why are you averting  
your eyes from this?*

*What in this can be brought to joy?*

*Can happen? Can happen? [T]*

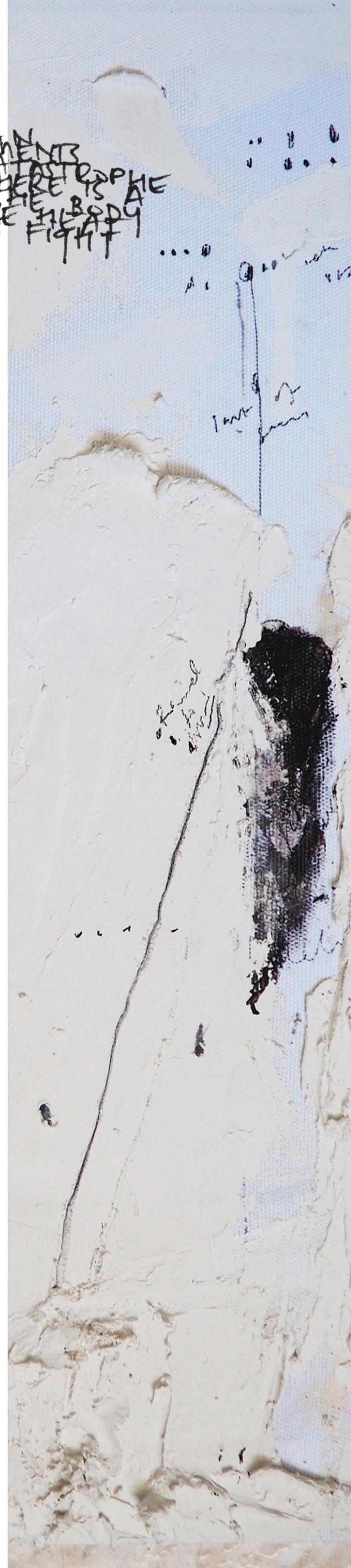
...

Have you heard of this place, Rum Jungle? Australia's first major uranium mine, on Malak Malak country. It supplied US and British nuclear weapons during the cold war. When the pyrite in the waste rock and tailings was exposed to air and water, it created radioactive material and acidic liquid waste that's been leaching into the river beds since. People report seeing thick salt crusts made of heavy metals and radionuclides. Pools of water in rich red and aqua green. Nothing lives in that water. It was a Malak Malak woman who first showed a white prospector named Jack White the bright rocks that would bear uranium. 1949, and of course there were sacred sites nearby. I read that the punishment for the woman's transgression against country was bodily, it was taken *into* her body. She contracted leprosy and spent her remaining years at the Channel Island leprosarium. So Medean, no? The site is still considered culturally unsafe. Traditional Owners won't go near it. A big king brown snake Dreaming is considered to have been

(J) activated. Radionuclides as venom.

...

IF WE ORGANISE  
DETAILED CATASTROPHE  
PLACE IN THERE IS A  
WHERE THE BODY  
FOR THE FIGHT  
LIVES



I know we are instruments for catastrophe, but I'm asking about the body because I want to know how we can be instruments *against* catastrophe, and if we can, then perhaps there is a place in the body where the heat for that fight lives.

...

*This might be the most tiring painting project to date.  
If each time I place the black dot I take the loss of a species  
into the body, where I feel it is in the back of my  
throat. Sick. And fatigue. Wanting to switch  
off. Wanting to slip into sleep.*

*The names just keep piling up.*

*I read the reasons for extinction:  
introduction of non-native species / pollution /  
annexing of water for use in agriculture.*

*I don't want to continue.* [T]

...

(J) And if there is, should it be marked?

...

Pitjantjatjara healer/artist Tinpulya Mervyn says that in the old days, wild cats used to attack and kill people. They were at their most dangerous during drought. Feral cats with poison spirits, killing adult humans when the country was sick. Do I believe her?

Do I believe her story of how the heat arrived in her hands?  
Where has reason got us?

Obviously, the droughts are on their way.

(J) We have armed the earth.

...

**“There are so many birds and most of them mean nothing  
but once or twice a gannet  
from a nest of slovenly seaweed  
hops  
as far as those stones and stops”**

[Alice Oswald]

...



We've abandoned the drowning trap, baitless in the backyard. The plastic of the white bucket is so old, it crumbles when I kick it. (I don't mean to.) Dom has cut away the ivy along the foot of the fence, to minimise habitat.

(J) One of the bean plants Rat stripped to its stalks has sprouted a new head of leaves. There have arrived now more white blossoms.

*Would you believe me if I said that each dot  
was felt as an ending's death?*

*Of course not. [T]*



**Quotations are from:** \_\_\_\_\_

LK Holt, *Capacity*; Thom van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*; Alice Oswald, *Nobody*; Greta Thunberg at Davos in 2019; Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. "The Great Dithering" is also Haraway's phrase. The Rum Jungle story is from the AIATSIS publication, *The Right to Protect Sites: Indigenous heritage management in the era of native title*, edited by Pamela Faye McGrath. Tinpulya Mervyn's story is from *Traditional Healers of Central Australia: Ngangkari*.

Shivanjani Lal

*The story lost, before  
The story remembered*



*The shoreline as a  
place of separation  
and great longing*

*July 2019*

A man hails the car my dad is driving on the way to Ba town.  
He stops for him, and my maama climbs into the car and sits next to my aunt and mum. He needs a lift to FSC, it's on the way so we're happy to offer him a lift. He's a cane worker. It feels important to listen to him as he speaks to my mum. He's a living reminder of the girmit history and what he says resonates. He's scared about the future, and knows his children don't want to be cane workers. Why can't they have the better life we were promised? He knows that there might not be anyone after him to take care of the land he tends. Aise aise hai, he says, this is how it is: the future feels unknown. It is destiny. His voice shakes but he insists on wanting to share chai with my mum. She says no, telling him that this fleeting moment of meeting was enough.

Was it though?

We leave him at FSC.

Across the road I see a globe being held in two hands with a magnifying lens over Fiji. A sign underneath says Sugar for the World.

Sunshine hits my skin and we drive on.



I spent 50 weeks with no shoreline...

Only riverbanks.

The tide flowed and swelled and I learned a nadi.

350 days between a beginning and an arrival.



A nadi, a river

An echo; a mirror

A reminder, a memorial, a longing for home

On the wrong island, the wrong river

I sing out this prayer

No flowers, just stones, just bones



They had birds and fishes under their skin

Papery and translucent, as though they would disappear when they slept at night

Disappearing into their blood only to return in the morning

I used to trace the lines of initials and flowers

Wondering how they got etched onto my grandmothers' bodies

It was a comfort to see marks so lived in

I imagine dark nights and laughter ringing out as their marks were made

Imperfect and fragile

When I touched them I felt whole histories





Faith Wilson

I JUST  
WANNA P\*RTY  
TIL I D\*E

# *I partied so hard my toenails fell off*

I partied so hard my toenails fell off.  
My body is a shell and my cells generate new cells to replace the dead things.  
I drank myself into a stupor.  
I became one with the earth's beat.  
I spewed up eels and rainbows and guns.  
I spewed up coconuts and taro leaves and strange names and I spewed up hair and nifo that I ate off the root of a  
plant.  
I bound my feet with taro leaves and walked back through the tracks of my ancestors.  
I trudged through the mud I wiped the mud on my face.  
I slipped and I fell and I ate dirt I ate earth.  
Tired yet still I walked. Tired I ate tuna from the river I ate coconuts from the tuna's head.  
I reached the shore and I reached the ship and I drank juniper gin and I lost my head.  
I leaned overboard and I looked at my reflection on the water and I saw my father's face and my mother's face  
and I couldn't see myself.  
I danced to the beat I danced to the ocean beat I danced to the beat of my blood.  
I danced and I ate roasted boar and I bled ancient DNA into their gin and their wine and it tasted like nectar and  
it acted like poison and we danced til we fell and their heads fell off and I was the only one dancing, the only one  
still on my feet, my feet bound in taro leaves, I  
pushed their bodies onto a pyre I burnt the pyre I danced around the pyre I ate their flesh I ate them my  
ancestors I ate them and I danced and I danced until the taro leaves came off and my feet were bloody and my  
toenails fell off and I fell and I slept near the pile of burnt bones.  
I shat out the bloody histories of my colonising forefathers and foremothers and I smelled it and it smelled bad  
and I'll never get that shit-stench out of my head.  
I remember it with every step I take on this vibrating fanua on this land I now call home on this land that has  
housed me and accepted me and whose beat I have synced with.  
I walk with the stench emanating, and I walk with gratitude and a head hung in shame.  
I get used to the stench  
I live with the stench  
I am at peace with the stench  
I use the stench to write a new story  
The story is about how I walk between worlds  
and how I walk between my histories  
and the footprints I leave become legend.  
This is a story about how life becomes myth.

## DNA tests - rāhui - ancestry - desuetude - don't pick up that phone

Everyone takes a DNA test to discover whether their blood is more exotic than it really is. We're all just flesh on bones. We're all just vibrating cells.

*The heart of the universe is a steady, insistent beat:  
the sound of cycles in sync.<sup>1</sup>*

You can still be romantic about your lineage.  
Descended from Paramount Chiefs in Vaimoso, Siumu, Fasito'otai.  
Descended from the Chiefs of Clan Gunn.  
We're all vibrating cells, we all have our own beat.  
We're all flesh on bones.

*Aut pax aut bellum | Either peace or war.<sup>2</sup>*

Gunn means war in old Norse. Clan Gunn is one of the oldest Scottish clans, descended from Norse Vikings, thirsty for blood and a reputation for fighting.  
Either peace or war ... don't fuck with me or I'll kill you.

We're all vibrating.  
Mitochondrial Eve,  
wrap me in your arms ...  
We're flesh and bones.  
We're each a chapter in the myth of our gafa.  
Inheriting stories, tall tales,  
and then we write our own.  
What stories will you pass on,  
and which will you take to the grave?

*If you want to find the secrets of the universe,  
think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.<sup>3</sup>*

This rāhui is making me pissed off.  
My phone vibrates with the energy  
of a thousand managers  
asking me if I've *seen that email  
followed up on that meeting  
updated that document*  
and that, my friends, is called  
*frequency.*

*Don't you dare touch that phone!<sup>4</sup>*

Descended from gods.  
 I took comfort in the bosom of my mother's stories  
 I suppose that the earliest memories of most of us concern our mothers.<sup>5</sup>  
 But I want to write a story about my fathers, all of them  
 I resisted them.  
 Do I start in the highlands of Caithness?  
 Or with the street rats of Bermondsey?  
 Do I start as their ship arrived on the shores  
 of Aotearoa? Where one story ended  
 another myth began writing itself.  
 How they fought in the highlands  
 and built castles out of bones.  
 How the stories they told were passed down.  
 What histories do I call upon  
 and what has been omitted?  
 What is pure bull  
 shit and what of those stories still live in me?  
 What are the stories I carry  
 like lead in my veins?  
 Am I stuck with them  
 or can I rewrite them like you  
 straighten the crooked teeth  
 from your dad's side?  
 Can you purge and shit the stories  
 out like a good liver cleanse?  
 What if you don't like what you see and worse yet ...  
 what if you are unmoved by it?  
 What if you dive down  
 through the wreckage  
 and you emerge to the surface  
 with nothing?  
 I can only start with what I know.  
 Let me write you a story.

- 
1. A quote from Steven Strogatz's book about vibration: *Sync: How Order Emerges from Chaos in the Universe, Nature and Daily Life*. I was interested in the idea of there being a heart of the universe, and that it provides a beat, a music that we unconsciously live by.
  2. This is the official Clan Gunn motto. I was so struck by the savagery of it.
  3. Apparently, a quote from Nikola Tesla, but I don't know where/when he said it. I just liked the way it sounds.
  4. A hilarious song with a funky beat. IYKYK.
  5. This is a line from a book *My First Eighty Years*, written by a relative on my father's side, Helen Wilson. I grew up actually thinking she was my great, great grandmother or something but found out recently she was an aunt or second cousin. The book is boring as hell, but is an account of early colonial life here in Aotearoa, particularly their settling down south.
-

## PLEASE DO NOT EDIT THE SEPT LIST,<sup>6</sup> Daddy

this is my daughter  
she is yours too  
she is where the seas meet  
the tidal race she is  
woven from ancient tongues  
and brackish water and  
laumei and jellyfish and tuna  
and tartan and gunsmoke  
and swords and mud.  
she is not yours to sacrifice  
she belongs to the sea  
and she will bring peace  
and she will also bring war  
and she will return to this point  
when she is old and greying  
and she will weep for her forefathers  
and her foremothers  
and she will weep for her children  
lost to the sea  
lost to the sea  
lost to the sea  
so raise her to know the taste  
of salt in her bones.  
to know the sharp smell  
when blood mixes with  
seawater.  
raise her to walk between worlds  
harden the soles of her feet.  
to write stories from seafoam  
and equally  
to forget them.

For thirty years I wrote my own myths  
and for the last year I burned them.  
Some of us lost our tongues  
and some of us had them cut out.

In Caithness and Sutherland you roamed  
for thirty years, poor and white<sup>7</sup>  
starting fights with Clan Keith.  
And then you had me  
but I was a wild thing with bones in her hair  
a wild thing with savage tendencies  
with savage thoughts and a taste  
for blood and you realised  
we're not so different.  
Either peace, or war.  
You held me as a pepe  
by the feet  
and you stood at the edge of the cliff.

Here, take this wild young thing  
take this dark, wild thing  
and i'll never fight again.

And the sea rose to meet you  
and Tagaloa's voice rang back.

---

6. This comes from a note at the bottom of the "Clan Gunn" Wikipedia page. It made me laugh that someone would write a note in all capitals telling someone not to edit the sept list. A sept is a family branch/clan.

7. A line from Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy."

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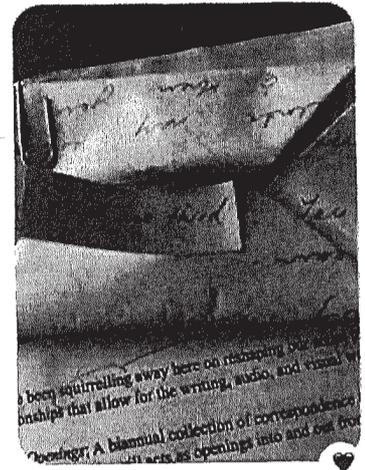
**Kirsty Dunn and Kommi Tamati-Elliffe**

# *Tongue || Tide*

Hey so what are your thoughts re: writing / arts collaborations involving te reo Māori things and poetry and piss-takes and whatnot? Asking for a friend.

(Me. The friend is me.)

I'm all for it. I mean, essentially outside of teaching it's what I've been doing lately with various talented weirdos



Soz a bit of reading material I drop off during hikoi tonight x

Anyway, your wondrous folder containing letter/etc. I'm very into it. I read it all. In order.

\*into it

I'll have a crack at it soon

À brainthink

Did u actually? Because I was like what is the point he won't actually do it in order he'll be like rules? Na and start from the last one haha

Ok

I read the letter

Then the rest

Read the last second

I knew it

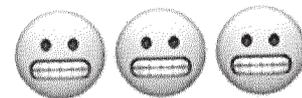
Then I started all over again and read in correct order

This is my way

I got your poem

I haven't opened it yet

Haven't opened the envelope

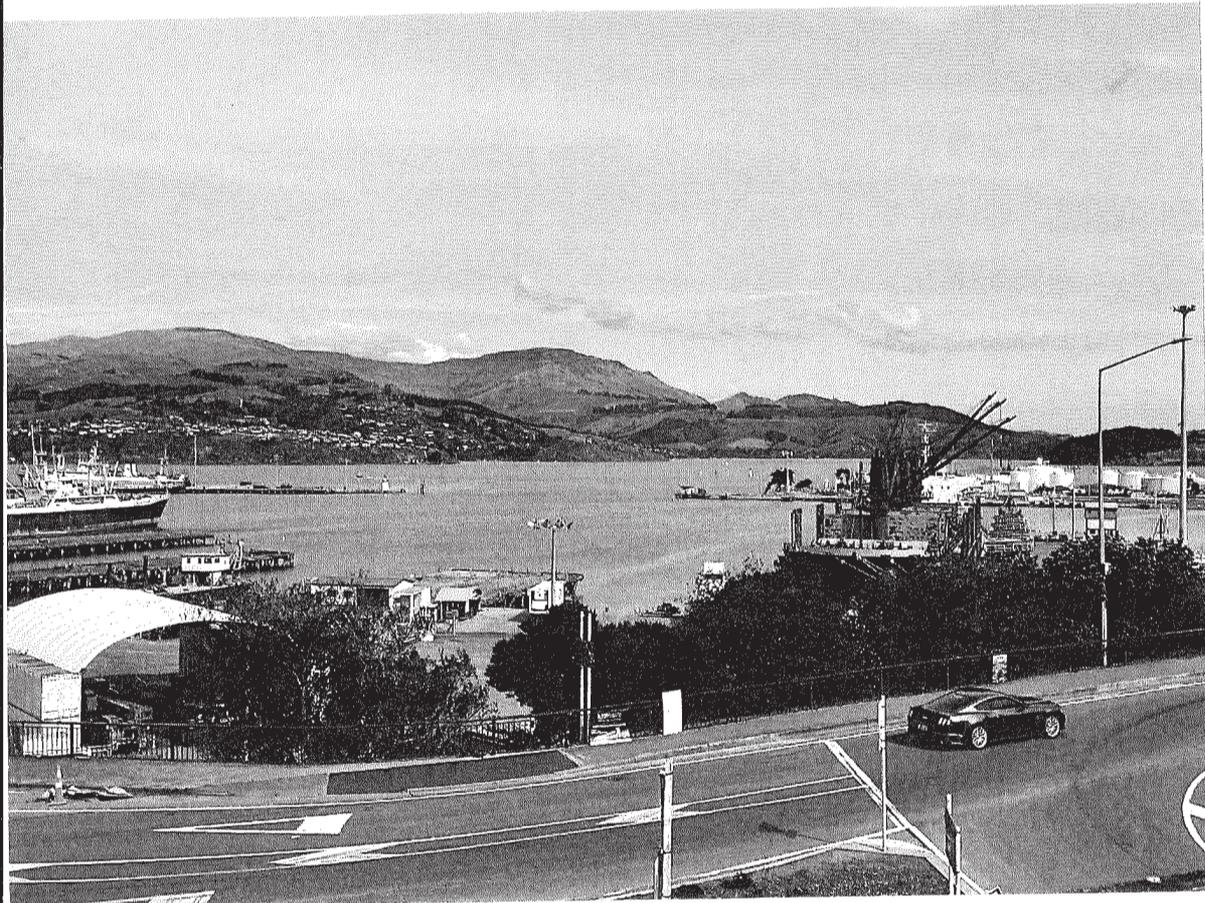


I told you what I was doing

Do us both a favour and burn it

Ok I thought maybe u thought it was shit but didn't know how to tell me lol

... ← 😊 Lol



## Tongue || Tide

What catches in my throat, sometimes  
is the way  
closeness sounds a little like hard rain  
and so too, does  
the bailing out of it in places unwanted

all this water  
I don't know what to do with  
except ask for three kinds of fish  
to be etched into my skin  
that they might have somewhere to swim

*I try to remember where the small horizons  
that make the difference are meant to go  
but even the names for these  
can be slippery  
with all that  
inquisitive water*

But back to the fish, I guess  
and what I was saying  
about  
some of us being hooked in the throat  
and the way  
the sound of scaleless skin  
lighting its way through water  
sounds a little like my actual wanting  
to be closer in its own way, too

*I try to remember where the small horizons  
that make the difference are meant to stay  
but even navigating these  
can be difficult  
with this constant rain  
and these curious tides*

Maybe I am not just treading here, though  
but moving, ever-so-slightly  
Perhaps this place – this island –  
where a throat is a fish  
and ink is like hard rain  
and hard rain is a little like the bailing out  
of itself  
is closer to close – to me – than I think

*one small horizon  
one welcoming wave at a time*

I'll talk to the fish  
and get back to you



Tongue || Tide

What catches in my throat, sometimes is the way closeness sounds a little like hard rain and so too, does the bailing out of it in places unwanted all this water I don't know what to do with except ask for three kinds of fish to be etched into my skin - ou tāmoko? that they might have somewhere to swim

*korokoro - he momo ika.*  
*Keke, Keke, Keke!!*  
*Anana! Kua taka te kapa nei!*  
*He whēkama rata katoa ana ki ngā tini momo kararehe, tae noa ki ngā ika*

I try to remember where the small horizons that make the difference are meant to go but even the names for these can be slippery with all that inquisitive water

*tōhūtō*  
*ngā pae tata nei?*  
*He momia te pae kōhatu e tata ana ki te wai mahira, kai taka, kai rūmaki!*  
*He mānīa! pāremoremo, pārengorengo, mānīa, pānekeneke - ahi ki te pae ki tae. E rūmaki!*  
*he wai mahira. he āhua rite to whakakua!*  
*But back to the fish, I guess and what I was saying about some of us being hooked in the throat and the way the sound of scaleless skin lighting its way through water sounds a little like my actual wanting to be closer in its own way, too*  
*He mānīa! pānekeneke - he momo ika - kāiore kau he unahi unauahi. Kōkopu - kāiore he unauahi. inā he momo inaka, āe, he pūatātata, me ki he tea tēnei ika.*

I try to remember where the small horizons that make the difference are meant to stay but even navigating these can be difficult with this constant rain and these curious tides

*tōhūtō*  
*he pērā te mārama i ngā kupu hou, ngā kupu rerere ka puta mai ai! Te hōhā, te mōte o te mahi kaiako.*  
*Maybe I am not just treading here, though but moving, ever-so-slightly Perhaps this place - this island - where a throat is a fish and ink is like hard rain - He whakataunitehanga? He kupu o rite ai rāwei? and hard rain is a little like the bailing out of itself is closer to close - to me - than I think*  
*mahira pānekeneke - (he mānīa)! Ahaha - tūhuhu - ko te korokoro, ko te korokoro! - āe rā, ko te ua tāta me te tata āo.*

one small horizon one welcoming wave at a time I'll talk to the fish and get back to you

*He āha ai ngā kupu reo Māori, e rangima ana pea? he tarawa - te pārewai o te moana e rūmaki!! ko te tōremi, ko te ngaronga ahi ki tua o te pae, heoi ko te rūmaki! to reo Māori.*  
*āe rā, kōrerohia tō reo ki ngā ika, penei i au, ka kōrero ai ki ngā pakitara o tōku whare.*

I guess this project began as a love letter to te reo Māori and as an attempt to correspond with other learners and speakers; though this was complicated by the fact that I had to resort to using English in order to do that. For this reason, within this self-indulgent letter/sort-of-poem/experimental-piss-take/tino-serious-journal-entry/thing there is also an inherent promise to keep learning; to not just tread water but to really keep moving, no matter how vulnerable I need to continuously make myself in order to fulfil that promise. As the project grew and shifted and changed, this idea of vulnerability kept rising to the surface; it became increasingly evident to me that the various facets and components of creating something, of collaboration, of translation and translation *as* collaboration, of language learning—and of the correspondence which helps facilitate those things—each require you to make yourself vulnerable in different ways.

I think a sense of vulnerability exists in all of our attempts to correspond with others on a daily basis—of course this varies in intensity according to context, but surely our attempts to communicate with others inevitably involves sharing something of ourselves each time; and yes, those attempts might be carefully curated, but I reckon even then, the person behind that curation is bound to seep through. To be honest, I find this both intriguing and terrifying in equal measure. To me, there is also a very particular kind of vulnerability at play when you ask someone to collaborate with you and I think it's intensified when it's something creative, and something you aren't quite sure of yourself yet. It's intensified further when you want to attempt to represent what it is to be a te reo Māori learner and all the difficult, weird, hilarious, awe-inspiring, annoying, sad, embarrassing, empowering things that come with that; when you want to celebrate the intricacies and complexities and relationships that live within the language while you are only just learning to swim inside it. Lately, I've been thinking about how the vulnerability that I feel as a te reo Māori learner and the anxiety and whakamā that comes from both not being able to understand and not being able to make myself understood, are also part of the creative haerenga too. Because when I put the mahi out there, I don't get to peer over someone's shoulder as they're reading and ask: *Do you see what I'm doing here? What do you make of that?* Once it's out, it's out—the thing will be whatever it is to whoever reads it. It's maybe the most obvious thing about creating and sharing things—but it is, nevertheless, still quite frightening as well as wonderful. Every. Single. Time.

So, along with the attempted bilingual-ish/language love letter thing, I also took this kaupapa as an opportunity to break the rules a bit. To take correspondence quite literally. To do what you aren't really supposed to do and show the working—both in terms of the poem itself and the collaborative process;\* to pass the notes over your shoulder instead of attempting to peer over it and simply say *here is what I am trying to do—this is what I mean*. I also asked Kommi to be part of this first publication too—because (again with the self-indulgence) I also saw this as an opportunity to get someone to write back to me; to share what they think I mean, what they read, what they get out of it. I wanted to see if a poem about te reo in English that relies on knowledge of te reo Māori, and words that sound like other words, and the multiple meanings of words, and bilingual puns even works outside of my own head. I wanted to see what might get lost—but more importantly what might get found—in the process of translation.

Looking at the poems side by side is, for me, strange and funny and awkward and beautiful—much like it feels to be on the reo waka actually. I don't think navigating this space will get any easier as such. I also don't think the creative haerenga and putting the mahi out there will be any less daunting. But what I have learned is that being vulnerable can get you places you might not otherwise have visited. So send the tono. Answer the message. Learn the kupu. Use them. Make mistakes. Laugh at yourself. Dip your toe in already. Maybe the ika will bite. Maybe they won't.

Look: you made a ripple anyway.

---

To Hamish, Unaike, Lucy, Sian, and Sam—Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.

Kommi: E whakawhetai ana au ki tō tautoko, e hoa. Ka hoatu au i te (pene)rākau ki a koe...

\*This too, took on its own significance. Lockdown 2.0 occurred just as we were beginning to discuss the kaupapa, so correspondence via messaging became integral to the project. (I'm also a sucker for handwritten letters.)

That's your job

But I think I need to see your poem

Ok eh

Otherwise I don't know what I'm doing

Ae. I guess the choice is see it now and we talk about it and that's part of the first publication

Oh yes yessss

Or i just do it, u see it when it's published, and u respond to it however u want

I am just experiencing creative constipation....

Seeing your poem will be the laxative

Laxative

That might be the nicest thing anyone has ever said about my writing

Haaaaaaahahaha

Yeah cos walking on the publication will give me anxiety

Welcome to my life

Also if u read it and think na not vibing u r not obliged to continue

I have a back up plan lol

I'm going to stare at the envelope for a while first and see what it conjures up for me

Ok but did u read the thing yet?! Or did u burn as instructed

Haha I'm gonna read when I have a clear head. Tomoz.

I started writing a thing to what I think it could be about lol

can you see the moana from your place? if you can, could you send me a photo? i was thinking it could be a cool way to bookend the pages and overlay an image of what i see from my whare on the first one, overtop of correspondence, and then what you see on the last page as a kind of play on perspective, and the ocean, and translation and all the things (or not, if u think thats dum lol)

Is funny how our houses are just out of sight from each other, but we can see the same moana yea yea

Yes exactly what I was thinking



# About the contributors:

**Terry Craven** is a painter and co-owner of Desperate Literature, Madrid. He is represented by Arniches 26 Gallery and his writing has appeared in *3:AM* and *The London Magazine*.

**Joan Fleming's** latest book is *Song of Less* (Cordite Books), a verse novel exploring ritual, taboo, and the limits of individualism in the ruins of ecological collapse.

Terry and Joan will continue their correspondence in Issue 2.

**Shivanjani Lal** is a Fijian-Australian artist. Her work uses personal grief to account for ancestral loss. She explores narratives of indenture and migratory histories from the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Shivanjani is corresponding with **Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, who will contribute to Issue 2.

**Faith Wilson** (Sāmoa, Germany | Clan Gunn, England), is a writer and editor living in Tāmaki Makaurau. She is the founder of Saufo`i Press, a staff writer at The Pantograph Punch, and has published work in many local and international publications.

Faith is corresponding with **essa may ranapiri**, who will contribute to Issue 2.

**Kirsty Dunn** (Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) is a writer, researcher, and māmā based in Ōhinehou. She recently completed her PhD in Māori Literature in English at the University of Canterbury.

**Kommi Tamati-Elliffe** (Kāi Tahu/Te-Āti-Awa) is a propagator of te reo Māori. A musician/rapper and lecturer in Māori and Indigenous Studies who teaches reo throughout the community with regular collaborations with Kāi Tahu artist Turumeke Harrington, Kāi Tahu artist/writer Kiri Jarden, and Kāi Tahu/Ngāi Tai musician Marlon Williams.

Kirsty and Kommi will continue their correspondence in Issue 2.

**Emma Kevern** is a graphic designer based in Ōtautahi. Her recent work has included exhibition poster design for Hot Lunch and website design for local artists.

# THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

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# correspondence

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Issue Two

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essa may ranapiri

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