

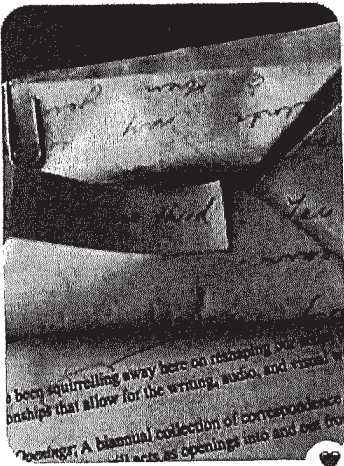
Kirsty Dunn and Kommi Tamati-Elliffe

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 hīkol tonight x

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

*into it

I'll have a crack at it soon

Â 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

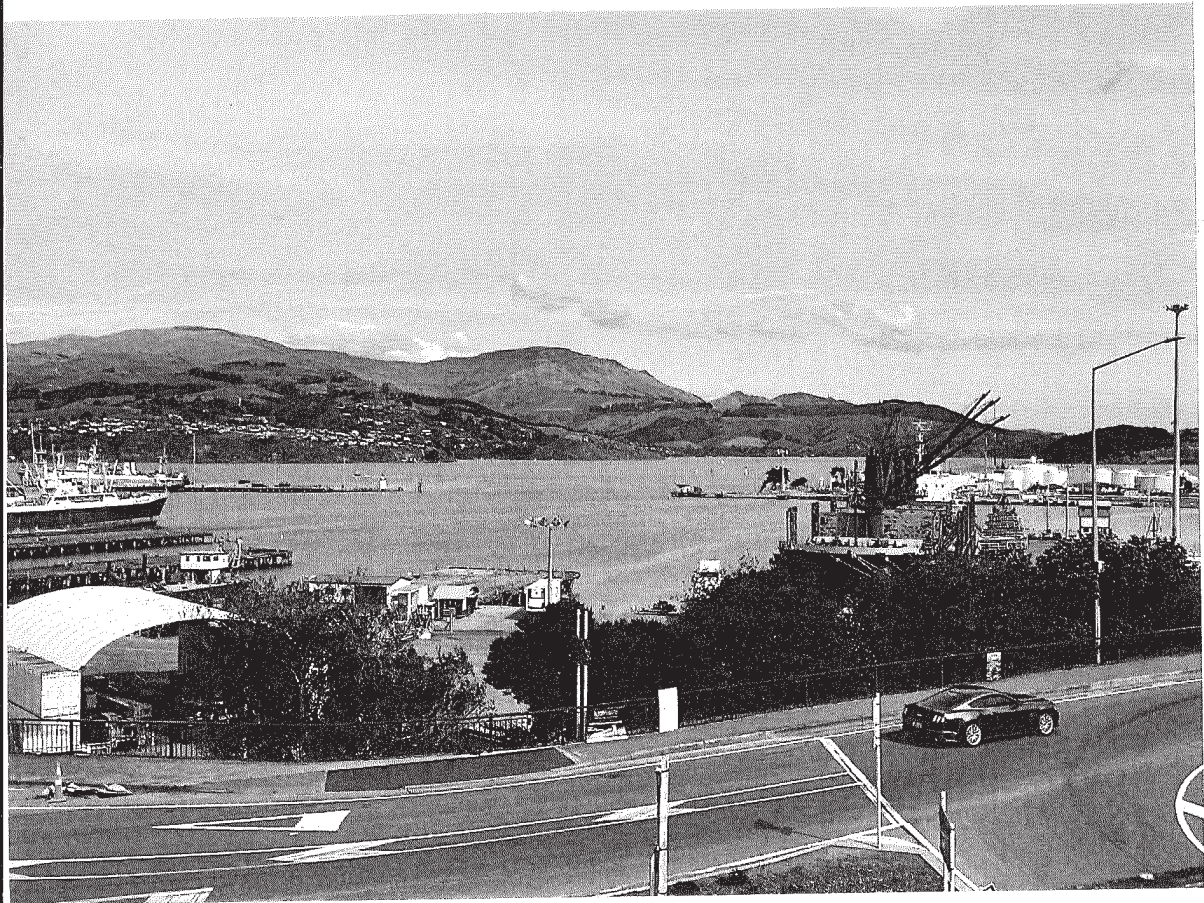


I told you what I was doing

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

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the whakawhaka are in the farao
ika as kiohio, as fapana, as kiofaki -
holders of real knowledge.

konakona
→ the throat. the ika. the
wantip

fata
fata
fata

faPa

to make

kioi kioi kioi
kioi kioi kioi

unspare

roto kioi

kioi kioi kioi

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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

Anana! Kua taka te kapa nei!

He whēkama rata katoa ana ki ngā
tini momo kararehe, tae noa
ki ngā ika

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that make the difference are meant to go
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and get back to you

āe rā, kōrerohia tō reo

ki ngā ika, penei i au, ka kōrero ai ki ngā pakitara o tōku
whare.

Korokoro - he momo ika.

ua tātā

keke, keke, keke!!

Kōkōpu

cockabully, eel, giant bully.

ngā pae tātā nei?

to = mania!

pāremoremo, pārengorengo,

maniat

he wai mahira

he āhua rite

to whakakua!

he māia

he māia

he māia

he māia

he māia

he māia

he māia

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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, Unaiki, 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

Okeh

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 waiting 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