



Ka Tangi Te Ruru

Ka tangi te ruru,
alone in the night...
rising, circling...
echoes reply...

fall to river,
stone and shore.

Koutuku north,
through floating mists,
ki Whetumatarau...
my grief-laden tears.

fall to river,
stone and shore.

Grasp these weary bones
and carry me home.

Let paddles sink deep,
into beating hearts...
direct,
swiftly,
to follow the tide.

Keep silver cliffs close,
so our faces be seen,
with incoming tide,
and warm rising sun.

At Takepo rest,
canoes hauled high.

Let the traps be set,
and the rats be caught.

My people will feed you,
my mana restored.



Death

Death rests suspending itself,
in floating dreams beyond the curve of hills,
to the north, west and south.

Synchronous rhythms splash and play.
Laughter, and joy soften, numb in chemical haze.
Arms float towards a horizon of solace
and quiet familiar embrace.

Tidal drift memories haunt every recess.
Tender ligaments lilt muscle and bone together.

Nuanced judgements sink deep within.
White light struggles to flicker.
Elbows flex, body rotates.
Streamlines dive far beyond sight.

Insides tumble turn,
trapped between sheets of immediate presence.
Water embraces a weightless beauty receding beyond grasp.

Shadows power through waves,
spiralling, laboured,
to lighten,
then sink one last time

Grief carries us home,
ebbs and flows with the tide,
paddles and surges through veins,
powers and floats, surging through water.

Grief takes charge, inspiring command,
declaring another call, to arms, to action, to move
again, to haul and lift up over rocky shore.

Rise and fall of this melody is rangi,
hugging, hovering, soaring, yearning over land.

Grief trembles, expanding air,
thunders and tumbles clouded.

Grief howls wind over sand
galloping in from the sea,
swoops up to smother views
from the edge of an abyss.

Above and below, towards and away,
resoundings shudder
to land torn, numb,
dripping to sodden dust.

Tangi, a lament, moves and cries

Grief carried on the call of an owl
at night echoes through slivers of time,
hovers and lingers
bewilderment through mists of confusion.

Emotional haze circles inward.
Tears mist, stream and sea.

Grief alights, drops and sinks into earth's folded skin.
Cascading upon verdant hills,
it slips and slides,
hurtling tragedy upon well-furrowed paths,

soaks through touching evocations,
of other grief and others grieving.

Grief is dissolved,
evaporates,
seeking,
pleading and gathering strength,
joining with others.

But tangi is not all grief, wailing, suffering, loss,
or silence deep within.
Tangi extends time,
draws together,
supports and cares,
remembers, hopes and heals.

Lament honours distant pasts,
recent passings,
ways of knowing ourselves
mortal, frail.

My father, sister and parents' parents,
all descended Te Rerenga Wairua.
They are remembered here.
Journeys end from the roots of a tree.

Beginnings from death to life,
journey,
cycle,
come to rest,
sink in waves...

then rise again
to perch
under an inky blue sky,
fading.

quiet



Ngā Tai Rāwhiti

By night you polish smooth
silent sandy darkness as a glassy bridge,
spanning infinite distances for feet to tread the universe
and leap-frog galactic reflections
of stars and luminescent creatures
dino-flagellating sexual display,
protesting rude interruptions,
predation and bother.

And now by day,
un-satiable patterns of bejewelled brilliance
fracture your surface
a million times or more,
sparkle and burst between floating toes...
light and time in motion,
as citations of pleasure, risk, and discovery.

You cede incremental shifts of energy,
as endless lines of influx and recession,
marked terrain for feet to follow,
of debris ripped from the ocean floor,
rinsed, sorted and set aside
for gulls to peck at,
and insects to devour.

Turning fetid in the heat,
gracious kelp garlands of yours
slither across the sand in lamenting gestural friezes,
before being tossed further,
onto higher ground
to rot
far from reckless clinging roots.

But you also gift shells, wood, seeds of mangrove
and plastic remains

of distant habitations and carelessness.
Histories and secret thoughts of frequent storm
winds ravaging islands of tragic beauty
also offered here,
are reduced to tracteries of dramatic sediment,
proximal regurgitations of froth and foam.

*Land... to sea, to land...
a multitude of voices... nga tini, nga mano...*

From whenua,
washes of sustenance infuse (and substances abuse)
embryonic stagings,
with capacities to rehearse, revisit,
and configure (or torture) innumerable
shifts in register,

a multitude of voices...

Your rhythms add aching scours
to rain-cleaved fissures on storm-whipped cliffs
shedding giants
to whither in the aftermath of lovers retreating.

Your turnings
lament coast-miles
of skeletal remains.

Stark beauties out-reach histories
of maomao and Nukutaurua,
singing solemn passages
to those who've filtered through bloodied sand,
and sedimented their loss upon reefs of intrepid
return...

Taking away,
and also bringing forth never-ending beginnings...

Mournings of devastation
return fragmented rock to particular sand,
draining fragments of former selves
to heart-heavy,
wind swept dunes.

You shore up and tumble high
lumbering, sun-bleached pilings
upon childhood memories of bon-fired celebrations
and digging holes.

Tossed further to dune
by dog-loving masters,
stone -fondled caresses search for your abraded tales of comfort.

How far did you travel soaked heavy pine?

Drunken beer-crate, fence-post?

'Once were' guardians of food stores and havens
are forced to scurry
from receding cliffs.

Dismembered limbs roll
to the incoming tide
and head to shore.

Ancestral faces cast new nets for shadows
upon the milky path
of rising moons.

If

If you have grown up within sound, smell
and sight of the sea
living, breathing,
a part of this place

then you may know...
ideas lie crystallised
waiting...

kina needling imperil pools
to jump
and slip

parengo, stars, fish swim together
froth bursts
sky-soaking waves
sand blasts weep shaded dreams and shins

surf carves harmonies on bedrock curves

stones beckon
which to throw away
as flotsams and jetsams
clump wearily to bed
in sheets of clouded mist

weeping



The swimmer

The swimmer runs into the sea until the water is too deep and dives head first into the surf. Eyes shut, muscles lengthen, skin chills instantly, ears feel inside surf. Body rises, falls, then levels between each successive wave. Head leads toward the horizon.

A winged creature, the butterfly takes flight with legs trailing behind. Muscular corsetry undulates pelvic thrust in rhythmic cycles. Water trails heavy from elbows lifted. Flight stalls. Fingers skim the surface. Shoulders rotate forward, up and over. Butterfly dives, turning to dolphin. Legs press down to generate lift and momentum. An extra double kick, lifts over the next wave. The cycle is in time, feeling, mapping waves. Rise, fall, restoring balance.

Dropping head, relaxing and exhaling, deepens a dive towards the bottom, avoids the accelerating surge above. Cooler waters descend further into the dark. Pulse quickens. Dolphin relaxes to frog and kicks upwards. Head rises above the water. Diaphragm contracts, and gasps.

Two voids, pleural cavities surround each lung, transmit a negative pressure. Lungs expand. Flesh does not collapse in upon itself to fill the void. Air draws in through throat and lips, his first ever breath...

tihei wa mauri ora!

Breathing out, the poet puts into words what the swimmer already knows, feels surging through his body, as urgency, need, rhythm, control, response, coordination, intention, effort, gasping, moving through water.

The poet puts words into the mouth of the swimmer. Breath absorbed through membranes, mediated through chemical necessity, articulates speech through lips and tongue, and sings the heart out of the body.

Breath gurgles and screams in distress when punctured pleura fill with air. Void maintains potential, capacity to breathe. Breath activated through void, keeps body afloat.

Exhilaration re-enters this domain buoyed by salt, memories, breath, and relaxation.

The poet is at home here. His name, a family name, is for a shared love of the sea. The same love, through this name, is in different bodies at different times, and some times also at the same time. This name is not an adornment, but situates and locates, is in him. Moana, “sea” or “ocean” is also Peter, from the Greek, Petros, “stone” or “rock”.

Ruku

Take one deep,
final breath.

Flip over
and duck
under the surface.
Dive quickly towards the bottom.
Blow out.

Feel mask press in on face.
Turn to look up.
Watch bubbles rise.
Listen.
All seems quiet.

Let air from lungs,
and listen again.

What sound is this?

Stay, still.

Let more air from lungs.
Sink further.
Drop legs,
but stay floating,
deeper.

Let knotted kelp unfurl
slowly across your body.

Rest,
exhale further,
empty,
still.

Turn from the warmth of the sun.

Lift up
and lower
to shadows' silent dance.
Four-armed
slink ripples
across rocky floor.

Turn to follow a silvery flash.
Clutch kelp
and kick.

Watch boggle-eyed shrimps hovering casually past.
Other feelers retreat into darkened crevice.

Seaweed curtain washes silence back over.
Relax and stay calm.

Running out of breath?

Stretch legs
and kick off
with arms stretched for surface.

Unexpected surge from above pushes down,
flips over rock,
and down once again.

Disorienting white noise,
heart thuds loud,
lungs about to burst
in side searing pain.

Will to relax
and will to make air.
Feel rock with feet
and kick off again.

Rise, blow, gasp and spit.
A salty taste
in afternoon sun.

Gather breath.
Relax.

Empty shell wind pours from ears
to sea-breathing clouds'
unstoppable force.

Lay back in waves,
soften, light.
Joints up and over
through head into spine,
knees, shins,
ankles, feet.

Breakers recede in level response
to cool heeled pleasures...
recover and stand.

Tai...hoa.



Breath and hand

Stand tall,
gaze fixed on horizon's ocean air.

Breathe in to under arm space,
rise and fall with waves.

Empty lung, steady stance,
with palms and fingers curled.

Extend knuckles,
wind between arms,
heavy, light.

Elbows soften.
Lead forearm side.
Ripple body out.

Lie head along one palm
to press where liting breakers curl.

Scoop a whispered hush
to catch rotating farthest breast.

Contract.

Head follows through to other side
and chin to chest.

Breathe out.

Horizon flips
to counter weight.

Lean over side
soften one knee
up through hip,
to spine and neck.
Chin tilts back,
spirals to shore.

Tuck pelvis under.

Continue arch
in time with rocky crag.

On bending knees
engulfing tide,
crescendo,
lisp and pause.

Hold steady,
drop,
bounce.
Repeat.

Hold steady,
drop and bounce.

Arms follow through.
Escarpment shifts
teetering
at broken branch.

Relaxing ridge,
twisting sharp,
pulls,
entangling greys,
hardening blue.

One toss
of wrinkled bark.
Clatter,
flick and snap.

Course out to sea.
Rotate base
to float
and find a new position.

Catch sun in hair,
both hands together
and slide through
rubbled touch.

Course knotted vein
up arm with thumb
to rocky cleft and shade.

Reach arm to sky
and chin to sand.
Pull side apart to match
weathered side
of hill and clouds
departing north.

Push over crested brow of
Ngāpunarua.

Trace finger dips softly.

Impulsive
valley scales align
extended harmonies.

Head turns

Legs, arms,
bend
in dune sand-wind,
sweeping time.

A counter pull
spirals.

Torso replies
arcs skyward,
trailing
shoulders.
enfolding arms
one to another.

Fine fingered breeze finds tension lurking.

Reach hips forward.

Flatten chest to
pebbled ground.

Left arms pull down
to clouded wrists.

Once more from the top...

Stand tall,
gaze fixed on horizon's ocean air.

Breathe in to under arm space,
rise and fall with waves.

Crawl

Everything seemed quite normal at first. The breakfast dishes had been put away, chickens had been fed and the fire was on. Mere had at last begun to relax a little after months of sleepless nights. She'd secretly thought about returning to teaching, but was happy to wait a while, before asking if one of her cousins or aunts might like to help babysit.

Rain cascaded from the verandah down the steps and onto the brick path. Uncle Mick's car splashed through the gravel potholes outside the front gate, then disappeared around the corner. A few cattle ambled slowly along the fence line in the opposite direction, nodding away from the road and toward the trees for shelter.

The back door was half open, and the linoleum was slowly getting wet. No-one had shut the door. No-one rushed from the kitchen to wave at Uncle Mick or retrieve washing from the line. Perhaps he might have been able to pick up the groceries. They should have been collected earlier that morning, but no-one noticed they hadn't. And no-one thought to venture out to Mere's place that afternoon.

From under the kitchen table, a pair of tiny hands opened and flexed, grasping and searching for attention. Piri crawled out from his play place, pulled himself across the floor towards his mother who lay quiet and still. He tugged at her apron and crawled further, towards her outstretched arms.

He felt hungry and cold, but didn't understand why. There was no-one to nurse him now, no-one to pick him up or play with him.

He crawled over one arm toward her shoulder and pressed gently into her side. The warmth and smell of her felt comforting and familiar, but she didn't move. He kicked his chubby legs, and thrust his arms towards her, struggling to make himself felt. His gestures were not returned. He could not find or obtain what he had always known.

He pulled himself up to stand, then fell upon her stomach, pushed himself up again to crawl across her body, and up to her face. Her lips were open, still, and silent. Her eyes were open but empty, not registering the joy and love she cared for. He searched for some sign of recognition, tangling his fingers in her hair, and pressing his face upon hers. But there was no response. He cried, but there was no reassuring sound of humming or whispering, no telling him not to worry, how wonderful he was, that things would be alright, or how his parents fell in love.

The rain died down and he could see the room getting dark. No-one was there to light the candles. No smells of cooking filled the air.

But he could hear the trees as the wind picked up again, and the crackling fire as it gradually died down. He could feel it getting cold, but no-one was coming home.

No-one knew what had happened.

Cosmology

old man and woman stand
child stands still with others
still for JFK and Martin Luther King
twice
in rows
in the same place
outside
on the concrete
hands by side
facing the front of the classroom
not shuffling
not moving
not fidgeting
not talking
not whispering even
but listening to the sound of the sea
and the gulls
...occasionally the pohutukawa trees
feeling the sun on the back of his neck
where the hair stops
and on the back of his calves
down to his bare feet.

Child stands still
not sure where to look
not sure what to think
not quite sure what else to feel either
except how sad
and how shocking it is
to shoot someone
to have someone shot
to see someone shot
or hear someone shot
to be shot
a President
a Minister
and to become dead
to die

to die
to deaden everything
lose everything
not see,
feel,
hear,
experience,
understand,
grow,
or like
or find,
discover,
or learn
anything more
while minding your own business
minding other people's business
helping someone even

like when the budgie died
of a heart attack
most probably,
while minding its own business,
until I gave it
a fright
on purpose
or like the kahawai we caught with spinners
at Omaio

and the pet lamb
we ate
as a consequence of it growing too big for a lawn mower
after all.

Assembly was a pause on two feet
in a dance in real time
with others
not a solo,
while it was explained to us what had happened,
twice.

Net curtained shadow play
billowed late at night
on a floral patterned wall
echoing waves to a streaking moon
through a double hung window.

A lone soft cheek nestled
witness to sand, log, water, stars, wood, shell and weeds
fine staging places for octopus drownings by dragging
under,
dolphin leaps,
shark attacks on unsuspecting swimmers,
and fighting stingrays pulling fishermen off the rocks,
quieter inanga chases for jam jar specimens
and giant elephants in the circus
leaving giant turds
to grow giant watermelons

One giant elephant that grew too big
eventually died from eating tutu grass
just down from where round moss-covered rocks
disappear into shadows in the creek's bend

There was a lone place
quiet
where water moved
but also flowed still
so you could see all the way
clearly
to the bottom
if you stood very still.

Birth

A small voice deep within her body said “no”.

She woke every morning in a high metal bed, to a view across a grassy field, and up a steep hill dotted with trees and sheep. This was one of her few sources of pleasure during the day. In the evenings, her husband and mother would visit, and at those times her mood changed completely. But otherwise National Womens' Hospital felt like torture. As the lights went out like clockwork each night, she lay in the dark thinking how much control of her life she'd lost.

What ought to have been a happy time, turned to months of agonising discomfort. To be prodded and examined in front of students without being asked, talked about as if she wasn't there with tubes running in and out of her body, inflamed her embarrassment and pain. Her own thoughts and opinions were of little consequence or significance to those around her. She followed instructions, kept quiet, and felt humiliated.

The sound of metal instruments and silence bore into her body, echoing through the emptiness she felt with each muscular contraction, toss and turn, repeat and playback. Rippling outwards again, other movement and thoughts began to arise. Physical pain began to transform to stirrings of resistance, defiance and anger, before gathering to congeal, swell, and wash through every cell in her body. But she felt unable to speak, to express her confusion and frustration. She didn't fully understand what was happening to her. She'd never felt like this before.

No-one could see, feel, or understand how such a helpless sense of emptiness could result from intensive care. In truth care was clinically misplaced, experimentally determined, ill-considered and lacking compassion. In a theatre of errors, the extras had lost sight of who the main actor was.

She no longer trusted the doctors around her, had enough of being told what to do, and refused to accept their advice. She would not let them mutilate her body, and was determined to prove them wrong. Hope and determination would help fill the insufferable void she now felt. Another child might endanger her life, but Margaret was prepared to take the risk.

Aroha had stopped moving before being pulled unceremoniously into the world. She was still-born at full term, taken away, without being cradled in her mother's arms, and buried in an unmarked grave. Love, happiness, and dreams were cast aside as unfortunate waste. Such tragic events were 'best forgotten about' as quickly as possible. Without discussion, or pause to consider her feelings, Margaret was returned to her room to recover in isolation.

There, the same colourless portioned meals each day stripped all pleasure in food from her, providing calories, but little to lift her spirits. What she did eat did not make her feel full.

Twelve months later she proved the Doctors wrong.

I suffered a premature case of stage-fright, made a reluctant entrance, and was left with forceps marks on my forehead.



Just above 178 degrees and 20 minutes

Pinned to the wall,
one by one,
flimsy greys flicker,
eviscerating their topographical neurosis,
one by one.

Paroxysmal seizures
cutting north to east
disembowled valleys
denuded hills,
starved, punctured and pricked
to dessicate and wither.

Northern squalls
upon bleached bone.

The rain passes

The bell rings. Everyone's called for lunch. I'm staring into space, not hungry, huddled under a blanket and silent on the porch. Faces, speeches, umbrellas, and song, replay ritual patterns of grief, and silence within.

A red-billed gull eyes me sideways, turns, and launches from the fence. He drops into the wind, tucks his legs under, and flaps up over the road. I throw off my blanket, uncurl myself, and tiptoe through the mattresses to where our shoes are lined up against the wall. Booming breakers beckon.

More fun at the beach right now? Perhaps the tide's gone out?

I sit on the step and stretch my socks into shiny new gumboots. Seagull heads off behind the poplars, next to the urupa. Cousin Kohi is staring at me from one of the wooden benches.

Won't you share a few tears for your Nanny?

I'm speechless, can't make myself cry.

I glance to where I curled up before. Taera smiles up at me from inside her shiny coffin. Fragrant flowers in cellophane glisten at her feet.

Caught in silhouette through a recession of open doorways, she pauses to catch her breath and steadies herself.

One leg stretches down to the step outside.

Clasping her pale green cotton dress with her left hand then swings the other leg down to follow. The next step is more precarious. Her hands can't reach the doorway. Reaching and transferring her weight from one leg to the other, she steadies herself with both hands on the opposite thigh.

She takes a deep breath in, straightens herself up, reaches carefully with bent arms out to her sides, and lifts her head into the sun to find her balance. Her last step down is more confident, sensing level ground beneath her feet at last.

I gather the washing from the tubs, and follow her cautious progress, a few steps at a time. The narrow concrete path leads to the centre of a neatly clipped lawn edged with well weeded dirt, and a single row of evenly spaced gladioli. I place the cane laundry basket on the ground behind her. She grasps the centre pole with one hand, and reaches for pegs with the other.

I pass the washing to her and we begin the ritual unfolding, shaking, and pegging neatly in place. First the heavy towels, then the facecloths, and finally the mixture of floral flannelette and crisp white cotton sheets. She steadies herself on the line for a moment with both hands, shuffles sideways to smooth creases between her fingers, returns, pauses, then reaches to turn the line round a bit more. Every gesture is measured, felt, and deliberate.

The sheets unfurl flapping fine spray between us,
then she disappears, fading first to silhouette, then
to white, in a billowing gust of warm summer wind.

Haramai!

Outstretched arms reach towards me. My cousins
watch from the couch. I step through a pool of light
from the open window and close my eyes.

Fingers greet me gently across my brow, part my hair
over my eyes.

I shiver as they draw down either side of my nose and
swallow as they reach my neck. Toughened hands
press firmly into my shoulders, slide down my skinny
arms.

E tama!

Grasping my hands firmly, she pulls me toward her,
smothers me with kisses, and laughs. I open my eyes
in time to see her wiping a tear with her handker-
chief. Family photographs circle out from us around
the room.

I look back and the sheets part. She beams a big
smile as she brushes her hair, a silvery plaited hair
back across her shoulder. I smile in return. The
green of her dress merges with the grass and into the
sheets.

Then she is gone once again.

I turn to the gate and run for the beach. Squelching wet grass gives way to the crunch of gravel, sodden leaves, and puddles in the road. Water flows heavily beneath the old concrete bridge. Waitakeao stream is chanting, cleansing, renewing, muddy flooding water.

I keep running, straight on to Huawhiwhi, down the narrow track to the beach, scattering gulls from the rocks and wet sand below. Soaring up and overhead, they circle high before coming in to land. But mad screaming scarecrow in shiny new gumboots swoops at them with outstretched arms.

I chase, but never catch them, in and out of the surf. I follow, but never reach their spiralling upwards along the beach.

What noisy disturbance is this to respite from storm?

*Halting feeding, disrupting preenings,
and matings in such rude,
maddening haste?*

Restlessness, but no rest obtained.
Peace, scattered, soaring instead.
No catch, no caught.
No reached or touched.
Transit and touch down, at last, on your way

Haere, haere, haere atu ra!

Greys and whites

Greys and whites turn to grey, then disappear above the scattered scratchings of hasty departure. Shrieking displeasures pirouette into the distance, beyond cackled laughter and gossip at Te Puka tavern, a noisy recession of waves flapping.

Up towards the bank the crackled, sun-dried, half-buried, hidden line draws deeper breath from chest, arms, calves and thighs. Body sinks, slumping. At Wainui, where surfers and pohutukawa profusely blossom, whales buried, sink finally to bone.

Down towards the surf, lines converge, thickening, sodden, weighted. Gait is more sprightly and breath alights on firmer ground. Salt foam rinses through a bloated puffer fish with stinking hollow eye.

The boy kicks off his gumboots and spreads out a towel. A small wave washes over his feet.

He relaxes, feeling the moist slope of the land through his toes sinking away from the length of each leg.

Patella bind to cliff-edged proxima where sky kicks ocean from boulders tumbling.

Torn open,
prised from arching back of land,

cliff falls undress
what remains here
of composite histories,
bedded down
in Jurassic past.

Furrowed frowns,
horrific cries,
and wind-whipped titi trails.
cut further fissures
deep
into headland's worried brow
where souls tossed from
towering cliffs
enfold
naked
up-thrust cracks.

Release knees,
cascading tears
to desperate rubbled scree.

Calciferous exposé
born of the sea,
washed,
replaced and
stumbled upon...
bathing still
upstream,
no longer hidden.

Hauled first into light of day,
settlings rock
to bone
to dust and mud.

Lengthen down lower back,
tilt, precarious gasp.
Fear worn smooth
pounds through chest.

Lean, give in, fall.

Open chest,
to empty sky.

Let head float,
neck loosen long.

One foot, another
and first to follow second,
accelerate lighter,
stumble down, escape.

Head up again.

Scalloped sand lines merge
into hugging salty curves.

The boy picks up his towel,
shakes into the wind
squinting his eyes.

A dark shadow creeps toward him
as the sun drops over the hill.



Kihikihi

Transparent messengers
feed dream-times
to store...
and walk about trails
to wander...
blind, burrowed deep.

Memories layered,
spat upon silent root...
claw, crack and crevice...
emerge and release!

Under cover of night,
from coastline dawn...
Mai nga pohatu katoa...
Kua takahurihuri nei
Mai Kakepo ki te tihi
o Tawhiti nui...

Un-corseted waists
and shedding lungs...
heave in cacophonous roar.

dance clapping knees
rise up
blood-flushed flight
Kei te wawaa roa

*Ko wai tera...
huri ra i nga rori?*

*Ko te kihikihi...
haere ora i te ao e!*

Elsewhere

In another land
in the hands of a woman
transported,
doubled as another woman,
“named by the sea”
travels by canoe

through Kore Rawa
through dreamtime land
Wolloomoolloo and Toowoomba
she speaks to the ‘terra nullis’ that never was
from the eyes, shoulder and lips of Taranaki,
Horowhenua, Otakou,
England and Bavaria

Weighted histories collide
in a transmorphic body.

Rhapsodic conjurer of thought
riddles with kinaesthetic ease the anatomy of one
journey
to another.

Weariness paddles,
setting arms alight.

In an ancient place, a sight,
positioned “High on the jump up”,
scanning “fossiliferous Gondwanavista” by the
“Coolibah Motel,”
she recites “names of all the reindeer on the
Christmas serviettes”

of myth, religion and ecology,
and of hokioi's extinct sounding
words from bleached bones
beneath our feet,
creaking through floorboards
trodden over
to dust
volumes of space
with an unlikely rendition.

Nothing Nothing in an arid land,
Te Kore personified,
converses with sea,
Hinemoana, ocean chick swimming,
bathed in apricots
under mackerel skies
parched with aching gills.

The "World's Oldest Mother" who nurtures
and feeds,
dreams
and "roars like a motorbike."

She, Kore Rawa, also speaks of the invisibility
of a black woman,
a black history and presence
upon a continent baked in political heat,
and of a seeing beyond
what had been obliterated, emptied,
baked to oblivion.

Nothing Nothing's own invisibility senses
a heightened transformation to orange
in other ways as fragrant aroma,
steaming *Portunus pelagicus*.

We might relish the same delicacy
elsewhere perhaps
with a tasty traminer to enhance the aroma of
double negation...

stolen lands heaped upon the plight of stolen
generations.

Te Kore speaks here of shared histories
between two lands.
of ripping and tearing apart
families, people from land,
genocide, histories lost,
never to recover... from the colonial machinations
of obliteration,
silent shadowing
of religious habit, upon land,
its smell, taste and sound...

Nothing Nothing also echoes orders,
of those who came to do good...
and who did very well...
missionary folk with their missionary zeal, faith
and positions.

Nothing Nothing remembers her own twin birth,
doubling negation,
repeating loss.
A traumatic rupture from flesh
born twice.

*E kore e mutu mai te aroha e
Ka pumau tonu ra
I nga wa katoa...*

I held you

I held you in my arms
as you took your last breath.
And now you are gone.

Between us,
numb,
an empty stanza,
quiet pain.

hope, memories flood

*E kore e mutu mai nga wawata e
Me waiho i roto, te manawa e...*

And I am here
now to make of this,
just as you did,
from absence and loss,
and memories of other happier times
all sorts of wondrous,
imaginable, possibilities.

To create
is also sensing
you there,
then, and also here,
in that potential,
now...

*E kore e mutu, te aroha e,
Ka pumau tonu ra,
I nga wa katoa, nga wa katoa...*

... with words,

the spaces between them
and memories
enveloping, gathered, aligned,
shared,
part of me now
for a new awareness to emerge...

of momentary shifts,
tugs and pulls
upon body senses,
muscle and bone...
controlling,
positioning,
emotional forces,
hovering,
tilting, in-between

holding sway.

At some distance,
reflecting upon reflection,
he adds words from another source,

his other language
and their translations
...mokopuna, whanau...
tender lines from Moetu's love songs
speak of a Kore
never ending,
commitment and eternity.

He presses these words
into his own expression of loss
and uncertainty
into the warmth and sway of his body
listening.

The video loops, fades through white,

washes over him,
recedes to find the line repeated twice
already
repeated again...

*E kore te aroha e taka e
I waho I taku manawa...*

A familiar line,
similar pattern,
another song,
another page,
the same book,
but from another time,
and with another translation.

Tuini gathered meaning
through gathering others to perform,
repeating messages through song,
offering through repetition
within different songs,
and sometimes within the same song
as well,
subtle inflections
and turns of phrase...
turning one meaning into and onto
another for others to follow,
melodies, actions,
tunes to words...
sentiment, augment,
reflect, enhance.

Nothing Nothing gains in stature,
repeating, colour, meaning and depth.
Nothing, nothing, not always heard,
but painted absent, vivid with words.

The sheet remains,
an intransigent hush

with the devotion
of distant traffic humming
on Karangahape Road,
thought is transcribed, written...

and with the devotion and faith of
curiosity, a procession
of connecting steps emerges

Ara, course of action,
evolves un-scripted,
revealing form,
awakening thought,
between what has already been made,
what was always there,
travelled, placed,
whispered,
sung, touched,
shouted and danced...

before

