One with the waters

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Creative Writing (MCW)

at Massey University, New Zealand

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2024

Karanga

Welcome, visitor

Allow me to welcome you with this thread of my being

A thread of my life and the lives of my tīpuna who went before me

I extend it to you to attach to your own threads

so that we might bring your waka here

to my shores

to my waters

to my hills

to my whole body

come sit and let's talk a while

and share our common currents

Abstract

Alice Oswald's book-length poem *Dart* is a work of ecopoetry that layers the voices of the Dart River's humans with the voice of the river itself. By using notions of duality and place from a Western perspective, Oswald's poetry weaves a connection with the river and the surrounding Devon landscape that could be used as a spur to ecological responsibility. This metaphorical "river speaking as a human" analogy connects the reader with the river, while simultaneously drawing attention to the ecological concerns present within the human-river connection. Oswald's perspective uses the voices of people and stories that have been told along the river to show the strong connection of people to the river, while keeping the stream as an object separate to the people.

From a Te Ao Māori perspective, the connection to a river is implicit, due to its differing relational ontology, where the river *is* the person and vice-versa. The conflict between stream-as-object and stream-as-being is visible in the treatment of Wharemauku Stream, the waterway that stretches through Paraparaumu, a town in the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. This stream has been modified throughout the length of Pākehā occupation of Paraparaumu - carved and straightened to run down property boundaries and routed under roads, rather than allowed to spread where its waters naturally would, in the interests of keeping the land and roads nearby financially viable. This has impacted on the wairua and mana of both the stream and the mana whenua of this rohe. A Kaupapa Māori approach that incorporates poetry for educating and connecting local people with the stream could help to spur ecological responsibility while also increasing the wairua and mana of the stream and its people. A hybrid method, using Oswald's method of speaking for the river using a human voice, but giving the river personhood and agency using a Te Ao Māori approach of whakapapa and kaitiakitanga, is the work of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

Before reviewing my journey, I would like to sit beside Wharemauku for a moment and acknowledge those who have aided me to this point. I would first like to acknowledge my ancestors, who have guided me and granted me their knowledge along my journey, always showing up when needed and never earlier. I am deeply indebted to the eternally patient Joan Fleming for her guidance without which this thesis would be quite a different creature. I am also extremely grateful to Tracey Hepi, for helping this very lost urban wahine Māori find her place in academia and in Te Ao Māori, while introducing me to the usage of Kaupapa Māori. To the fellow members of my cohort, thank you for your helpful comments and support throughout my Master's study. I would also like to give special thanks to Bryan Walpert for his supportive criticisms of my work. To all who are part of the Whale Song and Wharemauku Park projects, but especially Marco Zeeman, I thank you for sharing your expertise and art from the local area with me. I would also like to mention my fellow poetry workshop members at Paraparaumu Library who have helped craft my poems, especially the late Mercedes Webb-Pullman, whose encouragement pushed me into Master's level study. To those of Puketapu hapū Te Atiawa who shared their stories and love of their tupuna stream with myself and the Whale Song crew, thank you so very much. And last of all, but most important of all, thank you Wharemauku Stream, for holding me in your waters since we first met.

Contents

Source of the waters

'I find you in the reeds, a trickle coming out of a bank, a foal

of a river'

Alice Oswald*, Dart*

On March 24th 2021, I was invited to listen to a group of speakers talking about "greening" the urban development of Kāpiti. Catherine Knight, an environmental historian, talked about Wharemauku Stream, the waterway that winds its way through Paraparaumu from the hills to the sea. Having taken part in plantings along the stream and having lived near it for the prior 16 years, I thought I knew the stream. Knight read aloud from a piece she wrote in 2010. As she spoke of the stream being "stripped of its Indigenous ecology" and that "many might mistake it for a man-made drain" (envirohistory NZ), the kaumatua to my right drew in a sharp breath and began to weep. Before Knight finished speaking, I was also weeping. I had begun to realise there was a depth to Wharemauku that its shallow waters contradicted. I also learned for the first time that, aside from the plants I had seen during walks through Kaitawa Reserve, the stream contained freshwater crayfish, native fish, and many other types of creatures. I thought about the many times I had cycled past or stumbled through the stream, never giving it a second glance. I thought of the planting efforts I had helped with in September 2012, which were never extended. A desire and a sense of responsibility built within me. I needed knowledge, so that I could help to preserve, renew, and reinvigorate my adopted waterway, Wharemauku Stream.

Ko wai au?

'whose voice is this who's talking in my larynx'

Alice Oswald*, Dart*

I am originally from Tauranga, in the Bay of Plenty, almost 500km North of where I now reside in Paraparaumu. I am Māori, of Te Whānau-a-Apanui, Whakatōhea, and Ngāti Porou descent, but was raised in a primarily Pākehā family by my mother and her parents. I am autistic and ADHD, which informs and shapes my sensory comprehension of the world around me, as well as my understanding and experience of emotions.

My early years were a time shaped by two opposing but simultaneous forces. I struggled with explaining myself verbally yet was praised for the complexity and quality of my written communication. I was forced to behave "like a lady" but preferred trains, dinosaurs, and science. The Māori Language Act 1987 meant that when starting school, I was encouraged to learn Te Reo Māori, where previously it had been actively discouraged. Yet many Pākehā around me questioned me learning a "dead language". I knew I was Māori, but at school, I was Māori only as far as the ticked boxes on the enrolment form. I learned Pākehā pepeha, as I didn't know my whakapapa. Kapa haka was enjoyable until the whiteness of my skin made me stick out too much. I would tell those who asked that I had Māori heritage but felt like a fraud because of my skin. I lived with this whakamā about my lineage while trying to uncover whatever I could of it.

I had an innate scientific curiosity. Throughout my childhood, my maternal grandfather, Ron Lynch, taught me to inquire and test everything around me. I spent hours using a laboratory quality microscope on samples I collected from the backyard and marvelling at the world of amoebae and paramecia in otherwise clear water. I looked at my own blood under slides, examined pollens, and searched for mites on the ends of hairs plucked from my eyebrows. Later in my childhood, I spent hours with my mother in the swampy Kopurererua Stream catchment area, catching tuna (eels) to take home and grill. I also spent hours in my grandparents' gardens, planting, picking, and learning about plants. I was taught to weave harakeke (NZ flax) during a school trip and cut many blades from our garden afterwards to create small fish, braids, and flowers. At six years old, I went on a school trip to the Waikareao Estuary, where we learned about the rich variety of flora and fauna that existed there. I wrote one of my first poems upon returning to school from that trip. Though the rhyme, vocabulary, and meter were clumsy, the poem still comes to mind when I think of mud,

mangroves, or estuaries in general. Poetry became a way to process experiences and emotions, then relate them to others without having to attempt to speak the right words.

I found ways to connect to other people through poetry. Over many years of evening chats with my grandfather and his friend John Stocker, I heard the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and found myself immersed in the rich sensory experience of this place. Especially in lines such as "So twice five miles of fertile ground / With walls and towers were girdled round; / And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills, / Where blossomed many an incense- bearing tree; / And here were forests ancient as the hills, / Enfolding sunny spots of greenery (Coleridge, lines 5-11)." True rhyme used in this way evoked a sense of wonder and fantasy. The word choice also played an important part in developing my connection to fantastical landscapes. For example, the sibilance in "sinuous rills" gave a snakelike quality to the visual image, despite not knowing upon first reading this meant small curving brooks or streams. I began to write poems about places and objects that incorporated as many fantastical and complicated words as I could fit on the page, wanting to draw my imagined reader into the rich emotional landscape as I experienced it. It produced poems such as the below one about the moon, penned as a teenager in 1995. Although I look back upon this work and recognise the saccharine musings of a teenage girl, I can also recognise the same reverence and love for the natural environment, as well as a direct connection and relationship with nature that exists in myself now.

The Moon

Suspended by nothing, yet dancing in fragile circles

The heavenly body cascades flamboyantly

Surging with propriety, alive, yet dead, or

Tranquil enough to be as steel

Delicately woven patterns, embroidered spider-webs emerge from the spherical surface.

A luminous defender

Lighting the opaque darkness, a kindled flame,

Poised like a tigress, one moment stealthily stalking a minute fawn,

The next protecting her cubs

This combination of my fascinations with fantasy worlds, the natural world, and the magic of language became a finely tuned tool with which I could examine and query the world. I weaved my

Pākehā literary inheritance with my Pākehā perceptions of the natural world, through the lens of science.

Meeting of the waters

'We jump from a tree into a pool, we change ourselves

into the fish dimension. Everybody swims here'

Alice Oswald*, Dart*

Upon moving to Paraparaumu in 2005, I first encountered Wharemauku Stream. I saw nothing more than a long drainage ditch, adorned by shopping trolleys and takeaway wrappers. Occasionally, I had seen someone picking watercress, or stomping down the pathway with a net over their shoulders. I had still never considered that the stream contained much more than dirty water, litter, and some questionable watercress. When I participated in a riparian planting effort in 2012 with the Friends of Wharemauku Stream, I had wrongly assumed that, once our plants had matured, life would return to the river, unaware that life already thrived in the stream, and we were merely supporting it to continue. Thinking back, I assumed that people would relocate creatures to the stream once it was healthy, as it was "obviously" dead.

I joined the Whale Song sculpture project in 2020, helping create prototypes for a sculpture of seven humpback whales, which provided a connection for me back to my Ngāti Porou whānau and our stories of Paikea, the whale rider. After his brother Ruatapu capsized their waka, the sea guardians sent a taniwha in a whale's form for Paikea to ride safely to Aotearoa (Haami). A carving of Paikea atop the whale is at the top of the roof of Whitirēia marae of Ngāti Konohi hapū of Ngāti Porou, and there are a wide range of both oral and physical artworks depicting Paikea in East Coast Māori tradition (Taonui).

It also helped connect me to my local area, where I began to learn about Kāpiti Island, the many whaling stations that existed on the island, and the history of mana whenua including Ngāti Haumia and the iwi and hapū of the ART Confederation of Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, and Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Also, others who have inhabited this area – a whaler called George whose stories I encountered numerous times in conversation, the Hadfields of Valley Road and Harry Shaw the farmer. Through Whale Song, I met a wide range of people, from local kaumatua to local politicians and local folk, all of whom had connections to the awa and stories of their relationship with it that strengthened my own convictions regarding restoration.

After the Covid-19 lockdowns, other groups began to coalesce around the project, and we began the development of Wharemauku Park, an urban greening and restoration project. This project's vision is to provide a central park along the banks of the Wharemauku Stream, while restoring the mana and wairua of both the Stream and mana whenua. It was here that my own focus toward Wharemauku Stream and its restoration intensified. I also wanted to research ways in which I could incorporate poetry into a project that would help to emphasise and re-establish a connection between local people who were not mana whenua and Wharemauku stream, much as the project had done for me personally.

My initial questions for this project were, 'Through creative writing, how can incorporating the people and places that surround a waterway help to enhance understanding of the stream's importance and connection to the local community?' and 'Can a work of ecopoetry be used to improve the ecology of a waterway?' Investigating works of ecopoetry alongside a creative writing practice that incorporated close examination of and immersion in the Wharemauku Stream area formed the basis of my research. For this reason, and the fact that her method seemed closest to my understanding of Te Ao Māori, I chose to use Laura Sewall's tenets of ecological perception to study Wharemauku Stream (Sewall 201-215).

To ensure I had a wide scope of ecopoetry to help answer my question, I chose poetry that explored water from a range of perspectives, overseas and within Aotearoa, as well as from non-Indigenous and Indigenous writers. The initial list of poetry was *Star Waka* by Robert Sullivan, *Flow: Whanganui River Poems* by Airini Beautrais, *Ephemeral Waters* by Kate Middleton, *Dart* by Alice Oswald, and the poem *Watermark* by Jane George. Using my own lived experiences and these tools, I planned to fuse ecopoetry, science, and Te Ao Māori together to achieve my goals, knowing that there would be tensions between the Māori and Pākehā approaches that I would need to overcome.

What runs beneath?

'whisper, this is the naturalist

she's been out since dawn

dripping in her waterproof notebook'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

Laura Sewall's theory of ecological perception was used by Ben Gleeson of Charles Sturt University while engaging in an ecological agriculture study of a waterway called Flood Creek (Gleeson, n.d.). Using Sewall's tenets as a lens to examine Flood Creek, Gleeson performed close observation of nature in an intentional way that involved consciously relaxing and immersing himself into his natural environment. He noted that it took time and effort to do, but he was able to observe more closely and notice details, using his primary sensory inputs (touch, taste, smell, sound, sight). Gleeson's observations were recorded as sketches and notes in his notebook – a practice which could be slightly modified for my own creative needs.

Replicating Gleeson's method, I intended to spend at least one hour, three times each week, engaged in mindful contemplation and observation of Wharemauku Stream, equipped with a notebook, field guides (for identification of flora and fauna), and a smartphone for recording photos and videos of the stream and surrounds. This information was to be collated as a reflective journal, documenting my trips to the stream, while also providing reference material for the poetry I created or edited while away from the stream. Each visit, I would try to go to a different part of the stream and spend at least an hour collecting observations. I posited that using this scientifically informed approach would assist me not only to re-perceive Wharemauku but to rediscover the connections between the awa, the wider environment, and myself through my poetry.

Maintaining Gleeson's approach proved more difficult than expected. The weekly sessions reduced in number quickly, before I was unable to continue the process. While at the stream, I would write and rewrite the same observations as prior visits, and I felt that the regular obligation of this practice was causing me to be less observant, and less creative overall. I found myself anxious about trying to capture every visual detail I observed, and often finding very little to write about, other than rust-coloured water, takeaway wrappers, and fast- or slow-moving water. Reflecting on

my issues, I realised that there were two main reasons. Firstly, my personal sensory limitations, and second, an internal conflict between Sewall's tenets and my understanding of Te Ao Māori.

My sensory experience of the visual world is as affected by my neurodiversity, which restricts my attention on visual stimuli. Pressuring myself to focus on visual inputs for too long can cause an avoidant response in my brain, and even obscure my memory of the things I have observed. This can happen whether I am enjoying the source of the visuals or not – I have frequently forgotten I was watching a movie with others and left the room to do something unrelated.

Similarly, my growing understanding of Te Ao Māori was changing the way I engaged my brain and senses with nature, especially water. Without water, life cannot exist. For Māori, this is reflected in our pepeha, where we speak the names of landmarks and waterways that we descend from. It is also shown when we ask someone's name, "ko wai koe?", which can be translated as asking "from which waters do you come?" (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa). For some of these ancestor landmarks, legal personhood has been granted, such as the case of Te Tupua Awa, who was declared to be a legal person, being an 'indivisible and living whole, comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements.' (Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017).

In their essay 'Non-human others and Kaupapa Māori Research', Hoskins and Jones describe the Māori relational ontology with the environment as Māori taking for granted that the material objects of the world, the non-human, have agency and voice (Hoskins and Jones 49). Mason Durie expands on this recognition of agency and voice, explaining that it extends to viewing the non-human as being in unity with humans, or indeed to be engaging in a complementary and synergistic relationship with humans. In this relationship, the natural world is directly linked to the people and their wellbeing, and this link defines the identity of the people, such as with Tūwharetoa and their expression that 'links them closely to their environment '"Ko Tongariro te maunga, ko Tūwharetoa te iwi." "Tongariro is the mountain, Tūwharetoa is the people"… mountain and tribe are bound together by both time and place' (Durie 241).

Whether in pepeha or in stories, Māori often speak of the non-human speaking to humans, as Māori view themselves as always in relation to these material objects. An example from Sir George Grey's collection of Māori manuscripts is a prayer which asks for the rain to stop so that its grandchildren will not die. The rain is personified as an ancestor of people and plants and spoken to as having agency and voice (McRae 175–76).

My connection with Wharemauku through my Māoritanga meant I felt a oneness with the stream and viewed it as its own autonomous being. This was disrupted by using Gleeson's practice, which made me think of the stream as an object. This conflict, which I define as stream-as-object versus stream-as-being, led me to pursue Māori ways of viewing, writing, and interacting with the stream. I set out to find my own personal waka that would take me on the journey through Wharemauku's belly, and toward my goal.

Despite my inability to work within the framework laid out by Gleeson, I believe that there is value in his methodology. I found that it allows for a conscious and mindful observation of the natural world, encouraging close and careful perception. However, my own sensory limitations regarding the perception of visual stimuli, and my personal way of thinking, stopped his research method (and Sewall's tenets) from providing an adequate platform for me to personally work from. Therefore, I decided to apply a Te Ao Māori perspective to this situation, to weave my own personal dualities together and produce a work that illustrated my own perception of the world.

Filtering the waters

'we've seen each other, somebody knows where

we are.

falling back on appropriate words'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

To find appropriate poems for my research, I needed to locate works with elements that resonated with the work I wanted to create, preferably works identified as ecopoetry but primarily works focused on waterways and water. The waterways or water needed to be a primary subject and focus of the work. I was also looking for works that were either written from a Te Ao Māori perspective, or that shared writing methods, or otherwise, works that shared a similar relationship with nature.

Beautrais' use of historical events and local stories was engaging, yet her poems focused on the stories of the people alongside the river more than the river itself (Beautrais). I could see the potential for inserting stories and histories of the people who share Wharemauku's space, but I felt that the work did not strongly reflect my stream-as-being approach. Sullivan's writings are seated in Te Ao Māori but addressed a different relationship with the waters than I was specifically writing towards – water was in most of the poems but often as a transport method for the people in the poems rather than a subject of close observation (Sullivan). Further, George's poem "Watermark," though not book-length, gave me a clear example of a work that engaged my connection with a place through her use of clear, concrete images and the comparisons of landscapes with familiar objects (George 14–15). This allowed me to clearly visualise what George was conveying and engaged my emotions, however I felt that the one short poem could not provide as much research possibility as required. Middleton's following of the course of the Colorado River was emotionally engaging, and I found her ability to connect with a waterway that was not from her home country or town echoed my relationship with Wharemauku Stream (Middleton). Sections of the poem reflected the type of emotional engagement I was wanting to replicate. Middleton's writing did not always capture my attention as much as the other writers, but certainly contained useful sections. However, Alice Oswald's use of language and sound, combined with her ability to use duality in the form of

human voices to give the Dart River agency and personality, while portraying the ecological concerns along the river, helped me to decide that I would focus on her work as a primary text. Oswald's approach was akin to the Te Ao Māori traditions of oratory and waiata, especially in her insistence on live performance as her "personal manifesto" and the importance of reading poems aloud (Oswald, "Interview with Water"). Traditionally, Māori have transmitted knowledge primarily through oratory, creating a body of knowledge that is multi-stranded, over many generations (McRae 11). I also chose to use her audiobook as my primary source of her work, while using a print copy for support and clarification. This meant that my experience of *Dart* was more in line with Te Ao Māori ways of sharing knowledge.

Though there were many Māori poems and poetry collections that I could examine to find techniques that would fulfil my desire to connect readers with Wharemauku Stream, Alice Oswald's Dart formed a strong framework from which to create my own work. Primarily because, being mostly raised in a Pākehā literary tradition, I found Oswald's work endearing and personally relatable, while finding that it felt remarkably similar to the Te Ao Māori worldview I wanted to convey. Additionally, much Māori writing felt too far removed from my own experience as a mixed heritage person. From a Pākehā perspective, *Dart* is a work of ecopoetry that layers the voices of humans along the Dart River in England with the river itself. From a Māori perspective, this layering of voices and agency it gives to the river is similar to traditional personification of landforms. Combined, this dual approach models a connection with place that I feel works as a spur to ecological responsibility for both Māori and non-Māori.

Diverting the Waters

'I haven't

worked it for six months, hence my agitated state,

I keep looking over my shoulder, I dream my skin's

flaking off and silting up the house; because the

boat's my aerial, my instrument, connects me into

the texture of this, as I keep saying, the grain,

the drift of water which I couldn't otherwise get a

hold on.'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

Sidney Moko Mead describes Māori who had learned English in 1840 using Te Reo Māori as a "bridge to the white man's knowledge", and that it was important because it allowed Māori to "control the traffic across the bridge" through the Māori language. Māori now had a conduit to pass on Pākehā knowledge to Māori and expand access to education for Māori. At the time, Pākehā used this to hasten the eradication of Māori culture and language by removing the 'blanket' of Māori education from around the metaphorical shoulders of Māori. However, Māori culture managed to survive until 1930, when aspects of mātauranga Māori were allowed into the classroom (Mead 12-14). For my own research and creative purposes, I felt that Kaupapa Māori formed a similar bridge, but one that I could control for the benefit of Māori. I could use this to help focus my own approach, while also helping others across the bridge to understand my ideas.

Kaupapa Māori is an approach that is uniquely Māori and is continually being shaped and re-shaped by everyone who uses it. It is not confined to use within the academic world. It can also be used in everyday life, parenting, education, healing, or any other place that a Māori-centric approach would be beneficial (Durie 4-5). It allows Māori to live as Māori in environments that are traditionally not completely compatible or relevant to a Māori way of being. It also provides a framework for incorporating mātauranga Māori, as well as helping Māori to better manage long-term development

plans and move from crisis-driven forms of decision-making to longer-term strategies that cover multiple generations (Hoskins and Jones 55–57). But most importantly, it is an approach that completely resonated with my Māoridom, as well as my personal relationship with Wharemauku Stream. It was a waka that aligned with my own lived experience and emotional connection with nature. Further, a Kaupapa Māori approach was crucial to this creative work, as it incorporates mātauranga Māori, and allows for a deep integration of Te Ao Māori to my English language poetry.

Using Kaupapa Māori also means that, despite having an English poet's English language poem as my primary text, I could look at the poem through a Te Ao Māori lens to gain inspiration and direction for my own poetry. Māori and Pasifika creatives often reimagine and subvert the Pākehā literary traditions to create richer works that draw on Māori ways of knowing, while keeping Māori culture fluidly evolving and alive (Makereti 57–65). For example, Selina Tusitala Marsh's English language poem "Led by Line", with a central theme of "lines" that subverts and challenges the concept of the linearly arranged English language poem by arranging itself in visual waves on the page (Marsh 13).

Trying to fit concepts of Kaupapa Māori into a work about the stream was complicated. Although I am Māori, I had no specific Māori audience in mind for my work, nor did I have a clear idea of how creating my work would help with my own Tino Rangatiratanga. Creative works serve as part of a whakapapa that future generations of Māori can build upon, adding each person's own knowledge to the accumulation of generations of Māori knowledge. Whakapapa emphasises the importance of relationships between all things, including people and the environment, as well as the building of further and deeper relationships (Mikaere 289–290). These relationships form the basis of survival for people, as reflected in the whakatauki "Te toto o te tangata, he kai; te oranga o te tangata, he whenua" "A person's blood comes from food; land grows the food that sustains his life."

I looked at the layering of Alice Oswald's human voices against the river and recognised a resonance of whakapapa within it. The work enacts layer upon layer of metaphor, voice, musicality, and imagery, that all came together to make something greater than its individual parts. And I also saw within Oswald's work elements of kaitiakitanga, where there was a building of connection and responsibility within the poem that reached out to me as the reader. Realising that these two elements of Tikanga Māori were integral to my relationship with Wharemauku Stream, I chose to focus on those and explore them, while viewing this non-Māori work.

Although my own knowledge of Te Ao Māori (a Māori worldview) and Te Reo Māori is limited, I recognised early in my writings about the stream that a Te Ao Māori perspective was not only required but fitted the natural evolution of the project. I read geotechnical surveys and

engineering reports that reduced the stream to the smallest visible components: layers of crushed shell, sand, rocks, clay, water mechanics, and water quality. Reading these reports from a Te Ao Māori viewpoint, I felt the duality of whakapapa (loosely translated as genealogy, but with a literal meaning of "to lie in layers") and scientific writings such as those of core samples (a literal pulling of the earth's layers to lie them in sight) and realised that this was another duality I could incorporate into my writing – science and nature laid alongside and within one another. The many distinct layers written about in the core sample report are all viewed as one whole being within Te Ao Māori, of which I (and the person doing the surveying) are also a part. We are both the examiner and the examined. The viewer and the viewed. If I could incorporate my concept of stream-as-being into my poetry, alongside a vice-versa effect of the reader becoming the stream (being-as-stream), this duality could invoke an emotional response, in turn provoking a spur toward kaitiakitanga of Wharemauku. Mikaere identifies this sense of kaitiakitanga to more than just human kin but to the inanimate, animate and the overall environment as a direct consequence of using whakapapa as a lens for viewing the world. When all the relationships between these are acknowledged and respected as taonga, to be preserved and passed on through generations, as well as properly acknowledged as being of critical importance to human survival, there is an inherent will to protect them (Mikaere 289).

In establishing Kaupapa Māori as my research methodology, I also needed to consider uniquely Māori questions for creating the work. These included the use of macrons, italicisation of Māori words, and whether to include a glossary of Te Reo Māori words used. I have chosen to use macrons, as although some of my own iwi do not use them, preferring to omit the macron altogether (e.g. Māori becomes Maori), this is the form of Te Reo Māori I am most familiar and comfortable with. I have also chosen to follow the example of Rose Lu's *Those Who Live on Islands*, and not to italicise words that are not English, centring the multilingual perspective (Lu 218-219) and refraining from making Māori words look like foreign words within their own country.

With all of this taken into consideration, my research question became solidified.

Research Question:

Alice Oswald's *Dart* is a work of ecopoetry that layers the voices of humans along the Dart River with the river. This use of duality models a connection with place that could be used as a spur to ecological responsibility. How do similar concepts in Te Ao Māori, such as whakapapa and kaitiakitanga, spur ecological responsibility?

Whakapapa and Duality

'But we're fishermen Matt, we won't starve

Sid, we're allergic

to fish'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

Whakapapa is a Māori concept where all things, human, spiritual, environmental, and otherwise are layered together in a shared genealogy. It can also be used as a technique to enable the accumulation of knowledge in vast quantities, due to the nature of its focus on the interconnectedness of relationships both human and non-human. This interconnectedness allows Māori to not only stand within their environment, but to be in a constant relationship with it, and take for granted that the environment can speak and has agency. Whakapapa can further be used to more closely examine or consult the non-human, while also storing and recalling information for onward transmission (Mikaere 285–306; Roberts 741–751). It is a tool that can assist when communicating concepts from Te Ao Māori using Te Reo Pākehā or living between the two worlds – Māori and Pākehā (Makereti 57–65). Whakapapa offers a useful concept to more closely examine Wharemauku Stream, from a Te Ao Māori perspective.

Mere Roberts discusses whakapapa in *Mind Maps of the Māori,* describing the interconnectedness of the natural, physical, and spiritual worlds in a Māori worldview. Roberts posits that whakapapa is like a cognitive map connecting things within a set environment, and that by using a genealogical form, it also serves as 'a useful mnemonic for storage, recall, and transmission', while also providing information about terrain and environment. Māori explorers used the "mind maps" that Roberts describes to not only navigate distances and map out geographical features, but also to keep the accompanying spiritual and strategic elements of each area distinct from other areas while still interconnected within their place of existence with one another. When these mind maps were drawn in a physical form, they often contained not only physical landforms such as mountains and oceans, but also spiritual pathways, such as the pathway of the deceased that Tuki's people believe they followed upon death (Roberts 742). While this duality seemed strange to colonial explorers, who struggled to understand Te Ao Māori and similar cultures, it was

an everyday practice that enabled the passing on of information across great distances. As it also connects the human with the non-human, this interconnectedness allows humans to view the non-human as having agency and greater importance (Hoskins and Jones 49–60). Whakapapa creates Māori identity and culture by linking Māori with their natural origins to the extent that when performing formal introductions, the mountains, and other environmental features that each person descends from are the first elements mentioned (Mikaere 285–306). In the case of Puketapu hapū of Te Atiawa, this is often Wharemauku Stream, the primary waterway and tīpuna of their hapū. Wharemauku is a living, breathing ancestral link between the past, present, and future of Puketapu. This relationship –stream-as-being vs stream-as-object – is reflected in everyday speech with hapū members, and in their addressing of the stream's behaviours. The stream is referred to as having moods and emotions, and to live and breathe in the same way as a human. The stream is a point of pride and mana for the hapū and is also an important ancestor to them. Mikaere describes this type of whakapapa connection to the environment as speaking of reciprocity and responsibility, and the paramount importance of relationships reflecting the dependency of our survival upon us taking care of our environment (Mikaere 285–306).

In *Māori Writing: Speaking with Two Mouths,* Tina Makereti explores whakapapa's role in creative work, and her own experiences of the difficulties and opportunities inherent in living between the Māori and Pākehā worlds. She points out that as Māori writers, we are always living in a duality and should seek out Māori ways of continuing to create Māori works, while speaking in both directions at once, Māori and Pākehā, (Makereti 57–65). Duality, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is, "the quality or state of having two different or opposite parts or elements (Merriam-Webster)."

Describing a manaia pendant she was gifted, Tina Makereti explains that its two mouths represent to her both transformation and communication, and the task of a Māori writer is to "speak with two mouths at once; to communicate between two sometimes opposing forces; to exist at the centre of the paradox." Makereti also speaks of the difficulties in existing in this space, as there is a duality inherent in translating Māori concepts into English. This duality is in the existence of both the rigidity of solidifying a concept into a comprehensible form, whilst simultaneously keeping the fluidity of modern Māori society and its future. Makereti further describes her own writing as being focused on these concerns of "duality, contradiction, cultural fluidity, and paradox" (59) and discusses the Māori writer's "necessity to speak in both directions at once" (65), such as writing both to Māori and Pākehā.

At the start of her creative process whakapapa, (from a Pākehā perspective, as a Māori perspective of time is non-linear), Makereti describes Te Kore, a place of pure potentiality, from which everything in existence comes. By viewing Te Kore through the Māori tradition of whakapapa, she is one with Te Kore, and can create using this pure potentiality (while also acknowledging her connection with everything else in existence). Te Kore is at the heart of her creative works in the same way that she herself, and the subjects of the works are, too (Makereti 57).

Using whakapapa and duality to explore Wharemauku reveals that the stream exists in this centre of a paradox or in a duality much as Makereti describes. From a Te Ao Pākehā perspective, it is an object that is a natural environmental feature, able to be owned, sold, moved, removed, or changed and shaped as required. Yet from a Te Ao Māori perspective, it is a living being with agency and voice (stream-as-being). It is a stream which wants to spread over its traditional watershed, where now it cannot, as there are houses located there. It is a stream where eels feed on damselflies, but at times, arsenic levels in the watercress can render it inedible to humans (Kāpiti and Coast Independent). It is a stream that simultaneously, in places, is free to surge normally over its banks, while elsewhere is piped under roads and houses. Near a bend, a family picnics on its banks to "get back to nature", while elsewhere, another family erects a six-foot-high fence to keep the waterway next door hidden. This duality, where the two opposing/contrasting states exist in the same entity (the stream) is one that can be expressed well through poetry, using strong imagery with simile and metaphor, in a condensed form. Poetry further allows the expression of the stream's whakapapa, through a figurative layering of descriptions and experiences of the stream.

Oswald describes her poetry in an interview with *Between the Covers* podcast: 'I suppose my poetry has always been a growing attempt to encounter something that's not myself and that's not like myself. What I love about water is that it's evidently not human nor is it animal nor even vegetable, but it does seem to have an intelligence. It reflects you back and it seems to have a voice, a narrative voice, it sometimes has a beginning and end, and sometimes throws you into formlessness. It challenges all my edges and understandings but also offers me a way of looking at looking I suppose' (Naimon).

Although Alice Oswald is English, she uses imagery and sound in *Dart* that layer upon one another in a way that conveys the Dart River's agency and personhood. While different from Te Ao Māori, Oswald demonstrates how a river (and I would argue, its whakapapa) can be animated in a poem. The dualities used by Oswald are like the concept of whakapapa in Māori creative works, as she uses voices that are all meant to be read as though they are mutterings of the river itself. This has the effect of making the river become more than "just" a river, and yet still "just" a river,

through the layering of the voices across the length of the book. Though the voices are ascribed to individual humans, they give a sense of the river itself.

A canoeist in *Dart* speaks to the river as another person asking 'will you rustle quietly and listen to what I have to say now / describing the wetbacks of stones golden-mouthed and / making no headway, will you unsilt', before giving the river's behaviours and movements animal qualities, 'how water orders itself like a pack of geese goes up / first in tatters then in shreds then in threads / and shucking its pools crawls into this slate and thin limestone phase (Oswald 15).' The canoeist talking to the river reflects a vague sense of the river's personhood, however it returns quickly to the river as an object. Further, the analogies chosen by the canoeist as descriptors for the river are a more high-level view, devoid of nuance and suggesting a repetitive, machine-like quality to the movements of the river; the water goes up, splits into different types of current, and moves into areas, but does not have a self-awareness as to why it performs these actions, or an agency in choosing to perform them. So while this metaphoric view has a duality that gives a broader concept of the river and its environment as a whole, it is not quite the type of duality that I am wanting to explore.

Another instance of Oswald's use of duality is when the Keeper of the Woollen Mills talks of the fishermen complaining and contrasts their complaints to the mill's own need for the water: 'I see us like cormorants, living off the river. / we depend on it for its soft water / because it runs over granite and it's relatively free of Calcium / whereas fishermen for what for leisure' (Oswald 19). The worker is trying to justify the mill's need for the water as being a wholly natural event, much like the cormorant collecting food. This is layered upon when Oswald describes the details of the soft water, the granite bed, and the lack of calcium that all make the river's water so important to the mill – important enough that the mill "lives" off the water. Part of the duality in this (which could also be seen as a form of cognitive dissonance) is that the mill worker sees the river as important to the mill but not in any way that the mill could be responsible for maintaining the health of the river, such as by the discharge of the detergents the mill uses that are described as 'reasonably biodegradeable (Oswald 18)'. The worker instead is referring to the river providing a source of income, which in turn provides his own income, ensuring his own life and lifestyle. If the mill workers conceived of the river as a being, or an ancestor, this sense of responsibility for the river's health would be indisputable, however the stream-as-object approach enables the workers to conceive of the River Dart as just another resource to be used for a singular purpose. In turn, Dart's environmental needs do not need to be considered other than in ways that could endanger the mill's ability to process wool.

Oswald also uses both typographical choices and sound to create dualities in describing the river. There is a swimmer who describes swimming through the river 'spelling the shapes of the letters with legs and arms' which is typographically shown on the page with capital Ms and Ws that could represent the swimmers' arms and legs, and capital Ss that might represent the swirls of the river currents. '/ S SSS W / Slooshing the Water open and / MMM / for it Meeting shut behind me (Oswald 23).' When spoken aloud by Oswald in the audio book version, the sss and mmm sounds she uses to represent these sections are smooth and evoke the sounds of the river splashing and the swimmer's arms pulling through the water, while her voice also has a propelling quality that grants a feeling of motion to the sounds (Oswald, chap 13. 0:57-1:10). The SSS and MMM as written in the book allow the imagining of swishing water sounds and the sound of water rushing past the swimmer when read. Both these methods help visualise what the swimmer is seeing and what the river looks and sounds like as they swim through it whether in the audiobook or physical text.

The primary point at which Oswald anthropomorphises the River Dart is in the section describing the river having a dream-self. 'And then I saw the river's dream-self walk / down to the ringmesh netting by the bridge / to feel the edge of shingle bush the edge / of sleep and float a world up like a cork / out of its body's liquid dark.' Rather than give the river agency and personhood in its everyday behaviours, this section is in a part of the poem with an annotation denoting the voice as that of 'a dreamer' (Oswald 28). Because it is the human dreaming which comes up with this dream-self, the human is what gives the river agency, as opposed to the river having agency of its own.

Throughout *Dart*, the river is an object to interact with throughout the poem (swimming in it, using it to supply a factory, etc), it is consulted closely through intimate observation. The waterfowl, fish, and plants of the area are named throughout, and their interactions with each other and the river are described vividly. Oswald further brings in spiritual and mythological aspects of the river such as the references to Jan Coo, a farm boy who disappeared near the river, after hearing it call his name (Phillips). This is like Tuki's mind map, laying the spiritual upon the geographical and blurring the edges between the two (Roberts 742). This combination of relationships both physical and spiritual form a sort of whakapapa of the river. While whakapapa shows the dependency of people's survival upon their respect and care for their environment, Oswald shows more of the dependency of her chosen voices upon the river, and their effects upon it while less so a reciprocity and responsibility toward the river by those voices. By incorporating these specific and concrete images within human dialogue, and following the course of the river's flow, a duality is crafted where a river of poetry is formed from the humans' words, despite the river not being anthropomorphised. The rich soundscape of words used by Oswald evokes a similar effect to oratory

(in fact, the audio book is far more evocative of this soundscape) but focuses on the humans in the river's catchment to tell the story of the river.

Traditionally, Māori literature took a primarily oratory form, and attributed human characteristics and feelings to the environment (McRae). While there are moments, such as the canoeist's speaking to the river, or the dreamer imagining Dart's dream-self, I feel that investigating these dualities using a Te Ao Māori viewpoint, could better serve as a method for 'enacting a dialogue between the river and the audience (Matthewman et al. 442–463)'. Oswald provides a familiar frame of reference for her audience to reflect on, as within the range of human voices present, they cover a wide range of human uses and emotions toward rivers. Additionally, the visual, oral and aural features of Dart align with a Māori view of literature i.e. they are mechanisms for the transmission of story and history in the same way as moko, waiata, carvings, and other Māori types of information transmission. Using whakapapa alongside other dualities to show the human qualities of the river would help to give the river a "voice" and a personhood for the reader like that which it has in Te Ao Māori. Hopefully this would lead to one day, Wharemauku and other awa like it, gaining legal personhood and protections, like that granted to Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017. Incorporating these concepts into poetry could lead to this increased kaitiakitanga toward Wharemauku.

Kaitiakitanga and Place

'A tree-line, a slip-lane, a sight-line, an eye-hole, whatever it is,

when you're chugging past Sharpham on a fine evening,

completely flat, the water just glows.'

- Alice Oswald, *Dart*

In English-speaking countries, there is a tendency to speak of "a place to call one's own" or having "no place like home." There is a longing inherent in those phrases for connection with a land area that is ours to inhabit. But within Te Ao Māori, there is a different relationship between people and land. Māori recognise that people are part of the land and the same in reverse, as the land is part of the person's whakapapa. This connection with the land engenders a sense of kaitiakitanga, where the land that sustains life must in turn be supported, sustained, and looked after by the people. These varying perspectives of nature lead to varying methods of interaction and emotional connection to natural landscapes, due to the differing relational ontologies. As mentioned prior, Māori consider themselves always in relation to, and part of, their environment, whereas non-Māori traditionally see nature as something separate to humans, especially in examples such as the buying and selling of land.

Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones write of this differing relational ontology between the Māori and non-Māori perspectives of land purchase. They use the example of Hongi Hika's drawing of his moko on a sale and purchase agreement at Kerikeri in 1819 as an example (49–51). From a Pākehā perspective, the moko represents Hika's signature, thereby handing over ownership and use of the land and alienating Hika and his people from that land. From a Māori perspective, it may have been viewed as a solidifying of relationships between Hika's people and the Pākehā and instead stands as a representation of the alienation of land from Māori through the process of colonisation.

Kaitiakitanga comes from a connection with and a sense of responsibility for the place concerned. Creating connection and responsibility for Wharemauku Stream will help to engender a sense of kaitiakitanga. Connecting an audience with a place directly can be done many ways but is perhaps best shown in "The River Talks: an ecocritical 'kōrero' about ecological performance, community activism and 'slow violence'", which was a work of art as activism. It was comprised of a

series of talks and performances given at the Omaru River in Auckland that included poets, artists, and scientists, who came from a diverse range of ethnicities. To open the work, Tamati Patuwai stood in the river and quoted a Māori proverb 'Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au. I am the river. The river is me,' then asked the audience to look at the polluted river he stood in, and answer 'If I am *this* river then what does this river say that I am? (Matthewman et al. 443). Audience participation was encouraged and solicited throughout, implicating them into the work, while inviting comment upon the work-in-progress.

Matthewman et al. conducted an interview with Tamati Patuwai with the intent of revisiting the performances from an academic viewpoint, to assist in developing a model to be used for educating the public on sustainability and ecology. They also discussed the conflicts of worldview between Te Ao Māori and Western worldviews. For example, regarding time from a Western perspective, events that happened in the past are finished, but for Māori, there is an intermingling and interconnection. Toko King et al. describe this aspect of Māori time conceptualisation as hurihanga, where time has a cyclical nature, 'spiralling through the realms of Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Ao Marama, and alongside this, our pasts, presents and futures. (258)' This hurihanga was reflected in the performances by the wide age range of performers, and the calling in of ancestors while actively acknowledging and imagining the future.

When asked if he'd decided to take the Omaru River up as a cause, Tamati explains that he has taken it up as it is a natural part of him. He discusses the concept of kaitiakitanga as an obligation upon Māori to look after the land and waterways, which is ongoing and not something that is started or stopped at a whim. It is not something taken up as a cause, but something that Māori are born into. He also discusses the use of the proverb 'Ko au te awa. Ko te awa ko au' in the performance, and his follow-up of 'If I am *this* river then what does this river say that I am?' as a 'direct question to the audience – to bring them right up close to the river, to get their noses up in it, their ears, their eyes, everything' (Matthewman, et al 447). This direct addressing of the audience with the ecological questions being presented is an evocative way to provoke an emotional response from an audience.

Kaitiakitanga can also be evoked through connecting the reader with place via a more indirect means, such as evoking emotion through strong imagery. Oswald uses such indirect means with the ecological concerns of Dart River, by careful word choice that evokes a sense of disgust in an environmentally aware reader, such as, 'It's a rush, a sploosh of sewage, twenty thousand cubic metres being pumped in, stirred and settled out and wasted off, looped back macerated, digested, clarified and returned to the river. I'm used to the idea. I fork the screenings out – a stink-mass of

loopaper and whathaveyou, rags cottonbuds, you name it. I measure the intake through a flume and if there's too much, I waste it off down the stormflow, it's not my problem.' (Oswald 30) In this section, she is using the voice of the person managing the milk processing, dealing with unclean water, filtering it off and returning what he doesn't need back to the river, regardless of whether it is healthy for the river. In this section, the Dart is reduced to a tool for taking unwanted trash. The words chosen, such as "macerated", and "digested" are ones that are generally associated with human digestion, a topic which most people are uncomfortable contemplating. The addition of loopaper, rags, cottonbuds, and the miscellania referred to as "whathaveyou" being poured into a river which the reader has experienced swimming in, eating from, and socialising around, increases the discomfort. By showing the river being exposed to all the things that would make a person squeamish, an emotional connection is built between the Dart River and the reader. This connection through poetry can be a force for kaitiakitanga, awakening a person's emotional link between the person and their natural environment, aiding in an increase of personal responsibility and guardianship of that environment.

The tendency toward a non-Māori relational ontology with the environment has increased the prevalence of capitalist and extractivist processes that are injurious to the health of rivers in Aotearoa. This means that instead of preserving and protecting our rivers, they are often treated as drains or sewers, or as conduits for disposing of industrial sludge and waste such as the cyanide waste tipped into the Waihou and Ohinemuri rivers in the late 1800s. Logging and flax milling has added to this waste influx, as has agriculture. (Knight, *New Zealand's Rivers: An Environmental History* 69–89). Wharemauku is no exception to this maltreatment, as evidenced by situations such as when high lead and arsenic levels were detected in the awa in 2018 (Kāpiti and Coast Independent). Aiding people to engage in a deeper relationship with Wharemauku could aid in creating kaitiakitanga toward the awa, and therefore reducing this harm.

A method that proved beneficial in my own writing for exploring similar connection-building to that of Oswald was walking the stream and considering the words of Patuwai 'If I am *this* river then what does this river say that I am?' (Matthewman et al. 443). Wharemauku is not my tīpuna, however I feel a close connection with the awa, as it has been part of my journey into discovering my Māoritanga and understanding my place in the world. It is also important to me as it is part of the whenua upon which I live and am raising my children. While I cannot speak in the same way as mana whenua, my own actions and lifestyle impact on Wharemauku's health, and thus I cannot separate myself from responsibility for the awa. By showing responsibility and reciprocity in my treatment of the stream – giving voice to its plight, helping to plant its banks, raising awareness of its interconnectedness and importance to the area – I can help with the task of restoring the awa's

mana for the future of Wharemauku, mana whenua, and my own children who have grown in Kāpiti. By imagining myself as the river and querying myself as to how it might feel to be Wharemauku – concrete pipes or timber beams lining my sides, sun baking me with no access to shade, pollution poured into me like a drain – I am able to illustrate Wharemauku's issues using the human body as an example.

The impacts of differing relational ontologies are apparent in the treatment of Wharemauku Stream, where the natural curves and channels of the waterway have been straightened and carved along property boundaries. Native plantings have been stripped back and replaced with grass, so that the stream no longer shelters its inhabitants from the harsh sunlight, and its banks are littered with garbage and household waste at various places along its length. In places, there are McDonald's wrappers lying on its banks, and a glass bottle is wedged firmly into the side of the stream at another point. Often, it contains shopping trolleys. Thick green algae clings to rocks and debris throughout the stream, and the air smells faintly of decay. Yet in other areas, such as the Kaitawa Reserve, the stream is cool, clear, and the stones and small swimming creatures can be occasionally seen through its waters. By inserting myself into this environment and asking, "if this river is me, what am I?" provided a strong foundation for implementing human elements, especially physical health, into poetry about the stream to persuade the reader to emotionally connect their own experiences of health with the health of the river. By leveraging my personal experience of physical ailments and applying this to the geography of the stream, I could create a poetic link of stream-as-being that would assist in spurring the ecological responsibility I was aiming for.

Posthumanism, New Materialism, and Kaupapa Māori

'giving water the weight and size of myself in order to

imagine it,

water with my bones, water with my mouth and my

understanding'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

Identifying a way to discuss the concerns of Wharemauku while also building a closer connection with the awa through eco-poetry is the primary intention of this thesis. There are several theoretical frameworks that were investigated to create the eco-poetry, including Posthumanism and New Materialism, alongside Kaupapa Māori. Hoskins and Jones identify that Posthumanism and New Materialism methodologies already have frameworks in place to consult things which are non-human more closely and provide lenses for incorporating the natural landscape in a more mindful way, but that they have limitations which might be better overcome through Kaupapa Māori (Hoskins and Jones 49-60). There are also conflicts with colonialism and the contradictions and limitations inherent in creating my work in English, despite it being my primary tongue.

Posthumanism is a Western theory, discussed by Rosi Braidotti in her work trilogy composed of The Posthuman (2013), Posthuman Knowledge (2019) and the more recent Posthuman Feminism (2022). Braidotti proposes a respect of feminist theories' role in the radical reimagination of life, bodies, and the human experience (De Pascalis 267). Pramod Nayar defines Posthumanism for *Oxford Bibliographies* as relating to the intersecting natures of humans, their environment, and the technological world. Further, it looks to disestablish the nature vs culture binary and attempts to decentre the human as central to the universe and adjust the attitude toward the non-human (Nayar). As a school of thought, this is like concepts in Te Ao Māori, however as identified by Brendan Hokowhitu in *'The emperor's 'new' materialisms: Indigenous materialisms and disciplinary colonialism'*, Posthumanism has little focus on the agency of the non-human. Posthumanism also tends to lay claim to so-called 'new' ideas, such as the interconnectedness of all things human and

non-human, while erasing the fact that this is already a common mode of thinking and being for many Indigenous cultures (Hokowhitu 132–36).

Hokowhitu describes New Materialism as being like Posthumanism in that it decentres the human and privileges interconnected relationships between human and non-human. It reflects on the material-discursive relationship, where thought creates matter and vice-versa and most foundational works were created in the 'Feminist Cultural Studies' area. He further discusses that there is little to no reference of Indigenous, Postcolonial, or African/Black academics throughout the New Materialisms texts, and that they tend to rely on the Western theoretical contexts the authors are 'supposedly railing against' (Hokowhitu 136–37).

In closing his essay, Hokowhitu speaks of the invisibility of Indigenous peoples in discussions of Posthumanism and New Materialisms as a symptom of 'Western theory's *pathology* and *disease*'. He suggests that as colonisation could be seen as a pathogen that enables disease, and that decolonial or anti-colonial theorists should consider themselves as 'pathologists', that is, studying the cause and effect of this colonial *disease* (Hokowhitu 144). This concept of colonisation as a disease mirrored my thoughts on the industrialisation and stream-as-object use of Wharemauku – humans have *diseased* the awa through colonial thinking that values Wharemauku only for what it has given them and not as the living being it is. That Wharemauku's "body" has been affected by this disease, and much like a human body, is showing symptoms that require intervention to return the stream to health.

Rev. Māori Marsden defines the word kaupapa as deriving from two separate words, *kau* (to disclose, or become visible) and *papa* (foundation or ground), with the entire word translating to *ground rules*. Marsden asserts that these ground rules would be queried and tested against in making decisions, from which new tikanga would be derived. This tikanga would then be integrated into the cultural framework of the society, developing the culture further (Marsden 66).

Kaupapa Māori Research is an Indigenous methodological framework, grounded in Mātauranga Māori, which has also evolved through a Te Ao Māori framework. Organically evolved from the struggles of Māori academics to have our worldviews respected and valued within Aotearoa, it grew out of the foundations of Kaupapa Māori theory developed by Graham Hingangaroa Smith and Linda Tuhiwai Smith in the late 1990s. Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Leonie Pihama were instrumental to further developing this framework into Kaupapa Māori research, with Smith's foundational work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012) influencing not only Māori methodologies, but Indigenous methodologies the world over. As a

research framework, Kaupapa Māori encompasses knowledge, worldviews, perspectives and practices designed to guide and inform approaches taken to research with and for Māori, by Māori.

An example of a Kaupapa Māori informed research to narrative inquiry is Kaupapa Kōrero, which was applied by Felicity Ware et al. This approach allowed a privileging of Māori customary practices, including oral tradition and whakapapa, as well as privileging the voices of the people consulted for their stories. By using this culturally informed and based approach, which privileged both Māori customary practices (including oral tradition and whakapapa) and the voices of the people consulted for their stories, the authors were able to show aspects of Māori culture that would not have been apparent using non-Indigenous methods. Ware et al. further assert that a Māori approach to research not only uses the uniquely Māori perspective but can incorporate non-Indigenous methodologies or tools as well, and that it 'creates a platform to research in culturally inspired ways' (Ware et al. 46). This project similarly reflects the flexibility of applying Kaupapa Māori Research to *Dart,* because it privileges a Māori perspective that is culturally inspired and informed toward the examined text without requiring the examined text to be Māori. Further, Ware et al. also used whakapapa to analyse the narratives collected in the original research and assert that whakapapa can be used 'as a tool for scientific inquiry to examine the nature, origin, interrelatedness and future predictions of events and experiences' (Ware et al. 50–52). In a similar vein, using Kaupapa Māori principles and whakapapa when writing about Wharemauku can be used to inform the poetry created to show this cause-and-effect relationship of human interaction with the awa, and reflect a stronger Te Ao Māori perspective in the creative work.

In their chapter 'Non-human others and Kaupapa Māori Research', Hoskins and Jones identify the difficulty in maintaining the vibrancy and life force of the non-human as viewed in Te Ao Māori after translation to English, even when viewed through a Kaupapa Māori lens combined with Posthumanism and/or New Materialism. The logic of the English language is to place the non-human "behind" the language, where objects (as nouns) are passive and worked upon by the more active adjectives or verbs. This linguistic logic stops the objects themselves from having a life force or spirit of their own, a mauri. In Te Reo Māori, words such as mauri exist that are not directly translatable in English, which give a life-force to the non-human that English words cannot easily replicate. However, Hoskins and Jones conclude that by finding a way to make Indigenous traditions "work" in the creative work created, there might be a metaphorical sharing of breath that infuses and pushes back against the Indigenous thought conflicts in these Western ontologies. That by simply creating the work, viewing Indigenous works through an Indigenous lens, and finding an openness toward the uncertainty and contradiction between Western and Indigenous ontologies, we can keep the mauri alive of the non-human referenced within the works (Hoskins and Jones 55–60).

Alice Te Punga Somerville describes the contradiction of working in English as a Māori academic and the pain it causes in her essay 'English by name: English by nature?' when she describes the heartbreak that being an English scholar has caused her. Whether through the knowledge that the language she both speaks and studies is one which was forced upon her ancestors, or that the word English is also the name of those who perpetuated violence upon Māori and others globally. Somerville reflects on the irony that English was first taught in India (not England), forced upon the native people to teach them how to be English while pushing their own literary traditions aside in favour of English literature. She also discusses the pressures of writing Māori academic work in English when one cannot speak Te Reo Māori, while reflecting on the different readerships available to each language (Te Punga Somerville 93–103).

Te Punga Somerville's acknowledgement of these different readerships, alongside Hoskins and Jones' talk of openness toward uncertainty and contradiction, reflect my own feelings toward creating my poetry. English is my first and most fluent language, but it has limitations in both translating my thought processes and feelings into words. Therefore, I feel supported in my choice to write primarily in English, with specific words in Te Reo Māori, where they are either better choices, or more reflect the feeling I wish to portray. I also feel that, while Posthumanism and New Materialism both offer opportunities to consult non-humans in a way that is similar to Te Ao Māori, choosing to acknowledge their existence while writing in a way that reflects my Māori roots and Te Ao Māori, using Kaupapa Māori as my research methodology, is the correct path for this project. Further, Hokowhitu's reflection on colonialism and pathology reflects my choice to write a number of my poems personifying the river as a being with a body capable of being diseased.

Conclusion

'Oh I'm slow and sick. I'm

trying to talk myself round to leaving this place,

but there's roots growing round my mouth, my foot's

in a rusted tin. One night I will.'

Alice Oswald, *Dart*

My research aimed to identify how concepts in Te Ao Māori, such as whakapapa and kaitiakitanga, spur ecological responsibility, using Alice Oswald's *Dart* as a model. Examining *Dart*, the layering of human voice with the river was analogous to whakapapa, in that it provided a model for interconnectedness and explored interrelationships between the two. Additionally, the concrete visuals and descriptors in *Dart* were designed to provoke an emotional or visceral response, invoking a strong sense of place. This sense of place increased a feeling of ecological responsibility, which is similar to kaitiakitanga. Using Kaupapa Māori and investigating Oswald's layering of human voice alongside and within the Dart River, similarities were identified between traditional Māori oratory and Oswald's poetry, both written and oral. Ultimately, *Dart* came from a different cultural and relational ontology with the environment, but it gave inspiration for the means to create the type of poetry I wanted to create. Instead of using human voices layered upon the river to create a connection with the river, I would use whakapapa, alongside the Māori ontology of the stream-as-being or ancestor kin. Using anthropomorphism and personification would help give the river a "voice" that my audience could relate to. This layered with emotional connection could spur kaitiakitanga (and therefore, ecological responsibility) for the river.

Reflecting on this, I believe poetry that layers human qualities alongside close observation of the river is likely to provide an emotional connection between the reader and the waterway. By finding similarities between the river and the human body, for example, a poem could help a reader to imagine themselves as the river, much as Patuwai's question 'If I am *this* river then what does this river say that I am? (Matthewman et al. 443) Taking the example of *The River Talks* further, there is an argument for more directly implicating the reader into the work. One such idea I have considered

from this is making certain poems accessible on websites linked to QR codes situated alongside Wharemauku, so that visitors can choose to scan a code and read a poem written for or in that location. However, this is currently beyond the scope of this thesis, and would require closer consultation with mana whenua before it could be considered.

During my research, I also reflected on Sewall's tenets of Ecological Perception, as well as Posthumanism and New Materialism, to find similar concepts between these theories and Kaupapa Māori based research. While Sewall's tenets of ecological perception were valuable in giving an initial methodology for close examination of the river, they proved to be less effective when creating a Te Ao Māori approach. Posthumanism and New Materialism both had elements that were closer to the desired approach, however, both came with the drawback that they did not centre Indigenous researchers and literature. Kaupapa Māori combined with the elements of whakapapa and kaitiakitanga proved to be the strongest method for the investigation of Wharemauku through poetry, as it affected my own sense of kaitiakitanga and ecological responsibility toward my adopted awa.

Investigating Wharemauku using whakapapa and seeing the interconnectedness of my own and others' actions with the health of the stream over time has implicated me in Wharemauku's future health. I find I am no longer walking past Wharemauku considering it as an object that is separate from myself. Wharemauku has laid down a wero for me to consider my place within the environment and to ask myself whether the condition of the taiao I live in is representative of who I am. This has forced me to consider my participation in local environmental activities and whether I am doing enough to assist in helping the local environment's health. I feel that I have not done enough and will be increasing my efforts to become more locally active.

In closing, I wish to once again acknowledge and affirm that Wharemauku is not my ancestor. I can only speak as a welcomed visitor on behalf of Wharemauku. However, I can acknowledge and revere the relationship we have developed with one another during this project and assist in the restoration and reinvigoration of this important being, its rohe and its mana whenua.

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Creative Section:

One with the Waters

Fern Campbell

Karanga

Welcome, visitor

Allow me to welcome you with this thread of my being

A thread of my life and the lives of my tīpuna who went before me

I extend it to you to weave with your own threads

so that we might bring your waka here

to my shores

to my waters

to my hills

to my whole body

come sit and let's talk a while

and share our common currents

The shape of me

See Figure 1, where we denote the geographical boundaries of me. Approximately 15m2 of mixed landuse regions. I run through residential and commercial, with rural farmland and pine forest in the hills to my east. Note my main channel, and its many drains and tributaries (primarily in my rural areas). These feed into me, along with the entire stormwater network for Paraparaumu and Raumati. I am the key conveyance asset for floodwater and stormwater.

As per Figure 2, I have detracted from my 1994 design baseline. The uniform flat based channel I was carved into then has been negatively affected by the aggradation of sediments. These sediments have the potential to cause damage to residential properties and ecological value. In order to increase habitat diversity, the decision has been made to create a profiled channel that is deeper on my right bank, with pool-riffle-run sequences integrated to mimic my existing habitats.

Tenders have been invited, with the inclusion of surveyed solid measures of material to be removed from me.

There is a separate hourly rate for removal of my vegetation. This should ensure a fair and accurate payment method.

In order to protect endangered fish, a relocation method is to be used, ensuring this is completed outside of natural spawning periods. This will be overseen by a certified electric fishing technician. Hundreds of fish will be lifted and relocated prior to instream works being undertaken. Continuous monitoring of the morphology of my channels following the dredging will help with understanding changes in service of flood protection assets and the stormwater network.

It will also help with determining the extent of aggradation and determining future dredging to reinstate previous levels of service, though this should be carefully considered, to ensure the desired hydraulic benefits are achieved.

Run-riffle-pool sequences must be considered when dredging me, and my channel profile should be altered to replicate or improve habitat diversity. Where possible, shade provision and bank stability should be maintained on my banks through the retaining of riparian vegetation.

They asked the ranger for permission

to cut four cores

from my left and right atria

ventricles

centuries of secrets

rock in a PVC tube

The I/we of cells exposed

their whakapapa rewritten

as “pumice deposition

from coastal degradation”

my moana and whenua

rewritten as “transition from marine to terrestrial”

my moenga of yesterdays

“a matrix of light brown poorly-sorted sand

with a radiocarbon age of 33482

(plus or minus 701BP)”

my once-belly

“pumaceous sandstone”

tuatua who once nourished the I/we

renamed *Paphies subtriangulata*

words from a tongue not long untied

at least, to my ears

the next winter, Rangi's tears

help me cleanse the incisions

Stormwater (a found poem)

to look after the stream, the community

will need to decide

the devices

to mitigate the hydrological, hydraulical effects

of development

interception

infiltration

attenuation

inattention

it is of particular importance that funding mechanisms are addressed

and that schemes be targeted to areas identified as problematic

always ensure that new development achieves hydraulic neutrality

and a large degree of interdependency

between private devices

Moving fish

in my rusted girder teeth I *swallowed/swallow/will swallow* the sea

and it *swallowed/swallows/will swallow* me back

we *talked/talk/will talk* of the days when

clumps of my hair *clung/cling/will cling* to the sides of *new/old/gone* sea walls

wavering, loose in our currents

that *pushed/push/will push* out against the tongue and groove spine from my mouth to

my throat

where a crushed tracheotomy *flooded/floods/will flood* me

with stormwater - the runoff of roads and of houses

whose boundaries *I was/I am no longer/I will be*

I *am here/can wander there/will reclaim there* where I was *born/carved*

where in my belly I *slid/slide/will slide* my many smaller bodies

across driftwood and cobble

my belly, where the plywood *slid/slides/will slide* into my stomach

and the outsiders' hands

when they *took/take/will take* the fish I count along with them

nearly two hundred elvers

numerous tiny tuna

fifteen tuna like the big men's feet (three long fin)

two tuna like squirming school children (both long fin)

five redfin bullys

fifty common bullys

two koura

twenty banded kokopu

and over 100 inanga

my smaller bodies, hauled out

taken beyond my forced boundaries

counted and numbered and written on papers

walked through the spaces I am kept from

taken down my length

so my sides can be sharpened and flattened

my bottom dredged

my cobbles uprooted and tumbled

my small bodies tipped into another length of my belly

I dance in these bodies

while elsewhere my whenua cramps

as they gouge at its tissues

tearing and ripping the roots and fibres of my banks

my waters *emptied/flowing/filled/filling/still/alive*

Testing the waters

Each day I test my aquarium water

In test tubes - five in total, five mls in each

3 drops of Ph indicator in the first

5 of high Ph in the next

8 and 8 of ammonia test

5 of nitrite

10 plus 10 drops of nitrate

Shake the tubes and leave to develop

7.0 pH for healthy fish

With no ammonia, nitrite, or nitrate

When these three are high, I treat the tank

To help the fish to thrive

I took a sample from you, Wharemauku

Compared you to my carefully tended aquarium

Your pH lower, but still healthy

Your nitrites and ammonia at zero

The ammonia tube cloudy from your drinking of salt

Your nitrates near perfect - my tank over 40

I think of the cash I've spent buying new filters

The time spent in testing and treating and tweaking

Compared to your vast generations of healthy fish

While I daily struggle with seven

Once upon my tides

there breathed a bivalve

now laminated thick and deep within sands

enveloped in layers of roots and fibres

lithic material, then quartz, grains, and feldspar

that show no trend for roundness

no preferred orientation

a diverse mineralogy

composed of a complex matrix

of browns

poorly sorted

CPR

In a Scout Hall on a winter day

we learned first aid

Recited the DRS ABC

Resuscitated a dummy that tasted

like the garden hose

a pipe runs down your banks

from the carpark by the auto shop

liquid runs through it

into your currents

where the silt bubbles up

then juggles into your cobbles

squeezing out the oxygen

your breath chokes as you flow past the council

and its boxed-in native plantings

asking with lessening breath

for someone to perform CPR

while your lips turn slowly blue

In the watershed

You, me, my laptop

a table that rocks with each keystroke

a long, hot summer morning

where a moped wasps

into the neighbour's drive

you're beside me

in the dragonfly, lost in my vege patch

in the shh-shick-shh of leaves on the pergola

in the birds who spy coffee cup and think 'crumbs'

You are there in the roadway that passes my drive

You whisper, under the thrum of the cars,

curled and awaiting the signs to emerge

to tip shimmering scales into the sunlight

And stretch out across the whenua to your full length

slide through the places you remember

and the new ones you haven't yet seen

and this new place, the one we're creating together

At first glance

You cradle a trolley to the breast of your bank

as though the careful brushing of your waters

through its bars soothes it

while its wheels press in

to the stretchmarks they made in you

from the day your waters broke

your banks and delivered

its body to you

and the rush of your currents

turning your own body against itself

digs the holes deeper

wide enough to allow tin cans and bottles

to wedge into the gaps between your rocks

while you gently stroke the bars of your shopping cart

and whisper a lullaby

Hanging with a friend

There was a March when he and I rode our bikes

through the paddock off Manawa Ave,

avoiding the marshy bits where you'd overflowed,

then up the muddy bank between the blackberry bushes.

We'd stop and pick the fat black berries,

pop them in our mouths.

Hot from the midday sun,

their flavours stronger and sweeter than anything

from the supermarket.

We'd watch as the tall man in white waders

pulled armfuls of watercress from your twists and turns

to heave into plastic bags.

He'd wander the length of your pathways and ask,

"anyone want some free greens for your boilup?"

We'd decline,

walk the next few metres,

then drop our bikes

on the grass of your banks.

Sit side by side and look down your length.

I'd point to each plant around us and call it

by name, or use, or warning.

Then we'd pull pieces of fennel to rub on our hands

and breathe in the sharpness of aniseed.

He'd pluck the wild mustard flowers

and bite into their peppery yellow

while passersby gawked at the weirdoes eating weeds,

warned their children not to copy.

Other days, we'd open bags filled with books,

recently issued from the library who watches over you.

In the sun, we'd share excerpts, point at pictures,

or just read back-to-back by your side.

Sandcastles

While the water's low, we build back from the stream's mouth

Down by the bridge and a sun-bleached log

In between the rusty girders

Scoop by scoop

Handful by handful

We shape the sand into a mound, a village

Excavate roads and paths

Toward a castle released from an upturned bucket

Drip water and sand around each tower

Raise up fences from driftwood

Push in shells, leaves, sticks, pōhutukawa flowers

A camellia-skirted stick becomes princess

We surround her castle with a moat to keep away crabs

Stand back to take photos

When we're called for lunch

We move downstream

Sit cross-legged on hot sand to eat and drink

And reapply the warm slick of sunblock

Someone pulls out the cricket gear

The runs pile up

A grazed knee is patched up

and it's time for togs

We jump over the waves and splash each other

Wash off wet sand and sweat

Then run up the beach to our towels

Pat and scrub dry

Lounge till our togs dry

Ice-creams in hand

We pack bags as the waves come close to our feet

Walk the bridge to the carpark and look down to see

Our princess

washed out of her tower

On Fridays, we go to the library

Five children - my ducklings,

we made our way along the stream's edge,

all of them waddling behind.

Two would dress up -

one time in jeans, shirts, and wacky hats,

the next swamped in scarves and bandannas,

and some new "posh" ensemble the time after.

Two in matched pants and t-shirts,

the younger emulating the older.

One in plain shorts, regardless of weather,

and t-shirts with chew marks round the neck.

Sometimes a duckling would scramble down,

try to grab something shiny in the waters,

run ahead to the rocks near the bridge,

"can I cross, can I cross?" then a splash

moments before my "no" could follow.

Body / Fluid

when my youngest was six months old

I went to a mums and bubs playgroup

we'd meet at 10 each Tuesday

share stories of the pressures of breastfeeding

or which solid foods were best to start with

my friend arrived late

face flushed,

wriggling child under her arm

nappy bag slid down her shoulder

she'd just been to the doctor

as her son had chewed firewood -

a splinter broke off and he

swallowed it whole

the doctors had checked him

and told her to watch

for issues with swallowing

or swelling

or fever

or a cough

or anything out of the norm

---

there’re walls in your banks

cut deep in your sides

like oversized splinters

caught

in your throat

does it hurt when you swallow the tide?

does the saltwater temper your wounds?

do the waves coat your throat like dextromethorphan

suppressing your urges to cough?

but then when it’s cold and raining

it seems like you have an issue with swallowing

then you retch

across your banks and the roadways

or is it a swelling?

or fever?

or cough?

or is it the watery swell of you breathing?

your fluid breath thins between the planks

then bubbles over the rocks

swirls into a partial moko — a glimpse

of the you before they arrived and reshaped you

your tattooed face that carried waka from shore to hill

now squeezed into a mouth with lips pulled tight

Under pressure

I dip a hand in your currents to test your temperature

then run it over your banks and feel the swollen lumps of soil

pressed in where feet have pounded for decades

scraped raw where diggers did surgery

your bare walls punctured with gravel rash

when I'm at home, my blood pressure monitor hums

as it compresses my arm and translates blood into numbers

I wonder if further downstream

the little white box dug into your banks

with its monitoring system enclosed

might be doing the same

The making of Wharemauku-iti Wetland

2012, my first planting day

The Friends of Wharemauku Stream

I turned up spade in hand

in a group we filled a part of your banks

with:

tī kouka

harakeke

koromiko

pukio

with a “don’t hold your breath”

we waited

for future planting days

where we could stretch plants further down you

toward the airport

the mall

it was said we just needed the cash

and consent

from the council

then the emails stopped

I forgot

but you waited

over a decade, your plants grew

until they hid me when I walked your banks

hid you as I drove

from there to the sea,

I watched them weed-choke

or cook in the sun with no shelter

those who remembered

your *Friends*

continued with blackberry culling

pulled out trolleys and rubbish

kept waiting for the emails

dredged silt when you smothered

added green Schoenoplectus

watched ducks raising ducklings

and kokopu spawning

but only

in that same part

of your banks

Pipework

When he had a heart attack

they injected a dye-filled catheter

into his wrist

snaked it up

his artery

until the x-ray showed

a dam

just a couple of millimetres wide

They slid through a stent

to hold open the artery

Your culverts were placed

by machines

that first dammed the area

before they inserted them

concrete tubes

inches, metres wide

I watch the pulse of your currents

push through these gaps

and overflow onto the banks during a storm

Looking after the stream (a found poem)

On Facebook she says:

it's an embarrassment

degraded water quality

smothered Indigenous plants

limited water flow

flood risk

high bacteria levels from an overflow of sewage

They respond:

please observe the warning signs

stay clear of the stream

keep dogs on leashes due to presence of algal mats

remember to check, clean, dry all gear before moving between waterways

If you have been in contact with the stream and feel unwell, please call your GP or Healthline

Things found on a streamside walk

Foam pushed up against a rusty girder

A small dog sniffing the cracks of a bridge

A sign marked “Danger - storm water”

A pair of mating damselflies

A plastic wrapper inside a muddy bootprint

Driftwood logs with weathered saw cuts

A green rubbish bin with a sticker, “Keep New Zealand Beautiful”

Stairs that creak and twist underfoot

Crumbling lumps of concrete

A Watties baked beans can

A row of barbed wire

The spot where she fell

A crocodile shaped log

The foraging place of some Welcome Swallows

A rust-coloured stain on the ripples

Sunday bath

You'd never do it now, eh.

But when we were kids,

my cousins and I,

we'd dam up the awa.

Just block it off like this, you know?

We'd chuck on our togs and grab a soap.

Splash on in and get sudsy.

Then you'd let the water run free again.

Wouldn't do that now though, eh.

Then again, s'pose that's a good thing.

It wasn’t

It wasn’t the shopping cart lodged in the gravel

Or the bottle, half full, in the bank

Or the murky foam

It wasn’t the caved-in stormwater pipe

Or the crumbling concrete blocks

Or the rusted remains from the ’76 storm

Or the floating takeaway wrappers

It wasn’t the barbed wire wrapped safety rails

Or the dog pissing on the bank

It wasn’t the retaining walls, warped and buckling

Or the cars drowning out the bird song

Or the rickety stairs

It was the snap of an eel launching out of the water

And the shadows of juvenile kokopu

Swimming under and over driftwood

Erased

she wields the sea with spidered hands

cups it firmly in her palm

its blue/white/grey shaped into a mussel shell

to scrape the para of tree rings

from each rounded post along the seawall

each line, each notch a word from her journal

exposed for the briefest of moments

before she once again scrapes hard with her shell

and her secrets drift off on the waves

There's a taniwha in that stream

written deep in the peat

a road worker

saw the taniwha

on his skin, in the road, the wetlands, the concrete

and I looked out my window at the road

on your back, in your lungs

that I use to drive from my house to the shops

and I saw the taniwha

in the road, in my fence, on my hands, in my freckles

and I knew why some days

you turn your back on me

Six months with my taniwha

she's there in every bend of Wharemauku

my sister - my taniwha, and her plasticine rage

box bleach and a-little-too-much-eyeliner

L-O-V-E and H-A-T-E ink-poked on her knuckles

her second puberty pain pulsing

she dangles toes from the footbridge

this little piggy wants to jump!

will you catch me?

or better yet, I'll live stream it

she's on a vidcall from her house

she keeps the camera rolling

puts down the beer bottle to pee

I'm learning Spanish now, wanna hear it?

¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás?

I'm gonna move to Spain and get me all the ladies

I turn my screen away

her girlfriend's messages flood my phone

just wanted to say I had nothing to do with it

I am sorry this happened

I am happy I am alive not killed

trapped behind my phone screen

the bottle in her hand quickly empties

she shouldn't have said that

when I die it's her fault

passersby pull her back from the edge

the live feed cuts off

she calls me from the ripples under the expressway

once, twice, every day

do you want to know a secret?

when that fulla went to that mosque back in March

I hoped my ex was there for prayer

her image reflects from the ripples near the library

I'm almost six months' dry now

Bet you didn't think I'd make it

woken at dawn - Facebook

report her videos

call my mum and speak in code

ask to never again see what lies beneath my sister's skin

she swigs deep under the mall walkway

that woman drove me back to it

no amount of Disulfiram could stop that

but I have a plan

dawn again - my phone rings

my sister made her watch it

I walk to Wharemauku

ask the ripples why she did it

because she made me

Taniwha speaks

If they'd let me, I'd puddle

on the shore

where I used to play

and watch my other waters' flow

they push me under

carve me into my place

my purpose

the boundaries of belong/don't belong

the proper etiquette of water

I squeeze myself into their mould

and try to flow as they've showed me

but some days, I spill over my bends

into places remembered

and puddle on the shore

You’re new here…

You’re new here, you whisper - I nod

I’ll be new here till I die, as will my children

But that doesn’t mean I don’t belong

It just means that my place here is different

I don’t need to be born here to know you

But I’m patient

And willing to wait for as long as it takes you

To share what you want me to know

You’re a friend, a companion

A sisterstream of the travelling waves

We don’t look alike

But we share the same breath and beginnings

There’s no word that seems fit to define us

Not sisters, or lovers, or friends

Not in English, anyway

But there’s a language we share that runs deeper

One day, we’ll talk for the last time

We’ll share my last breath

And a part of me will ripple on

In your currents

Sculptors

While the water's high, we build

in between the drowned mountains

grain by grain

tideful by tideful

we shape our floor's sides into a rise, a coast, a cuspate foreshore

mound up dunes and peatland

raise up trees from fertile soils

drip the tears of Rangi down a hillside and carve the belly

of a stream

we scrape its shape around our dunes and rockways

stand back and watch the waters etch themselves

into moats around the landforms

We move to the drowned valley to watch the whales pass

they roll and scrape bellies across our rocky bottom

straining fish through baleen plates

singing their whānau through year after year

the years pile up

and we see our first waka

they slip past us and into our stream

sliding mountain to stream mouth and round the dunes

they spill people and plants on our shores

and we play with them daily

enticing them closer

then splashing and rolling them in our waves

they thank us and build on the banks of our stream

which they name Wharemauku

and we join our waters with theirs

as larger ships loom over the horizon

Topo 50 map of Paraparaumu

They draw you out from the shirred and pleated hills

a thin blue thread

straight, reliable, the same as all the others

woven and turned around property lines

hemmed in by the stitches of vehicle tracks

and strapped with bright orange ribbons of roads

and little darts of footbridge

past appliqued squares of houses and buildings

stem-stitched marshland

all the way to the little snip at the coast

where your name floats almost like an afterthought

on the blue cloth of Te Rau-o-te-Rangi

Releasing the taniwha

there are days when the words fall from brain to fingers and fill the page

and days when the words

stop

but then there are days when there's something else

a presence that flicks its tail across my wrists, my fingers

it coils its body around the keyboard, the pen

and growls a primal warning

deep in a language my tīpuna spoke but I can't

so I go to you

and I sit

I ask for you to take this taniwha from me

to let it slip through your waters

and back out to the ocean

it strengthens its grip

on the days when you're warm and you're open, you answer

you translate the taniwha's message

I feel a release

as it carefully unhooks its claws

my pen and my fingers move freely

but some days, you tell me you're busy

you're small and your own taniwha need addressing

I go back to my desk

and I sit with my taniwha

until it determines its message is given

it growls out a farewell then

with a flick of its tail,

slides from my fingers

which return to the keys

The makers of whales

We both make whales, you and I

You start with the fine silt and pull the nutrients

to fill the bellies of creatures my eyes can't make out

who in turn fatten the bellies of the fish

scales reflecting under your ripples

I start with a roll of corn-based plastic

dyed white, grey, red, or whatever was cheapest

I lift big rolls, 3kg at a time, up a stepladder and onto a spindle

my feet land hard on your belly as I step down

You wriggle small fish down your length

to the waiting mouth of the sea

I push the plastic filament down a tube

to the waiting nozzle

Your fish swim out to Te Rau o te Rangi and feed a pod of humpbacks

mouths wide, and scratching their bellies on the gravel on the way to

Tonga

My filament spreads over the hot glass

curled into the pattern I've programmed

Your whales arrive at Tonga

a newborn calf in their midst

Layer by layer, my plastic builds up

and a whale rises from the buildplate

Your whales swim past on their return

refuel and clean their bellies

Mine are scraped with a boxcutter and sanded

mounted on poles inserted in driftwood

Your whales sing as they swim toward Kaikoura

then Antarctica

Mine plead with plastic voices

for change

Always with Wharemauku

I feel you wind your way through my arteries, my veins

you squeeze my heart

gently

pass through each valve

a flutter catches my breath

on the ECG, you're marked by a quick inversion of the P wave

a pause

and then I'm back to my regularly scheduled badum badum

you work your way through my system

flooding me until I am part me, part you

my wairua now three waters

you, I, and the other half of I

I feel you in the soft vapours that tense vocal cords

resonate as I speak your name

I watch vapours rise to the clouds

who empty their hearts

to you