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# ***A long time to get home***

Rejection of closure and the role of the reader in hybrid texts:

*Lost and Gone Away* by Lynn Jenner

&

*Nox* by Anne Carson.

A critical-creative thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Creative Writing)  
at Massey University, Albany, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Annabel Wilson

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## Abstract

*A long time to get home* is a critical-creative thesis that asks the research question: *In what ways can the strategies and techniques of hybrid works articulate responses to loss?* My thesis approaches this question from a writer's perspective. Part One examines how two hybrid books about searches of different kinds, *Lost and Gone Away* (2015) by Lynn Jenner and *Nox* (2010) by Anne Carson, enact tensions between language and loss. This essay focuses on the genre-blurring strategies and techniques that make these case studies what Lyn Hejinian calls "open texts" (*Language* 43), which favour the "border" ("Two Talks", "Continuing"). Drawing on Hejinian's concept of "the rejection of closure" (*Language* 40), I look at how *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox* invite the reader into an ongoing production of meaning. I show how they each reject closure, making the search for words to speak loss a continuous, communal activity.

The critical investigation is the basis for my creative writing in Part Two. In conversation with the case studies and concepts addressed, the manuscript engages with my personal experience of, and process of writing around, loss. The manuscript comprises two separate pieces that are stylistically and thematically connected. Entitled *Waiariki*, the first is a collage of memories of a place and a person of significance to me. Its counter-piece, *Where Were You?*, is a fictionalised day in the life of an art gallery guide, set on March 15 2019. Within each work, I explore intersections of visual elements, prose, and poetry to build a hybrid text that circles themes of personal and public trauma and their repercussions and echoes. The weighting for this thesis is 40% critical and 60% creative.

Due to the hybrid and fragmented nature of the creative component, its page count has greater relevance than the comparative word count.

*There is no real way to deal with everything we lose.*

– Joan Didion<sup>1</sup>.

*It disperses and gathers; it comes and goes.*

— Heraclitus<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Didion, Joan. *Where I Was From*, e-book ed., HarperCollins E-Books, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> G.T.W Patrick, “A Further Study of Heraclitus.” *The American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1888.

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<sup>3</sup> WORD CHCH, Sunday 27 August 2023, [wordchristchurch.co.nz/programme/whaia-te-ara-o-te-kareao-follow-the-path-of-the-kareao/](http://wordchristchurch.co.nz/programme/whaia-te-ara-o-te-kareao-follow-the-path-of-the-kareao/)

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## Foreword

More than a year ago a friend, who speaks five languages and reads several more, told me it would not be possible to write about the Holocaust from New Zealand. There's so little to say here, she said. Europe is the Point Last Seen. But this is where I am, I said. That is the problem. This is where I am from, this is who I am, and this is where I am.

(Jenner, *Lost* 170)

When I go on the train from here to Toronto I always dread passing Port Hope because it was a place my family lived for six, seven years, and my parents for about fifteen years and my brother intermittently, so the book, because it's about him, is connected to that place. But it's a place where everyone's life fell apart. That's too strong. It was a place where we all, my brother and I, met the end of our adolescence. So that's a serious order.

(Carson, "The Art of Poetry No.88")

The proverb 'oku kaenga waewae' ... denotes the significance of traversing on foot the landscape that one might call home, and through the familiarity of that journey, coming to associate with the whenua and history of that space. It is vital to the notion of closing the gaps; that is, the treading of a pathway that allows one to understand through experience and time the world within which they might one day call home<sup>4</sup>.

(Mahuika, "Closing the Gaps': From Postcolonialism to Kaupapa Māori and Beyond", *Kaupapa Rangahau*, 75).

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<sup>4</sup> Note, the present day spelling is "kainga".

## **Possibilities**

*(After Wisława Szymborska's poem of the same name, From "Nothing Twice", 1997*

*Translated by S. Barańczak & C. Cavanagh and Liz Breslin's response to the above.)*

I prefer going to Hollywood cinema  
on Marriner St, to Netflix and chill.  
No cats or dogs, I prefer native birds.  
I prefer the space where the forest changes  
to silver beech from fern in the depths  
of Fiordland. I prefer O'Hara to Ginsberg.  
I prefer Marmite. I prefer myself loving love  
to myself obsessed with whether or not they'll call.  
I prefer keeping a hanky on hand, because  
in my family we cry easily. I prefer to turn  
my rings around three times if I glimpse  
the full moon through glass, just in case.  
I prefer marle and slippers with Wallace  
Chapman on Friday. I prefer not to maintain  
the links in email chain letters. I prefer  
the Possibles over the Probables.  
I prefer to write it down. I prefer the real meme.

I prefer a letter. I prefer you in leather.  
I prefer creative, non work-related  
assignments. I prefer deviations.  
I prefer the last-minute dash to the airport.  
I prefer the carpark to the waiting room.  
I prefer the old songs to the new album.  
*I prefer the absurdity of writing poems  
to the absurdity of not writing poems.*  
I prefer, where love's concerned, to  
speak the truth faster. I prefer the quick rip  
of the sticking plaster.  
I prefer the promise of frost, foraged cocktails,  
getting lost over finding myself.  
I prefer you to wake me up before you go-go.  
I prefer Papatūānuku to uphold me.  
I prefer 72% cocoa. I prefer Badedas.  
I prefer having some questions.  
I prefer the columns to the headlines.  
I prefer to be the one who leaves, rather than  
the one who is left behind.  
I prefer grating cheese to vacuuming.  
I prefer Art Garfunkel's *Bright Eyes* and Bonnie

Tyler's turn around bright eyes, equally.

I prefer the cupboards closed and the windows open,  
when sleeping. And when I sleep, I prefer to lie  
diagonally. *I prefer many things that I haven't mentioned here  
to many things I've also left unsaid.*

I prefer not to know what's coming.

I prefer Zero Cool and Zero Gravity to Zero Liability

I prefer to be doing a manual task outdoors  
when bringing up difficult subjects.

I prefer to let pīwakawaka out the same way they came in.

I prefer keeping in mind every possibility  
that *begin*, *beni* and *bien* are tangled anagrams of *being*  
for a reason.

As a reader and writer, I have long been interested in the possibilities of hybridity, fragmentation, and representations of place. At poetry gigs, I often begin with my "Possibilities" poem as a form of mihi. I return to it as an introduction to my kaupapa as an academic and a writer. "Possibilities" is an offering of my perspective and positioning as a practitioner based in the "shaky isles" of Te Wai Pounamu. I engage with ideas about uncertainty in my work, recognising that there is "no entirely firm sociocultural ground from which to tell stories" (Andrews et. al). Being Pakeha, my grounding place is not my birthright, but the physical and emotional place of some

of my earliest and most enduring memories. So the mountains, rivers and lakes where I grew up recur in my creative writing that I see as an ongoing experiment with ways to listen to and talk about place. When I first began thinking about research questions for a creative writing doctorate, I told my supervisor I was tired of writing about mountains and instead wanted to write about islands. I'd recently moved from Wānaka to Ōhinehou / Lyttelton, so this felt like it made sense at the time, geographically at least. I was thinking about the place of Aotearoa as part of the Pacific archipelago and using that as the basis for a hybrid book, starting in a transit lounge and then roving from Rakiura out to the islands of Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa.

Despite my desire to write my way into an oceanic space, mountains kept showing up in the poetry and prose and I was experimenting with. This reminded me of Rebecca Solnit's phrase, "...and the mountains kept promising," from the braided travel essay, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2014). Try as I might, I couldn't get away from the mountains.

I began thinking about patterns in nature and human nature, and how what we write about is the thing that keeps returning. This brought to mind playwright Gary Henderson's suggestion that you write the play so that the play you are meant to write can emerge, which he brought up at a writing workshop I attended at Victoria

University in 2016. My writing had deviated from my initial idea, but I had to follow the emerging one.

I read Lynn Jenner's *Lost and Gone Away* while developing the first drafts of my proposal and manuscript. Jenner's use of fragmentation and hybridity particularly caught my attention. This book is about many types of loss, and it spoke to me during a difficult couple of years when I experienced a miscarriage, and the deaths of three people close to me. I didn't intend to write about these losses and had difficulty talking about them. Instead, I started working on a hybrid piece (about a person with a hangover trying to figure out what they'd done the night before) made up of little pieces of prose, quotations, poetry, and photographs, set over a 24-hour period.

Reading *Lost and Gone Away* led me to re-read *Nox*, a book I appreciated for the dynamic way Anne Carson has created an epitaph-elegy "filled with light" (1.1) for her brother. While Jenner and Carson's works are quite different from each other, they share certain characteristics. Firstly, they are both hybrid texts which are distinctive for their genre-blurring. For example, in a review for NZ Poetry Shelf, Paula Green notes *Lost and Gone Away*'s "smudging of genres" ("Lynn is unafraid"). Likewise, Liedeke Plate calls *Nox* "genre-defying" ("Moving Words" 2).

Secondly, in both hybrid texts, human responses to loss are written about on a personal level, alongside artistic, historical, and communal levels. Both works examine histories and embody notions of searching. *Lost and Gone Away* creates "an excavation of loss" through a series of "emotional and intellectual" searches (blurb). Carson's crafting of *Nox* can also be considered an artistic excavation. By translating an ancient elegy alongside classical and anecdotal ideas about history and grief, Carson looks for meaning in her late brother's life.

In both the case studies and my manuscript, complicated notions of home are also important. *Home* is a fluid concept since no one can ever be fully at home or not at home. As Edward Relph explains, home is a malleable trope, varying according to individual and cultural understandings and experiences of home ("Home and Place"). The connotations of the term home relate to place, shelter, protection, and identity. A sense of home can also allude to a connection with another person, group, or community. A quick scroll on social media or a rummage through hit songs of the last 30 years will soon remind any reader or listener of the pop culture currency of concepts of home, (such as in Drake's 2013 "Hold On, We're Going Home", Six60's 2011 "Don't Forget Your Roots", Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros' 2009 "Home (Is wherever I'm with you)", Foo Fighters' 2007 "Home" and Shihad's 1997 "Home Again").

However, ideas about home are also not necessarily associated with positive experiences. A household can become physically or mentally unsafe for the people living there. The places we stand or have stood change with time, as well as geological and social-political processes. *Home* is complicated.

Home carries associations with locations where an individual grew up, live for an extended period or where they return to. As Parata points out in her analysis of the concept of *tūrangawāwae* in Kelly Ana Morley's *Bloom*, the feminist geographer Linda McDowell contends, "the term 'the home' must be one of the most loaded words in the English language" (71).

The *te ao Māori* concept of *tūrangawāwae/tūrakawāwae* is not fully translatable in English but is linked to definitions of home as the 'place to stand' or 'place to belong'. In *Te Ara*, the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Te Ahukaramū explains that "Tūrangawāwae is one of the most well-known and powerful Māori concepts". It carries deep cultural and spiritual significance for Māori. At semantic level, the term combines *tūranga* (standing place) and *wāwae* (feet), to hold meanings of the foundation where one feels "empowered and connected" (Te Ahukaramū). More broadly, *tūrangawāwae/tūrakawāwae* "embraces a person's identity as a Maori – culturally, linguistically and emotionally" (Karetu). The concept has been described as a "place where one has *the right* to stand" (Brown et. al, Moorfield – italics are mine), "to speak and be noticed and be heard" (Roa, 12),: a place of birthright (Mead

67-68), “ancestral connections” (Salmond *Ka whakanui*, Foreword), “roots” and obligations (Roa 12). Traditionally, the birthright of tūrangawaewae/tūrakawaewae would be linked to “the cutting of the umbilical cord and the burying of the placenta in a certain place” (Karetu, Salmond *Tears* 385)<sup>5</sup>. (In “Te haereka ki tōku turakawaewae: returning home”: Ruby Solly’s recount of returning to her tūrakawaewae at Waihao marae, Te Wai Pounamu, at twenty years old, “a wise ten year old” explains “Did you know when I was born, I came here straight after the hospital? That’s what tūrangawaewae means,”). The person who belongs to the tūrangawaewae and to whom the tūrangawaewae belongs would retain their connection to their spiritual home through the practice of ahi ka; or keeping the home fires burning (Karetu). These days, ahi ka can mean fulfilling “one’s tribal obligations; that is, being seen at the more important rites of passage of the tribe” (Karetu). Tūrangawaewae thus interconnects landscape and lineage as whakapapa. Hiniri Moko Mead supports this notion, explaining,

Tūrangawaewae represents one spot, one locality on planet earth where an individual can say, ‘I belong here. I can stand here without challenge. My ancestors stood here before me. My children will stand tall here’. The place includes interests in the land, with the territory of the hapū and of the iwi. It is a place associated with the ancestors and is full of history (67 – 68).

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<sup>5</sup> In “Our place to stand”, Chapter One of *Our land 2021 - New Zealand’s Environmental Reporting Series* includes tūrangawaewae as one of the many facets of the relationship between Māori and Papatūānuku, explaining: “The whenua is our home, our place to stand. The word whenua also means placenta. This demonstrates the lifelong connection formed when our placenta is buried after birth until we die and are returned to the whenua” (7).

Likewise, Witi Ihimaera explains that the concept of tūrangawaewae

acknowledges that we [Māori] have a pito, an umbilical, that, whether we like it or not, or whether we want it or not, replenishes us. It informs our works and makes it Māori. After all, that is what people say about the pito. Wherever it is planted, it always reminds you that wherever one goes in the world or whatever happens to you, you have a people and a place to return to; a life to which you belong, whether you know it or want it. (17)

Tūrangawaewae is therefore much more than a physical place. It is a notion aligned with feeling “at home” in one’s identity and intergenerational iwi affiliations. This is shown when someone recites their pepeha, acknowledging their standing place in terms of ancestral mountain, river, marae, and family. Citing Ranginui Walker, Parata explains how this practice is “both customary and continuing” (3):

Once territorial and hence tribal origins have been established it is relatively easy to identify the person. This convention is one of the powerful myth-messages of Maori society because it persists to the present day. In an urban situation where young Maori from different tribes meet each other for the first time, they respond to the social imperative embedded in the Maui myth. They begin to fraternise not by

asking each other's names, but by the question 'Hey boy, where you from?' Once tribal origins are established then they search for mutual relatives. This done, the bond is formed. (Walker 23)

The spoken acknowledgement of *tūrangawaewae* then allows for *whanaunataka* or connections between people to be established and honoured. *Tūrangawaewae* ties past to present and self to place in the world.

Janet Newman's thesis provides a helpful discussion of *tūrangawaewae* regarding its literary significance to this country's *ecopoetics*, citing how Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace and Keri Hulme's writing contributed to the term being "nationally known and understood" (74) during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Māori Renaissance from 1972 onward. (Newman also draws attention to Alex Calder's criticism of "Pakeha *tūrangawaewae*", whereby "*Tūrangawaewae*, understood in the Māori sense of belonging, of having a place to stand, is not the same as the affection for place felt by Pakeha" (4).)

Anne Pistacchi, Rawinia Parata and Janet Wilson have provided useful discussions of nuanced, multidimensional ideas about home emerging in 21<sup>st</sup> century Aotearoa fiction. Based on interviews with the writers themselves as well as critical readings, Pistacchi's thesis examines key post-2000 works of Patricia Grace, Paula Morris, and Kelly Ana Morey as "acts of survivance" (8). Responding to Pistacchi's ideas, Parata's *critical-creative Masters* also explores home as a fraught notion, in her case studies

by Māori writers (Paula Morris' novel *Queen of Beauty* and the plays *And What Remains* by Miria George and *Hui* by Mitch Tawhi Thomas) alongside her own play, *Our Side of the Fence*. Furthermore, Wilson notes how recent examples such as Craig Cliff's "Manawatu" and "Parisian Blue" (2010) and Aroha Benson's "The Power of Water" (2010) "show a cross-border transnationalism and new structures of feeling and place that lead to speculations about the meaning of home" (227 - 228).

Likewise, home in the sense of safety, stability and the known in *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox* is complicated. Whether the setting is New Zealand or Port Hope, unstable notions of home are linked to the writers' positioning in each hybrid text. In *Lost and Gone Away*, the author's physical home is New Zealand, which is geopolitically distanced from the personal stories about the European Holocaust that she researches and responds to. New Zealand, Jenner writes, is "where I am ... That is the problem. This is where I am from, this is who I am, and this is where I am. So this is where I start" (170).

In *Nox*, home is also evoked as a problematic place. The text's fragments reveal the Port Hope childhood home of the author and her brother, which she now "dread[s] passing" because this is where the pair grew up and faced "the end of adolescence" (Carson, "Art of Poetry"), and where so many memories of Michael's Lazarus-like character resurface.

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<sup>6</sup> "a Pakeha woman of Jewish and Celtic origin" (Peat 19).

The physical experience of reading *Nox* also connects with complicated concepts of home. Engaging with the book is like opening a reassembled family album as Carson pieces together her memories of Michael. Black and white photographs of her brother (sometimes alone, sometimes with Carson and/or their mother), in the context of their house, a yard, on a jetty, and below a neighbourhood tree hut are all reconfigured across its pages. The domestic symbol of stairs is also an important motif, hand-drawn or etched alongside prose fragments. These nostalgic elements, figures and icons of a long-ago home imbue the work with melancholic tenderness as we trace the vestiges of Michael across its pages.

Carson reminds the reader that this revisiting (and reshaping) of the past is a fraught activity when, near the end of the book, she explains how she studies “his sentences the ones I remember as if I’d been asked to translate them” (8.1). Over the page from this phrase, eight of these sentences are listed in bold amid the cut-up shards of a clear plastic photo sleeve. The last four lines of this fragment illustrate Michael’s warning to his sister about returning to their childhood home:

**Don’t go back to the farm don’t go alone.**

**What will you do sit on Bald Rock and look  
down at the graves.**

**Put the past away you have to.**

*Nox*, the book-object and the pieced-together fragments in it, becomes Carson's attempt to "put the past away" (8.1). However, because its physical form and fractured content defies containment, it is a work which rejects closure (Hejinian, *Language* 40).

Reading *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox* from a writer's perspective, I started thinking about how complicated notions of home entwine with loss in each book. In different ways, both works continuously become "open" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) or "border" texts (Hejinian *Two Talks* 1995, *Continuing* 2001), inhabiting spaces of instability. By studying Jenner and Carson's craft, I wanted to understand how human responses to loss might be (re)constructed in hybrid works. The question, then, became: *In what ways can the strategies and techniques of hybrid works articulate responses to loss?*

Meanwhile, like a mountain that kept returning, grief kept turning up in my own creative writing. The losses I kept returning to in my writing were often linked with place, as much as people. The initial draft consisted of one story, which splintered into the pair of stories that developed later. Waking up in a strange place after a strange night, the protagonist faces feelings of dislocation and dread. I wanted her to have a dark secret, but I didn't want it to be about death or perinatal loss. I wrote my way into the struggle of deciding on her secret by having her imagine different

scenarios for the faux pas she sensed she had committed the night before. This tactic allowed me to avoid writing more directly about grief because I was consciously trying not to write about it. Fictionalising personal loss in words felt like white heat. But it kept turning up; white and cold and burning. As Thomas Pynchon writes in *V*, “You wait. Everyone has an Antarctic” (255). Somehow, I couldn’t help writing about the icy, ashen place of loss.

Several issues worried me. Writing about my own experience of loss felt overly confessional. I also thought about my responsibilities in fictionalising the sudden, accidental death of a dear friend and the question of ownership—was this my story to tell? I worried about writing something with too much darkness and not enough light, which, in my mind, would do a disservice to the deceased and those close to them.

The themes of loss and grief also felt like I was going over familiar ground. For my Masters project, I wrote a fictionalised year-long diary in which the narrator returns home from overseas to care for a terminally ill family member and becomes re-entangled with her ex-lover, now a glaciologist. Though similar themes kept resurfacing in the evolving PhD manuscript, I wanted this to be different. My response to the loss of my oldest friend felt too uncomfortable to express, as if I could never get it right, even though I was initially working in fiction with smatterings of poetry (which later evolved into the *Where were you?* story), not the memoir piece

(which eventually became *Waiariki*). I didn't want to write about family members' terminal illnesses either. I felt I had written enough about cancer in my Masters project. I also felt a sense of the societal taboo around talking about the "common, though often invisible loss" of miscarriage (Weir). So, in the fictional piece, my main character's secret stayed secret from me for a long time, too. And the memoir emerged from the fiction, requiring its own space and identity as a separate story.

The week before I travelled to Auckland to discuss my proposal with my supervisor, the tragic events of 15 March 2019 happened when two mosques were attacked during congregational prayer. That afternoon I almost left work at lunchtime but was corralled to the staff workroom by one of our College leaders. In the room with a few other teachers and one student, I stayed under my desk for six hours until we were given permission to come out of lockdown. We were updated and given instructions via email during this time. Later, we assembled in the hall while everyone was accounted for, as parents waited at the school gates or outside the hall doors. Then I drove slowly home around various roadblocks across town. The following week I observed how Ōtautahi's young people led the response in solidarity with the Muslim community. At the meeting with my supervisor, the image of the narrator hiding under her desk and later taking a long time to cross the city and get home appeared. Since then, I've continued to question whether it's acceptable for me to set a story which takes place in Ōtautahi/Christchurch on 15 March 2019. With no direct, familial connection to the event, I worry that fictionalising my fringe

experiences of that day contributes to a kind of “nonwitnessing” of trauma (Weissman 30). In the 2018 study *Fantasies of Witnessing*, Gary Weissman examines the motivations and mechanisms surrounding audiences’ desires to “know” the tragedy and horror of the Holocaust. Examining prevailing US-centric artistic representations of the Holocaust being produced in America such as *Schindler’s List*, Weissman contends that these secondary texts contribute to making the Holocaust seem distant and unreal. Weissman’s notion of nonwitnessing influenced my shaping of the creative work, in that I decided to include only details that emerged from my lived experience of March 19. The personal question and pronoun of the title *Where were you?* is intentionally open, ambiguous and verbatim from conversations that unfolded across my work and social circles that day.

I’ve come to think of the critical and creative components as essays in line with what John D’Agata (*Electric Literature*) and Scholar (71) point out is Michel de Montaigne’s application of the 16<sup>th</sup> century French noun *essai* (attempt) and verb *essayer* (to try, test, experiment). The following three chapters and manuscript are an attempt to articulate some of my own responses to loss in conversation with two case study hybrid texts. I consider this research important because it intends to show ways hybrid texts can gesture towards the in/articulate nature of loss.

My thesis contends that responses to catastrophic events can be expressed in hybrid texts and that it is through the *articulate* nature of fragments that the reader and

writer gather connections across the splintered parts of these works. In her creative-critical PhD thesis, poet, fiction writer and former physiotherapist Sue Wootton suggests, “The answer to why a narratively-orientated recomposing of a life can be so powerful might be found in the word articulation itself, which contains the idea of a moving structure composed of connected parts (such as the articulated skeleton), as well as the ideas of self-expression and communication. To articulate, then, is to move and to connect, both of which have remedial potential...” (63). For this thesis, as within Wootton’s doctorate, both the meanings of the verb articulate (to express or shape meaning; to form or fit into a systematic whole) are applied<sup>7</sup>. In both of my case studies, their effectiveness in finding language for loss depends on how their fragments are expressed and connected.

In her discussion of the elegiac role of *Nox*, poet Emily Berry quotes Max Cavich who writes: “all elegies – indeed all mourning arts – are about the struggle to make the most out of some sign of the inarticulable, the trace of the loss that abides in our mostly inaccessible lives” (15). Rather than articulating the inarticulable, Berry’s critical-creative research explores her interest in “the ways in which elegiac writing might *represent*, rather than articulate, the inarticulable; how it preserves that ‘trace of loss’”(8).

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<sup>7</sup> Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle, in the poetry collection *Autobiography of a Marguerite* also leverages both meanings of the word articulate in writing about chronic illness and family dysfunction, as shown in the extract that was published in *Turbine 13*.

My research examines the tension of the in/articulate nature of loss as an artistic struggle that is akin to the complicated experience of loss. Due to the hybrid nature of this thesis as a critical-creative work, it enacts what it is about in that the work operates within two discourses. While the first part is scholarly, and the second is poetic, they both inform the other. As Ursula Le Guin points out in the essay "The Wave in the Mind": "Excellence in non-fiction lies in the writer's skills in observing, organising, narrating, and interpreting facts—skills entirely dependent on imagination, used not to invent, but to connect and illuminate observation" (140). I suggest that in *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox*, Jenner and Carson find ways to "connect and illuminate" some of the paradoxes of loss alongside the reader. I then experiment with these ideas in the creative component.

Beyond my research enquiry as a knowledge-seeking endeavour, my intent for the project is one of knowledge-sharing. After my examiner Robert Sullivan (Kāi Tahu, Ngāpuhi) pointed me towards the prominent work of scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou) and Leonie Pihama (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga a Tairi) regarding researching and utilising mātauranga Māori, I am mindful of the kaupapa of utu/reciprocity for this project. Smith and Pihama recognise the significance of reciprocity in Māori culture and its applications in research. "Out of a concern to develop Indigenous peoples as researchers" (18), Smith's perspective on decolonized research practises with regard to mātauranga

Māori<sup>8</sup> and reciprocity underscores the significance of engaging in respectful cooperation, fostering reciprocal learning, “getting the story right, telling the story well” (282) and cultivating enduring partnerships with Māori communities. These principles can ensure research is performed in a safe framework that upholds the rights and interests of Indigenous knowledge holders, while simultaneously contributing to the ongoing process of decolonization. Maturanga Māori, Pihama explains, is a by and for Māori worldview and way of being that continually shapes kaupapa (*Kaupapa Rangahau* 6). Alongside my own learning progression in te reo and tikanga, reading Smith and Pihama has catalysed my discussion of the kaupapa of my creative component (Links between the Critical and Creative Components, 207). Their work has also been a catalyst for me to think harder about different ways I can share my mahi.

Having given thought on how to best share the output of my research alongside the conventional institutional scholarly outputs (journal articles, conference papers and the open access repository), my additional personal offering will be twofold. Firstly, as well as the physical and digital copies of this thesis that will be held by Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University, a print copy will be given to the Wānaka Library, as a companion piece to their copy of my Masters thesis *From Aspiring to*

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<sup>8</sup> In academia and education, Maturanga Māori, or Māori knowledge, is experiencing a resurgence due to generations of activism. Smith writes “Maturanga Māori has been the subject of student dissertations, research programmes and funded science programmes. There are debates about what it is and how it is to be taught and learned. There are Masters level courses in Māori educational institutions of higher learning known as Wananga that focus specifically on Maturanga Māori. This level of activity and institutionalization is indebted to activism that has stretched back over several decades. The types of activism required over each generation to protect and nurture Indigenous knowledge have varied from direct political action and protests to defend the Māori language, court actions, land occupations and claims to the Waitangi Tribunal through to the implementation of programmes that would nurture the knowledge in public institutions. Traditional Indigenous knowledge is regenerating in spaces created by activism” (282).

*'Paradise' - the South Island myth and its enemies: a critical and creative investigation into the deconstruction of Aotearoa's Lakes District* (housed in the Pembroke Collection). Inasmuch as my living, breathing, bodily research process began in its mountains and lakes, Wānaka's library is where I began my reading for both my Masters and PhD projects. It houses "probably the best collection of books on the history of the Upper Clutha", which as Sue Gwilliam notes is particularly important because Wānaka does not have a museum (Harker). Likewise, if deemed appropriate, a copy can be held at Tūranga library in Ōtautahi. Secondly, I'll continue to share ideas gleaned from my research through the world of spoken word<sup>9</sup>. I connect with my local communities through my involvement with public events in the local and national arts, education and kaitiakitanga contexts<sup>10</sup>.

I hope this thesis may stimulate further debate about how hybrid texts can convey tensions between language and loss. I also hope it may contribute to further discussion about *Lost and Gone Away* and how, like *Nox*, it enacts what it is about. My final aspiration for this project is that it will contribute to burgeoning scholarship on and creation of poetry-nonfiction and poetry-fiction hybrid texts.

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<sup>9</sup> And possibly even go further with "dismantling" strategies, taking inspiration from Liz Breslin's creative-critical PhD project by rip, tear and busting this doctorate into a 'zine: [lizbreslin.com/project/zines/](http://lizbreslin.com/project/zines/).

<sup>10</sup> For examples of the public reach of some of the key creative findings during the course of this five year research project, see [www.wao.co.nz/wao-film-festival-2023](http://www.wao.co.nz/wao-film-festival-2023), [www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/old-friends-new-adventures](http://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/old-friends-new-adventures), [wordchristchurch.co.nz/programme/celebrating-culture-and-sister-cities](http://wordchristchurch.co.nz/programme/celebrating-culture-and-sister-cities), [allevents.in/lyttelton/common-ground-5-annabel-wilson-and-gary-mccormick/200023511195813](http://allevents.in/lyttelton/common-ground-5-annabel-wilson-and-gary-mccormick/200023511195813).

## **Critical Component:**

### **"Rejection of closure" and the role of the reader in hybrid texts**

#### **Chapter 1. Introduction to the Critical Component**

This chapter briefly overviews hybrid texts (particularly those which mix poetry and nonfiction) and some of the challenges of defining them. I also look at trends in poetry-nonfiction hybrid texts published between 2000 and 2022 and their ability to express tensions between language and loss. Finally, to lead into the case studies, I also discuss how the crafting of hybrid texts can bring them the characteristics of "open texts" (Hejinian *Language* 43).

##### **1.1 Defining hybrid forms**

The failure of language to express the inexpressible is one of the enduring themes of literature, and this is especially true of conceptual literature. What can be said is that any definition will be out of date as soon as it is written. Any attempt to narrow conceptual writing to a particular form or idea is doomed by the very limits required by definition.

(Tomasula 12)

The originally scientific term hybrid was first used to describe a type of writing by Mikhail Bakhtin (63). For Bakhtin, hybridity is the dynamic form; hybrid is a result (Guignery 2). In postcolonial studies, Homi K. Bhabha's application of hybridity refers creating of new transcultural forms in the "Third Space" produced by colonisation. Nowadays, the term hybrid is widely accepted as a term to describe writing which works across multiple forms, disciplines, or genres. A hybrid text may

also be described as intermedia, experimental, cross-genre, multi-genre, genre-blurring, transgenre, genre-queer, genre-defying, or genre-bending.

*Genre*, which is also the French term for gender, carries an association with identity politics. As Christin Galster explains, "...hybrid genres are intricately linked to the notion of a hybrid identity, which is fluid, unstable, incessantly in search of and transforming itself" (227). Further, Kazim Ali emphasises that gender (after Judith Butler) and genre are both reading practices, noting "a belief in genre manifests as a belief in gender - they are rooted in that same impulse: that a body (or text) must 'behave' according to the social rules that govern it" ("I am no hybrid" 127).

Although, as with conceptual literature, a singular definition of hybrid writing might be limiting or "doomed" in Steve Tomasula's terms (12), many writers and editors argue that hybridity's instability is productive and important. Adopting Monson's description of hybrid form as "a thing that's not entirely comfortable with the container it's placed in", editors Marcela Sulak and Jacqueline Kolosov view genre as "an affiliation, rather than a fixed point of identification" (xxiii). From this perspective, hybrid texts can exhibit a variety of genre affiliations that can be examined by different audiences for different purposes.

Building on Kimberly Ann Southwick-Thompson's idea that "Hybridity should be understood not as a genre but as a tool, one that has been utilised in all literary and

popular genres" ("Genre as Network"), I contend that using hybridity as a tool can be instrumental for articulating responses to loss. My case studies therefore consider how Jenner and Carson merge poetry with other genres in their attempts to find language for loss. My manuscript aims to do this too. In accord with Southwick-Thompson's view that pointing out a hybrid's roots when talking about its genre can reduce confusion that arises when there are multiple works with the same generic label, ("Genre as Network"), for the purpose of this project, the discussion refers to texts such as *Nox* and *Lost and Gone Away* that blend poetry and nonfiction as poetry-nonfiction hybrid texts.

## 1.2 Disruptive origins of poetic hybrid texts

Since the first lyrics were written, poets have experimented with the disruptive effects of combining different forms. For example, Janet Wilson has traced early Western forms of prose poetry to the 11th-century Anglo-Saxon scholar Aelfric, abbot of Eynsham<sup>11</sup>, and his “rhythmic prose” (306). Adapting elements of Old English verse Aelfric’s “innovative style” combined alliteration and rhythm to make theological teachings accessible to the laity (Kleist).

A more dominant view is that prose poetry emerged from a spirit of rebellion in 19th-century France. This hybrid form is often associated with writers like Aloysius Bertrand and Charles Baudelaire who wanted to challenge the traditional concerns of the Alexandrine metred form (Mitchell). Bertrand (in *Gaspard de la nuit*, published posthumously in 1842) and Baudelaire (in *Le Spleen de Paris*, also published posthumously in 1869) wrote in chunks of text that looked like prose but had characteristics of poetry (Mitchell). Further seminal examples of hybrid writing that merge poetry with memoir include Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons; objects, food, rooms* (1914), Alice B. Toklas’ *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1956).

Another early iteration of hybrid writing that mixes poetry with other forms is the haibun 俳文. First composed by Japanese haikai masters in the 15th century, haibun

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<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes Eynsham was “probably Oxfordshire”.

are blocks of mostly autobiographical prose interspersed with haiku poems. The form was popularised by Bashō's travel diaries, particularly *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1694). Though Bashō is one of the writers Carson cites in *Nox* (8.2), the haibun form is relevant to my creative component as it is a form I experiment with there. Interweaving prose and haiku connected to a particular place and personal perspective, I have used this form during some of the higher points of tension in the *Waiariki* story.

Both prose poetry and haibun are early forms of hybrid writing, which in practice these days takes on a wide range of genre-crossing forms and characteristics that I delve into in the next section.

### 1.3 Destabilised forms for destabilised times: Post-2000 trends in hybrid texts

That obsession which cannot be obedient to the requirements of classification, of genre, can be productive; this too, is an element of art.

(Ramke 131)

Containers need walls, but the hybrid in the container pushes back and tries to find where it might become electrically porous.

(Kolosov and Sulak xxiii)

Hybrid-form works stand on thresholds, refusing definition and creating themselves out of necessity... The impossible becomes possible with hybrid forms.

(Farris "The impossible")

Since some early versions of cross-genre poetry can be traced back to 11<sup>th</sup>-century Eynsham, 15<sup>th</sup>-century Japan, or 19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris, poetic hybrid writing is certainly not a new form. However, its implications and applications in the post-truth era are continually evolving. Post-2000, many creative writers work across blurred boundaries, stretching form, and eluding genre definitions to craft texts that defy classification. In writing referred to as hybrid or cross-genre that has seen a rise in critical and commercial success since the turn of the millennium, poetry merges with prose, fiction, non-fiction, fragments, found material and visual elements, in print and online<sup>12</sup>. Hybrid writing of the 2000s includes haibun, the hybrid novel, verse

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<sup>12</sup> As well as hybrid genres, Grassian has also noted that the term hybridity has also been extended to cover hypertext narratives (228).

novels, flash fiction, lyric essays, prose poems, playlets, hypertext, intermedial e-texts and any combination of writing that shifts between register, form, or mode.

An emblem of a poetic form that has evolved and been reinvented over the centuries is the haibun. Derivations of haibun and more traditional haibun often feature in post-2000 hybrid writing. Dylan Welch, a modern haiku poet, writes that haibun prose has some of the same qualities as microfiction and flash fiction ("Haibun"). Although the prose is traditionally autobiographical, often depicting the speaker's response to a time and place, Rich Youmans stresses in the online guidelines for submissions to *Contemporary Haibun* that "haibun has grown in scope to cover everything from brief biographical episodes to surrealistic prose-poem narratives and 'flash' stories". The economy of language in the prose leading to the haiku is taut, requiring the reader to fill in the gaps and make connections in much the same way as with microfiction.

Internationally, there is a strong contingent of contemporary poets and students writing English-language haibun. Publishers, journals, poetry organisations, haiku societies, schools, and creative writing institutions continue encouraging modern versions of this early hybrid form through anthologies, competitions, and teaching. Moreover, this ancient form can lend itself well to expressions of current anxieties. For example, from Aotearoa New Zealand, the 2020-21 blog *Love in the time of COVID: A Chronicle of a Pandemic* (edited by Witi Ihimaera and Michelle Elvy) features haibun by John Allison ("Departures & Arrivals: haibun in a time of

lockdown”), Gail Ingram (“Writer’s rock / Writer’s block”) and Stella Pierides (“Portrait”). These recent haibun have inspired my testing of this ancient hybrid form in my creative component.

The advent of the WorldWideWeb<sup>13</sup> and its subsequent information torrent (on Twitter/X<sup>14</sup>, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, news sites, LinkedIn, blogs, vlogs, in comments sections and “the million other online spaces that now make up the vast majority of the quotidian, functional nonfiction we read every day” (Ryan)) has shaped and influenced how we create, receive, and engage with poetic hybrid texts. In *Radical Artifice: Writing poetry in the age of media* (1991), Marjorie Perloff discusses how avant-garde poets in the late 20th century employed “radical artifice” (27)<sup>15</sup>, emphasising text as a “*made thing*” (28) to dismantle conventional boundaries of language and form. Her work sheds light on how technology has played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary hybrid literature, where text, multimedia, and interactivity converge. Perloff's analysis of poets like Joan Retallack, John Cage and Lyn Hejinian and their use of language as a form of “radical artifice” foreshadows the ways in which digital technology has influenced 21st-century hybrid writing. For example, the mash-up of “conflicting discourses that penetrate and interrupt one another” in texts such as Retallack’s “Icarus Ffffalling” (Perloff 204) are reminiscent of “The Poetry of Tabs” effect that Hugh Ryan has noted in the lyric essay’s “moment” in

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<sup>13</sup> Invented by Tim Berners-Lee, who coined the term WorldWideWeb, developing the first pilot server and browser, which he trialled at CERN as a “hypertext” system for universities to share knowledge and information.

<sup>14</sup> For further on the new name for Twitter, see [nytimes.com/2023/08/03/technology/twitter-x-tweets-elon-musk.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/03/technology/twitter-x-tweets-elon-musk.html).

<sup>15</sup> A term she borrows from Richard A. Lanham and his contention that the use of the personal computer and its screen “is forcing a radical re-alignment of the alphabetic and graphic components of ordinary textual communication” (3).

the post-truth era. Cage's computer-generated mesostic poems (such as "I-VI") can be seen as precursors to the poetry created (by practitioners like Helen Heath in *Are Friends Electric?*) with the use of text manipulators such as the programme leaves.glass. Further, "the creation of a language field in which 'identity' is [...] a fluid state that takes on varying shapes and that hence engages the reader to participate in its formation and deformation" in Hejinian's *My Life* (Perloff 166) can also connect with the language fields that poets of the 2000s are experimenting with.

Engagement with the page as screen can be found in works such as Courtney Sina Meredith's *Tail of the Taniwha*, where the speaker's questions about selfhood, longing and distance are embodied in the varying opacity of the reverse-printed lines of "Aotahi": (32 - 45), the collection's central poem. In Dominic Hoey and Joshua Solomon's zine, *Bad Advice for Good People*, the shape of the book object is the same as a laptop screen. But the poems, cartoons and cut ups that appear on its pages are deliberately anti-digital, an emblem of the resurgence of niche publishing platforms which are returning to Perloff's emphasis on text as a "*made thing*" (28) in the age of the personal computer.

Published a decade after *Radical Artifice*, N. Katherine Hayles' *Writing Machines* (2002) marks a major contribution to scholarship on the impact of digital technology on creative writing, examining three "writing machines" in depth (Talan Memmott's web hypertext *Lexia to Perplexia*, Tom Philips' artist's book *A Humument*, and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*). Hayles' meta-discussion of *A Humument* in

particular draws attention to how this “technotext” (78) plays with William S. Burrough’s cut ups method to construct “an unruly proliferation of unruly and multiple narratives” (80) conveyed through hypertextual “rivers” (81) of words wrangled from a Victorian novel. Hayles posits that hypertexts such as Philips’ which insist on their materiality (96) allow the reader “more freedom of movement” and random reading than their electronic hypertext counterparts (99). In this way, the electronic communication era has heralded the emergence of poetic hybrid texts that examine how digital tools inform and transform the way we create and make meaning from literature.

The internet, with its rivers of words, Ryan emphasises, “has created (or made visible) a problem—the unknowability of truth—and at the same time, sculpted a language to talk about it”. The ways poets can engage with this problem are being further complicated with the role of AI and algorithms. (It is certainly unsettling to ponder the implications of generative programs and apps such as predictive text, ChatGPT, NightCafe, Mid Journey and Smart Compose for the crafting of poetic hybrid texts. Perhaps there is a way to navigate these potential new discourses through a Perloffian lens by drawing attention to cyborg-esque texts as “made things”? But there is not space for that in this thesis).

Ideas of unease are often present in post-2000 hybrid literature. The proliferation of texts that have been labelled as hybrid<sup>16</sup> show hybrid writing's destabilised forms can be effective for evoking destabilised times. Hybridity, being both an unstable concept and a juxtaposing technique, is intrinsically linked with uncertainty. Juxtaposing different forms, styles or genres is an effective tool for enacting responses to crises. When a piece of writing shifts from one form, style, or genre to another, it generates a mosaic effect that can reflect the fractured nature of experience. Due to their instability, disruptiveness and vitality, hybrid texts can therefore be useful for articulating responses to trauma and loss.

Hybrid writing can serve as an important means of responding to the emotions and experiences of crises, offering readers a deeper understanding of the ripple effects of these events on individuals and communities. Hybrid literature can perform the difficult process of attempting to find language for catastrophe in many ways. For example, the hybrid novel is a term often applied to fiction that may combine different voices, forms, or genre conventions. It is well-established as a response to modernist and post-modernist anxieties around globalisation, and post-structuralist emphases on subjectivity, authorship, and identities in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>16</sup> Although all writing can be argued to be hybrid to some degree since language and genre are dynamic.

Jenner's *Lost and Gone Away* references two influential hybrid novels about loss. In Part FOUR "*I ring the bell anyway*", the writer discusses her reading of W.G Sebald's fiction-memoir-travelogue *Austerlitz* (161 - 162). *Tree of Codes* (Jonathan Safran Foer's 2010 sculptural cut-out from Bruno Schulz' 1933 *The Street of Crocodiles*) is cited as the impetus for the writing experiments or "investigations" (blurb) Jenner undertook in response to Glenn Kurtz' essay on Safran Foer's hybrid text (51).

From the array of hybrid genres writers have been working across in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been several landmark works that combine poetry with other forms<sup>17</sup>. An example that is important to the rise of critically successful poetry-nonfiction hybrid works is Claudine Rankine's *Citizen - An American Lyric* (2014). *Citizen* gained numerous accolades, including the NAACP Image Award, the PEN Open Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award—the first book in the award's history to be nominated in both poetry and criticism (2015). *Citizen* was also named one of the year's best books by *The New Yorker* (2014) and was the only poetry book to be a *New York Times* bestseller in the nonfiction category (2015). In this urgent and powerful collection, Rankine draws on verbatim personal experiences of racism, such as in the prose poem "VI [ On the train, the woman standing ]", the first lines of which are:

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<sup>17</sup> For a list of post-2000 hybrid texts which influenced the creative component of this thesis, see "Links between the Critical and Creative Components", p.193.

On the train the woman standing makes you understand there are no seats available. And, in fact, there is / one. Is the woman getting off at the next stop? No, she would rather stand all the way to Union Station. (131)

The book also combines verbal and visual elements to enact its descriptions of the prejudice experienced by Black people in the “sharp white background” (25) of the public sphere, for example in Chapter II, which focusses on discriminatory treatment towards tennis legend Serena Williams by the media and her fellow professional athletes. Chapter VI uses found material of the “script for a situational video” collected from CNN in collaboration with John Lusas to show the individual and societal impacts of Cycle Katrina. The arrangement of quotations develops the sprawling sense of ongoing trauma faced by this community as a story which has “no ending” (84). Collected phrases from personal recounts build a larger web of upheaval, betrayal, and loss:

“Someone said, where were the buses?...

What I’m hearing, she said, ... is they all want to stay in Texas.

Being honest with you... they forgot about us.” (84)

In terms of the effect of Rankine’s arrangement of soundbites such as this passage, Tomasula writes “When Claudia Rankine makes microaggressions rhyme, it isn’t to make language new so much as to make visible what is already present: the toxic

atmosphere unwittingly (or intentionally) created by words and deeds" (17). Thus, Rankine's poetic memoir shows how hybrid writing can effectively convey responses to injustice, crises, or other destabilising events.

By combining elements of different literary forms, hybrid texts such as *Citizen* can create a sense of disruption and instability in the writing itself to convey their themes. This jarring effect can echo the psychological experience of living through a crisis, where familiar patterns and structures are disrupted, and everything feels chaotic and unsettling. As Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington note of prose poetry in particular, its uncertainty of form could be seen as a way to articulate the upheaval of uncertain times, suggesting "It is possible that contemporary culture requires such literary forms in order to speak truthfully about the crises at the heart of modernity centred on identity, the interpenetration and mixing of cultures, and the need to find authentic ways of speaking" (112).

In psychological terms, genre-splicing shifts and fragmentation within hybrid texts are useful for constructing the "shattering trope" that Michelle Balaev describes as characteristic of trauma literature theory (150). Intrinsically veering in different directions across different forms, styles and tones, hybrid texts can poetic hybrid writing can capture the complexity and contradictions of a crisis, where feelings and experiences may be in flux. Conversely, the genre shifts and fragments in hybrid texts also call the reader to participate in a piecing-together process alongside the

speaker. As a more optimistic outlook on the implications of fragmentation in post-2000 hybrid texts, I favour the latter sense, particularly in my case studies. In my readings, I look at how the case studies illustrate the transformative effects of fragmentation.

Hybrid writing that experiments with combining different forms and genres takes time to fertilise, craft, incubate, grow, and flourish. As Ander Monson asserts, “If there’s not electricity there then there’s no real advantage and the hybrid becomes pointless” (Kolosov and Sulak xxiii). Hybrid texts push against boundaries or slip through or beyond them, refusing to be contained, defying labels or categorisation. By crossing genres, hybrid texts can allow a new kind of form to come to life. Hybridity is thus a helpful tool for crafting texts that seek to convey some of the prevailing “old questions” (Carson Nox 5.2) in their 21<sup>st</sup>-century iterations.

#### **1.4 Further questions and possibilities for hybrid texts**

Hybrid texts are flourishing in indie, digital and traditional publishing platforms because, as Katie Farris suggests, “we’re finally finding language to speak about them”. Courses in crafting and critiquing hybrid works are increasingly taught at

creative writing workshops<sup>18</sup>, tertiary institutions<sup>19</sup>, and art schools<sup>20</sup>. In the New Zealand context, Te Tāhuhu o Te Mātauranga's *Te Mātaiaho* (the draft refreshed Curriculum for schools, due for release Term 3 2023) the English learning area now recognises that students should be building knowledge about hybrid texts, specifying "Text structures can both clarify and problematise meaning. Text creators can generate new and hybrid structures" (10). There are literary festivals and conferences<sup>21</sup> dedicated to celebrating hybrid/cross-genre works, their writers and readers.

The abundance of hybrid books receiving critical and commercial acclaim over the last two decades suggests the potential for broader research into this flourishing area of literature. With possibilities for writers to combine genres, forms, and styles in myriad ways, hybrid texts in general, and poetry-nonfiction hybrid texts in particular, will continue to morph in productive and engaging directions.

One interesting shift likely to stimulate more creative and critical writing in this field is the rise in poetry-nonfiction hybrid texts using an autotheory method<sup>22</sup>. Gaining

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<sup>18</sup> Some examples from a Google search: "Poetry + Nonfiction: Hybrid Texts - Remote!" - *Grub Street Center for Creative Writing*, Boston; "Genre Becoming Shape: Hybrid Forms in Creative Nonfiction, *Lighthouse Writers workshops*, Denver, USA; "Hybrid Writing – Unbox your words", *London Lit Lab*, UK.

<sup>19</sup> Such as: Ocean Vuong's Spring 2023 Hybrid Texts course at NYU, the syllabus for which went viral on Twitter (Luzong); and Creative Writing Hybrid Forms EngLit4120, University of Glasgow.

<sup>20</sup> In the *Electronic Literature Directory*, Sullivan notes: "As of 2019, over 100 art schools worldwide offer intermedia as a discipline with a digital emphasis".

<sup>21</sup> See: Openned, The Greenwich Cross-Genre Festival, Greenwich University, London, July 2010.

<sup>22</sup> To this list I add Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2006) and *The Faraway Nearby* (2014), Eileen Myles' *Inferno* (2010), Ali Smith's *Shire* (2013), Stephanie de Montalk's *How does it hurt?* (2014), Courtney Sina Meredith's *Tail of the Taniwha* (2016); as well as the book which popularised autotheory, Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (2016).

traction in the 2010s, the term autotheory has been applied to cross-genre writing that merges memoir with other forms, including critique and philosophy.

Autotheory, drawing on the components of the word 'auto'/'self' and 'theory' refers to both a type of writing and its practice. The strategy became popularised, Lauren Fournier explains, following Maggie Nelson's publication of *The Argonauts* (2015). However, writers including Joan Didion and Rebecca Solnit are well-known, Madison Weaver notes, for "exercising the theoretical impulse" in their "new journalistic" writings before then (2010).

Seeing autotheory as a feminist practice, Fournier posits that "As a way of describing an artist's or writer's way of working, autotheory seems a particularly appropriate term for works that exceed existing genre categories and disciplinary bounds, that flourish in the liminal spaces between categories, that reveal the entanglement of research and creation, and that fuse seemingly disparate modes to fresh effects" (10). Moreover, hybrid texts crafted or critically appraised through an autotheory mode provide interesting approaches and dilemmas, such as around what constitutes 'theory'; the perceived narcissistic turn in focussing on lived, bodily experience, the place of autotheory in academic structures (such as the creative-critical PhD), the diluting effects of over-citation, and issues with defining the concept itself.

In terms of craft, I think hybrid texts' dynamic nature will see them continue to provide an exciting interface between language and experience. As Sulak writes, "Hybrid literature is powerful. It is also fun" (*Family Resemblance*, Preface). Hybrid texts also have the potential to embody a sense of renewal, as I suggest in the case studies in Chapters 2 and 3.

## 1.5 Methodology - A Hejinian lens: Hybrid texts as “open texts”

The open text is one which both acknowledges the vastness of the world and is formally differentiating.

It is form that provides an opening.

(Hejinian “The Rejection of Closure” 41).

To explore ways I might craft a hybrid text that verbally and visually enacts tensions related to finding language for loss, I have looked to writers who have done similar work. My first case study turns to New Zealand poet and essayist Lynn Jenner’s *Lost and Gone Away* (2015). The way Jenner’s “nodal net” (Herkt *Landfall* 191) blurs boundaries between prose, poetry, nonfiction, research, and history is of critical and creative interest to my project. I chose this hybrid work to look at how its form and the patterns within it articulate tensions between language and loss. As a counter-piece to *Lost and Gone Away*, my second case study examines Anne Carson’s *Nox*. Published in 2010 (although it started as a scrapbook in response to her brother’s death a decade earlier), this hybrid work also inhabits a genre-defying space. As a writer, I’m intrigued by how Carson’s epitaph-elegy-memoir combines visual and verbal forms to offer an innovative response to loss.

From a craft perspective, I am interested in how hybrid works, particularly these case studies, may be described as what Hejinian has called “open texts”. The “open text”, Hejinian writes,

...is open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit

in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather than directive. The writer relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a principle and control as a motive. The "open text" often emphasizes or foregrounds process, either the process of the original composition or of subsequent compositions by readers, and thus resists the cultural tendencies that seek to identify and fix material and turn it into a product; that is, it resists reduction and commodification" (43).

Emblematic of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets' goals, Hejirian's processes and hybrid works aim to break up and rearrange language in "open texts" within which the writer and reader can find new ways to make meaning. In 1983, Hejirian gave a talk on "The Rejection of Closure", positing a need for texts that become "open" through their "arrangement and rearrangement", repetition and compositional techniques. The material from Hejirian's talk subsequently appeared in *Poetics Journal* 4 (which Hejirian co-edited with Barrett Watten, 1984), and later in the essay collection *The Language of Inquiry* (2000). "Open texts", Hejirian says, question authority through their rejection of closure, drawing the reader into confronting the gaps between language and the world around us. "We delight in our sensuous involvement with the materials of language, we long to join words to the world—to close the gap between ourselves and things—and we suffer from doubt and anxiety because of our inability to do so" (*Language* 56).

Hejinian revised and extended some of these concepts in the 2001 essay “Continuing Against Closure” (*Jacket*) to show how the “gaps” in an “open text” bring forth “zones of encounter” (which she relates to political theorist Hannah Arendt’s “spaces of appearance”) for the speaker and reader. Through these sites of openness, subjectivity and understanding of ‘reality’ occurs. Hejinian includes “dreams and other works of the imagination” in these sites of encounter:

Reality is that which is, or can be, shared with other human beings, and it is to be found in spaces of appearance, places where things happen, where things do their thinging.

It is in this context that, though still arguing my case against closure, I can speak in favour of the border, which I would characterize not as a circumscribing margin but as the middle – the intermediary, even interstitial zone that lies between any one country or culture and another, and between any one thing and another.

Hejinian’s 2001 call for “Continuing Against Closure” is a helpful way of thinking about how 21st-century hybrid texts can act as what Hejinian called “open texts” which are able to ‘do’ what they ‘say’. “Open texts” often use fragmentation to blur genre boundaries and let the reader explore the complexity of the human experience with the author. One of Hejinian’s many ongoing projects<sup>23</sup>, *My Life, and My Life in the Nineties* is a testament to the value of

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<sup>23</sup> Hejinian is well-known for returning to, extending, and developing concepts over decades of her writing practice, for example, in her collaborative series with poet Leslie Scalapino, organised around each of the five senses. Following the

fragmentation in the creation of “open texts”. *My Life*, which first appeared in 1980 in 37 parts for her 37 years of life, is a well-known proceeding experiment in merging poetry with memoir. An expanded, 45-part version was published in 1987. *My Life in the Nineties* appeared in 2003 and later the two texts were published together as *My Life and My Life in the Nineties* in 2013.

Hejinian’s call for, and ongoing creative interest in, a poetics of the “open text” is useful for considering the extent to which hybrid writing, particularly *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox*, can articulate responses to loss. This project applies Hejinian’s definition of “open texts” from the initial talk (1983) and essay entitled “The Rejection of Closure” (2000) and her subsequent rally for texts that ‘favour the border’ in the later essay “Continuing Against Closure” (2001)<sup>24</sup>. On a basic level, a “rejection of closure” (*Language* 40) can be a valuable method for showing the gap between language and experience, particularly in response to catastrophe or crisis. Although, as Hejinian proposes, a completely “open text” is impossible due to the inadequacy of language to describe the “vastness and uncertainty” (*Language* 49) of our experience of the world, my readings consider the case studies as “open texts” which are characterised by their incompleteness. I read the books’ interaction of written and visual elements as enacting a “rejection of closure” (Hejinian *Language* 40). Their openness gives them two vital attributes: the capacity to enact the tension between

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publication of *Sight* by Edge Books (1999) and the death of Scalapino in 2010, the long-awaited second in the series *Hearing* was released in 2023.

<sup>24</sup> In 1995, Hejinian gave two talks to Stage 3 American Poetry students at Auckland University, which further exemplify her “long-term project” foregrounding the creative potential found in “the nature of the border terrain” as a transformational “realm of encounter”.

language and loss, and to invite the reader's participation<sup>25</sup>. In each of the case studies, I look at how their "zones of encounter" or "spaces of appearance, places where things happen, where things do their thinging" (Hejinian *Jacket*) become key to their articulations of loss, and for their involvement of the reader.

Although creative writing strategies and techniques are both on the same spectrum<sup>26</sup>, in Hejinian's terms, methods that can enable this collaboration include the text's 'arrangement and rearrangement' (43), a "generative rather than directive" writing voice (43), repetition (44), juxtaposition (44) and their resultant 'gaps' (48) which must be filled by the reader (*Language* 2000). Therefore, both reader and writer assemble meaning in these "open texts" by piecing together their fractured components.

In the next two chapters, I assess how two "open texts" engage the reader in ongoing assemblages of responses to loss. As I hope to demonstrate, this process may not seek to resolve loss, but instead make something useful from it.

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<sup>25</sup> Edmond (272), after Nealon, has drawn attention to Hejinian's awareness of reader collaboration in her poetics of "open texts", noting the influence of Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* in Hejinian's treatise, "The Rejection of Closure" (1983, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> In this thesis, *strategies* refer to the writers' overall methodologies, and *techniques* refer to how these methodologies are achieved. But I acknowledge these concepts can sometimes overlap.

## Chapter 2. Searching the tensions between language and loss:

### A craft-based reading of Lynn Jenner's *Lost and Gone Away*

"I ask my guests this question: If a pronoun can make brothers from strangers, what else could it do? Could it construct something useful out of bits and pieces? Could it reconcile the irreconcilable?"

(Jenner *Lost* 99)

#### 2.1 Introduction

Near the start of Part "THREE: Point Last Seen", the narrator of Lynn Jenner's *Lost and Gone Away* asks of the name that "the Christophers" (four sons of the same father to different mothers) share in her retelling of Jordi Puntí's *Lost Luggage* fable: "Could it construct something useful out of bits and pieces? Could it reconcile the irreconcilable?" (99). Through intersecting prose poetry, memoir, essays, and poetry, Jenner's hybrid text also explores similar questions. In this reading of *Lost and Gone Away*, these questions have helped me evaluate the productivity of the text's craft.

Lynn Jenner's genre-defying writing reflects her interest in research, place, history, and process, as well as her previous career as a psychologist. Jenner is known as a writer of hybrid texts—"sometimes essay, sometimes memoir, sometimes poetry" (NZ Society of Authors). Her three published books (*Dear Sweet Harry*, 2011; *Lost and Gone Away*, 2016; and *Peat*, 2019) combine all three forms, as well as others, with startling results and to critical acclaim. Self-described as "a creative writer with an interest in genre-crossing poetry" ("The index of

heightened sensations", 2014), Jenner's writing is characterised by its ability to move between different modes such as personal anecdote, history, and reflection. In reviewing *Lost and Gone Away*, Stead describes Jenner as a writer "whose pithy narratives demonstrate how prose can be 'poetry' simply by economy and sly wit" (*Read NZ*).

Jenner's writing process is one of the critical searches or "excavations" (62) which unfold in *Lost and Gone Away*. Informed by Jenner's active reading across broad subjects, these "excavations" (62) connect to the theme of human responses to loss. Early in the text, the narrator describes the importance of "books and facts" (62) to her distinctive mode of writing as a searching process:

Mostly I find books and facts in my excavations. Books are my listening and viewing devices, my undersea cables, my hearing aids, my best friends in troubled times and my weapon of choice. I am not easily cowed by their origins or their methods, even when these are august. I look them straight in the eye and take them on if I think they are wrong and I mess about with them quite a bit. (62)

From a writer's perspective, I am interested in how the hybrid writing or "messaging about" (62) in *Lost and Gone Away* directly involves the reader. In this case study, I interrogate key aspects of Jenner's craft which contribute to the text's "rejection of closure" (Hejinian *Language* 40). By assessing the effects of its strategies and techniques, I read the work as an "open text" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) that enacts tensions between language and loss. In navigating these

tensions, I propose that the speaker and reader become co-creators of Jenner's destabilised narrative.

In Section i. Reimagining form: A hybrid book in four parts, I describe the "bits and pieces" (*Lost* 99) of Jenner's work and their "tendency to adhere"(278), or how the writer reimagines form. I suggest that it is through this hybridity that *Lost and Gone Away* becomes an "open text" that enacts what it is about: a search about searches is performed within the book's destabilised forms and sequences. Due to the hybrid nature of the work, the reader has a crucial role in its "rejection of closure".

In Section ii. "Rearrangement" and the reader, I discuss how the techniques of self-reflexive narrative voice, fragmentation, juxtaposition, and repetition contribute to a process of opening the text in which "everything gets turned around" (*Lost* I) for both reader and writer.

In Section iii. "Could it construct something useful out of bits and pieces? Could it reconcile the irreconcilable?", I appraise what this "open text" suggests about the difficulty of seeking language for loss, and the provocation this can provide for other writers.

My understanding of Jenner's genre-blurring strategies and techniques (and how they enact the searches they describe) also informs my own creative writing in Part Two of the thesis.

## **2.2 Some background on the genesis, form and subject of *Lost and Gone Away***

For Jenner, there is an important tension between writing and research enacted in the hybrid work which sprang from her doctoral thesis. The result of several critical and creative investigations that the poet made between 2010 and 2014, *Lost and Gone Away* is a four-part hybrid of memoir, essays, prose poems, poetry, and visual elements. Each Part circles the theme of a search or searches. Each Part is also structured so the reader becomes complicit in these searches. Through its assemblage of fractured forms, the author considers the issue of how to write about loss, "but perhaps her ultimate subject is the act of searching itself" (*Lost* blurb).

The hybridity of *Lost and Gone Away* and its complexities make categorising it difficult. The work has been described as "an almost unclassifiable book" (Herkt "A New Zealand Perspective") and as a sort of "mosaic" (Herkt "As seen" 190; Green "Lynn is unafraid"; Reid). However, how the book is labelled or defined is not a key concern for its writer. Jenner has said in an interview with Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters colleague and fellow writer Pip Adam on Adam's podcast *Better Off Red*, that she is not especially interested in genre definitions, boundaries, or binaries. At the launch of *Lost and Gone Away*, Anna Hodge from Auckland University Press (also recorded as part of Adam's podcast) described the book as "a triumph of process" (01:49 - 01:51). Following the launch, Adam interviewed Jenner about her process and the genre classification/s she might give the book. Jenner explained that she is happy to describe this "book object" as, "among other things... a

whole lot of investigations of searches and it is itself a search... What is being searched for? Well, there are some literal things that are being searched for, but I think in the end, searches are always about meaning. So that's probably what it is for me. It's a way of thinking through things, of sifting things and finding meaning" (0:09:00 - 0:14:50).

From its beginnings as Jenner's PhD project at the International Institute of Modern Letters, the different Parts of the work were crafted to be a mix of critical and creative writing. As Jenner explains, the dissertation "began as two intentions: to write an exploration of 'missing people' and to use the form, style, and structure of [the] exploration to echo experiences of loss and absence" (*Everyday Life* 9). A general aim of the thesis was "that critical and creative elements are integrated to the point where it is not possible to distinguish much of the work as exclusively 'creative' or 'critical' in intent" (*Everyday Life* 11).

In her thesis, Jenner explains that a willingness to explore new ideas and methods in her writing and research process was influenced by a "bottom-up" approach rather than a "'top down' from a theoretical or genre-based" (11) framework as the project evolved. This sense of exploration and experimentation is embedded in the subsequent book and repeatedly signalled to the reader through how the text is organised. The incompleteness of its different components is a continual reminder of the reader's role in the putting-together process. After the first year of her PhD research, Jenner decided to create and curate three separate text objects, designed to stand alone while also forming "a picture when placed side by side...

always acting out of a rejection of completeness and simple interpretations”, joined through “their relationship to loss, search and re-construction” (11).

When the book (which evolved from the thesis) launched in 2015, reviewers noted its capacity for conveying human loss, observing how Jenner’s personal inquiry process leads the narrator and reader into considerations of what is “lost and gone” and how this may resurface or be (re)found, to speak of absence and distance (Green, Herkt, Koed). Paula Green’s review highlighted how Jenner’s fragmented navigation of “knotty issues” in the text reminds us “that there is no singular response and no singular way to write your response” to loss (“Lynn is unafraid”). Thomas Koed also drew attention to Jenner’s fragmentation, noting how it allows the reader to consider what of the “unregainable whole” is left behind or retained after loss (“Review”). Calling the work “a triumph of remaking and restoration”, David Herkt emphasised Jenner’s construction of “a mesh of references” to address “the nearly unspeakable topic of the Holocaust” from the distanced perspective of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century New Zealand writer (“A New Zealand perspective”).

Indeed, each of the four reviews that appeared following the book’s publication focussed a large portion of their discussion on Jenner’s wayfinding approach to the subject of the European Holocaust. In his online review Herkt explained “Jenner gives us an understanding of the Holocaust through its after-effects while admitting that we can never truly comprehend such a vast and brutal action” (“A New Zealand perspective”). In a subsequent 2016 review for

*Landfall*, Herkt describes the "tactful<sup>27</sup>" writer-position Jenner applies towards the topic of Holocaust, a position which shows her remove in "writing from the frontiers" (192). It is a subject that Jenner arrives at "elliptically, without presumption", within which her gathering and connecting method is "possibly the only strategy available to a New Zealand writer a half century after the events that centre the book" (192).

Likewise, Koed describes Part "FOUR: I ring the bell anyway" as the space where the writer makes "the most difficult of literary approaches: the Holocaust and the tendrils of antisemitism that appear in unexpected places" ("Review"). Both Koed and Herkt compare Jenner's approach to writing about the Holocaust in *Lost and Gone Away* with the "memory works" (Herkt, "As Seen" 193) of W.G. Sebald, an author whose work is referenced multiple times in the book (269, 317, 318, 322, 330, 423, 622, 631). Koed, as does Jenner, points out how Sebald approaches the Holocaust indirectly by "writing around its edge, pointing to it with all the details that appear to be about something else" ("Review"). Koed remarks that Jenner's success is in how she approaches the Holocaust "directly but by writing always about her approach, about herself and about asking how it could be possible to think about the Holocaust from her situation in present-day New Zealand, if it is possible to think about the Holocaust at all". Likewise, Herkt explains, "There is something personal, human and very sympathetic about her handling of the topic of the Holocaust. It is not that she wishes to steer away from the subject, but it seems we need not *stare*" ("As seen" 193). In Section ii, I discuss

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<sup>27</sup> These are Herkt's italics, for emphasis.

Jenner's use of sound as a metaphor which carries some of the writer's unease about writing about the Holocaust from the distance of "where I am" in New Zealand (170).

Aside from these four reviews (Green, Koed, and the two by Herkt) and Pip Adam's podcast that appeared at the time the book was published, then C.K. Stead and Nicholas Reid's later brief commentary, I have found limited further critical discussion<sup>28</sup> of the strategies and techniques employed in *Lost and Gone Away*. This gap has added to my motivation for exploring the productivity of this hybrid book (and hybrid works from New Zealand in general). Specifically, I am interested in its quest for language for (re)constructing loss and how this involves the reader.

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<sup>28</sup> Although poet Aleksandra Lane's PhD thesis (2014) provides a detailed close reading of Jenner's "dramatic lyric speakers" in *Dear Sweet Harry*.

## 2.3 Strategies and techniques

### i. Reimagining form: a hybrid book in four parts

"Can form make the primary chaos (the raw material, the unorganized impulse and information, the uncertainty, incompleteness, vastness) articulate without depriving it of its capacious vitality, its generative power? Can form go even further than that and actually generate that potency, opening uncertainty to curiosity, incompleteness to speculation, and turning vastness into plenitude? In my opinion, the answer is yes; that is, in fact, the function of form in art. Form is not a fixture but an activity."

(Hejinian, "The Rejection of Closure" 47)

"Searches are always about meaning. So that's probably what it is for me. It's a way of thinking through things, of sifting things and finding meaning."

(Jenner, *Better Off Read*, Interview with Pip Adam, 2015)

In the Foreword to her doctoral thesis, *Everyday Life in the Ancient World: Four Re-Collections* (2013), Jenner writes about how her first book *Dear Sweet Harry* has been described as a poetry collection, as one "long poem", as "a mixed genre work", and that she thought of it "as a non-continuous narrative, hovering on the edge of fiction and non-fiction" (9). *Lost and Gone Away* also subverts genre conventions. In its re-imagining of form, Jenner's second published book shows her interest in "how the form of a piece of writing can embody the subject that it describes" (*Read NZ*).

The theme of loss permeates *Lost and Gone Away* and necessitates each of the searches within it. Absence and distance are components of loss, which humans face in distinct ways (LaCapra 700). Seeing or feeling the subject of loss from a distance is one of the multiple human responses to loss that the book (re)constructs with the reader. In her discussion of the

collaborative creation of the 'Index of heightened sensations' that became the final Part in her creative writing thesis, Jenner explains that since the idea of loss was woven throughout the work, it was "un-indexable"<sup>29</sup>:

At one stage my supervisor suggested I index the concept of loss. As an obedient PhD student I attempted this, but failed. Loss in one form or another pervaded the whole work, something which, after this experiment, seemed best left implicit. I have commented directly on this in the index.

longing 47

loss (un-indexable)

*The Lost: a Search for Six of the Six Million* (book) (Mendelsohn) 195

loyalty 98

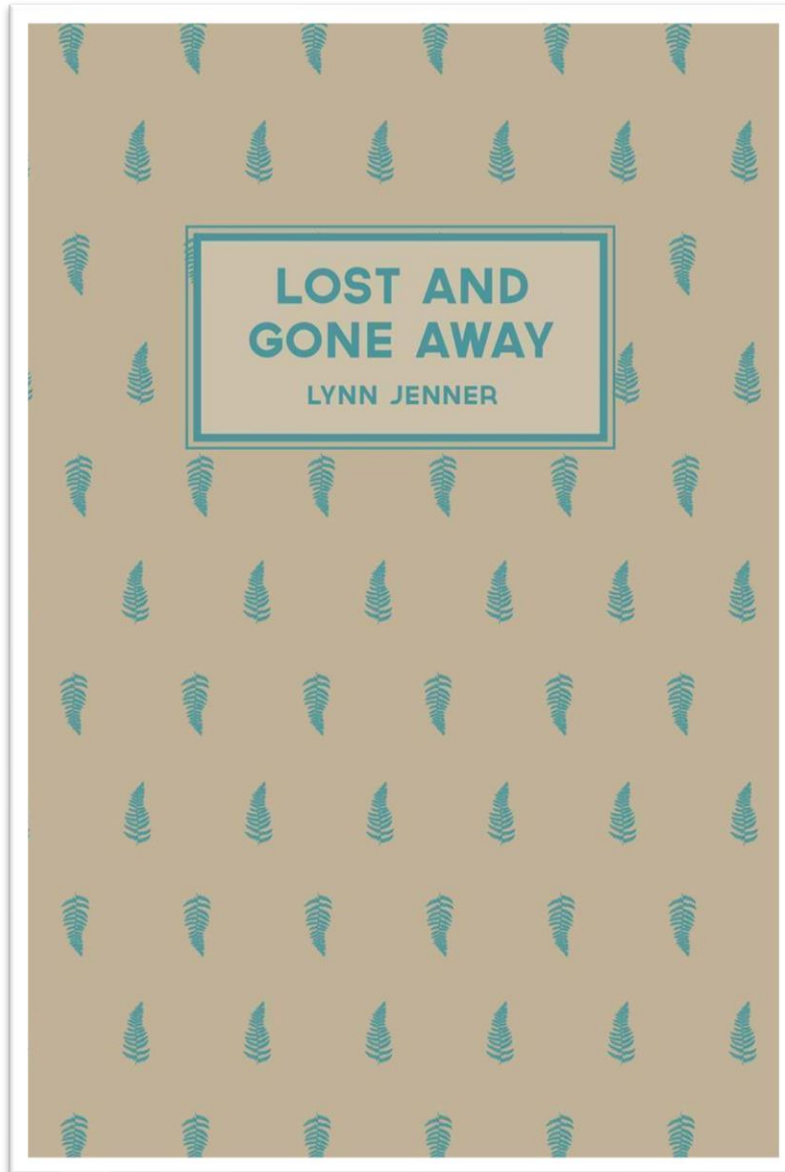
(265)

The book's materiality is integral to what makes *Lost and Gone Away* an "open text" that enacts the tensions between language and loss. Destabilisation is apparent in the interplay of the physical form of the work (design, layout, typography, and white space) and the verbal forms within it. The form of Jenner's book-object enacts its subject in several ways. These are experienced upon first picking up the text. The articulation of the difficult process of finding "knowledge" or words for loss is shown upon a first encounter with the

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<sup>29</sup> Although this Index was cut from the final book that is based on Jenner's PhD work, it provides some practical ways to navigate the author's process and thematic concerns across her thesis and subsequent book. Since her overall PhD project from the beginning was about human responses to loss and experimented with strategies to articulate these within a cross-genre work, it provides a helpful talisman for my own creative writing project.

book through its destabilising of form. The 278-page book is the size and shape of a novel, encased in a duo-chrome cover that bears the title (in the top third of its front sleeve) in block letters, framed like a card in an old-fashioned filing cabinet. In many ways, the pages inside this book are an invitation into Jenner's filing cabinet of four years' writing and research. It is organised in four Parts, requiring the reader to make connections between and within each. Like rummaging through a folio, the reader is complicit in the text's gathering of observations in relation to human experiences of loss. Jenner has arranged the research, documentation, annotations, and filing; now the reader visits and rearranges the material alongside her. This process of "arrangement and rearrangement", in Hejinian's terms (43), characterises *Lost and Gone Away* as an "open text".



*Figure 1: Kalee Jackson's cover design, for which the brief was to incorporate elements which chime with 1950's Caxton Press book jackets. Source: Auckland University Press.*

*Lost and Gone Away's* book jacket, reminiscent of post-World War II Caxton Press covers, also connects with Jenner's archiving of loss. Kalee Jackson's cover design imbues the book-object with a New Zealand aesthetic laced with ambiguity and nostalgia. In what could be a play on a chevron pattern, rows of what look like either ferns or feathers adorn the cover, in sets of six

inverted and then seven upright ferns/feathers. On a pale manila-folder-coloured background, this pattern brings connotations of old wallpaper, 1940s and 50s Kiwiana, or the sense that the reader holds a hefty folder of research papers<sup>30</sup>.

Inside, the book is divided into four Parts, signalled by the Contents page and the title page for each Part. An 'arranging and rearranging' (Hejinian, *Language* 43) processes is first suggested by the title pages for each Part, which signal the tone and overall topic, like the cover sheet for the folio the writer and reader search through together.

## ii. A process of "arrangement and rearrangement"

Inseparable from how the material forms of the case study articulate responses to loss is its reimagining of verbal forms. This subsection explores how Jenner experiments with reconfiguring and juxtaposing traditional literary forms, including prose, poetry, essay, elegy, and memoir, so the work becomes an "open text" which enacts tensions between language and loss.

Structured as four investigations into loss on a personal and public level, the subjects of *Lost and Gone Away* span relationships, art, and community. Stories of loss and its implications – fragmented throughout the book – include searches related to objects and artefacts (the diamond ring story, Sappho's poetry, a photograph of Marianne Hirsch's parents in pre-World

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<sup>30</sup> Jenner, as "a bit of a Caxton Press fan" explains that "given the way the Holocaust section of LGA relates to the immediate post war period, I wanted the cover to chime with that period (email, 27 March 2023).

War II Czernowitz, Bruno Schulz's lost murals), searches for "missing people"(95): persons known to the speaker who have been deliberately or unintentionally lost, as well as the annihilation of whole communities; and interrelated searches for meaning, ways of talking about or remembering, what is "lost and gone away" in these stories. Within these layered stories of searches, the reader is continually reminded of their crucial role in piecing together the text. By revealing her writing processes, the narrator invites the reader into the kaleidoscopic world of the text as it becomes a type of "panorama machine" (*Lost* 19), a "zone of encounter" or an open space of possibility (Hejinian "Continuing").

"Zones of encounter" (Hejinian "Continuing") are activated through the fragments' organisation into sequences that form patterns. These patterns reconstruct Jenner's "mosaic" process (Green "Lynn is unafraid"; Herkt "As seen" 190; Reid), embodied in the text as a series of searches in which the reader is complicit. Because the searches in *Lost and Gone Away* are generally inconclusive, they give the text a sense of openness in which thematic threads are constantly renewed or "turned around" (1). The often ambiguous outcomes of the searches within the text reward the reading experience as they ask the reader to interact with the form in a way that may not happen in more linear forms. (The story of the Christophers is not resolved, the stones placed at the Makara cemetery on United Nations Holocaust Remembrance Day "do not make anything. They are just stones" (275)). In this way, the narrator uses fragmentation so the reader can connect ideas alongside the writer.

Navigating through the sequences the writer builds by repeating motifs to develop connected fragments, the reading experience (as in any book, as reader response theory emphasises) is a matter of co-construction. As reviewers (Herkt, Green, Koed) noted when *Lost and Gone Away* was published, Jenner makes this co-construction explicit. By calling attention to her process, the narrator allows the reader to notice how the text's components work together to form a destabilised yet cohesive whole. Thus, with the reader's participation, *Lost and Gone Away* continually becomes an "open text".

The experience of reading this book can also feel like being in conversation with the narrator as she reveals her re/search process across her experiments in merging different genres and forms. Jenner's destabilised form enacts its subject matter through how narrative and the poetic co-exist across and within each Part. Various juxtaposing fragments and written and visual material are 'arranged and rearranged' (Hejinian, *Language* 43) so that as the reader engages with this text, they also participate in a type of search. An intricate series of narratives emerge and interconnect from the author's reading and writing as "excavations" (*Lost* 62). These "excavations" are revealed through Jenner's organising and sequencing of juxtaposing fragments of poetic prose, poetry, and found material. The book's constantly shifting modality recruits the reader into the co-creation of the "open text" as an ongoing search. Therefore, the narrator/reader relationship has an integral and productive role in the work's articulation of difficult, cyclical processes of loss.

The following four subsections outline the articulations of loss enacted in each of *Lost and Gone Away*'s quartet of Parts.

### **ONE: The ring story**

In Part "ONE: The ring story", the narrative begins "when everything is turned around" (1) with a diamond ring lost in the Christchurch earthquakes, told as a series of diary entries and extracts from emails and letters. Stead has remarked that "The story about the lost diamond ring is so narrowly focused and yet gave me a broader sense of what the Christchurch earthquake experience was 'like' (as we say) than I think anything else I've read" (*Read NZ*). In this part, facts and unsettling and unsettled observations are organised chronologically as the writer recounts searching for the lost ring (7). From this first story onward, the writing style is both intimate and expansive, drawing the reader into the first search embodied in the text as well as into the thematic concerns of the book as a whole:

#### **19 March 2011**

I phoned the jeweller's shop in Cashel Mall. There was no reply. I pictured the phone ringing in the Red Zone. Perhaps there were other phones ringing? (3)

A demonstration of how prose can be 'poetry'" (Stead), these early sentences show *Lost and Gone Away*'s capacity to draw the reader into its enactment of the tensions between language and loss. The personal story of the lost family heirloom connects to the impacts of wider-scale

losses across Christchurch after the quakes via the simple question, "Perhaps there were other phones ringing? (3)." Jenner's query asks the reader to consider the collective anxieties of a community in the wake of a natural disaster. In this way, the detail of a ringing phone allows a single story of personal loss to spiral outwards and connect multiple stories of loss. (Throughout the text, Jenner will return to the motif of sound to connect ideas across fragments. I examine these as repetitions or echoes in more detail in Section ii).

Through the narrator's diary-like recording of her personal experiences of the Christchurch earthquakes, she conveys some of the upheavals that defined this time for Cantabrians. In this first story, the city is described as being obscured, its centre having been hollowed out. While driving across town after retrieving the ring, the city centre is described as "dark as the inside of a cow" (17). This is an unusual simile, which jolts the reader into the unusualness of the experience with the speaker. Christchurch, the narrator's mother's home, has shifted from the known and familiar into a realm of the unhomely and unknown.

The lack of closure in Part "ONE: The ring story" demonstrates the threshold or "border" space (Hejinian "Two Talks", "Continuing") that hybrid texts can open. Its 13 diary entry fragments and final postscript shift between the gaps of what is missing from the facts as the speaker wonders "if all this really happened" (17) towards new cohesions and reconfigurations made by the speaker and reader. So "the ring story" operates in a Hejinian "border" space ("Two Talks", "Continuing"). Its openness is a prelude for the subsequent more heavily fragmented Parts that follow.

The epigraph for Part ONE, "where everything gets turned around" (I), offers a helpful way to think about the motives and motions of the text as a whole<sup>31</sup>. Jenner establishes thematic threads that later reappear, creating a sense of circularity. Digressions and thought drifts are "turned around" (I) as Jenner scrutinises ideas and stories, words and history. The reader is included in Jenner's pattern-making process as they encounter the fragments and sequences in each of the book's four Parts. It is the process of exploring these threads rather than fixing on any one response or authorial proclamation that is most important. The narrator-reader-text circuit is an ongoing search. In Hejinian's terms, the writing is "generative rather than directive" (43), so the text's fragments are in constant motion.

"The ring story" was a late addition to the original three-part manuscript, causing the structure of the hybrid work to get "turned around" (I). Jenner explains in her PhD thesis that during the writing of the work, the Christchurch earthquakes happened, so this story emerged around that time and needed to be in the book. The story of the disappearance of her mother's diamond ring in the post-quake, cordoned-off red zone became the opening piece in *Lost and Gone Away*. The ring story illustrates both assertion and uncertainty around "facts" that "make astounding patterns" (25) throughout the text. This oscillation between assertion and uncertainty develops a productive narrator/reader relationship as the first-person 'I' and second-person 'you' sift through the fragments and "facts" (25).

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<sup>31</sup> The epigraph could also be an allusion to the superstitious act of turning rings around for good luck.

In another enactment of 'turning around', the book begins with a search for a diamond ring and ends with a description of the annual United Nations Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony of placing stones "on a grave to help the dead dissolve into dust and to show them that in that moment, someone remembers them, whether as air or sparks or dust" (275). The image of the lost diamond ring also links to the image of stones on the final page, illustrating how the text's connected narrative sequences can create a sense of ambiguity and circularity. The lost ring and the stacking of stones are metaphors for complex issues surrounding the interminable process of expressing loss. The diamond ring story, as the narrator notes in the Postscript: December 2014, "had a happy ending", yet "Nearly four years later, there are still families living in sheds, and thousands of others living in their broken homes while they battle their way through the insurance system. [...] All of this makes the return of the ring a nice moment in a big complicated story" (17). This postscript reminds the reader of the ongoing difficulties many people face in Ōtautahi/Christchurch: a narrative that continues beyond the personal earthquake story from the opening pages of this book.

In "The Wind Blows" (the final fragment in the book's closing section), the stones "do not make anything. They are just stones" (275). Yet the process of placing them is where the reading experience of the text ends. While "The wind blows" and "The pine trees bend" at the Mākara site of annual memorial, the fragment describes an ongoing remembering. It is at once direct

and in constant motion, developing a sense of inconclusiveness alongside continuity, or ongoing “becoming”<sup>32</sup>, as questions surrounding loss endure.

## ***TWO: The panorama machine***

The reading/searching experience of Part TWO can be compared to looking through the eyepiece of the “panorama machine” (21), with a new fragment appearing with almost every turn of the page. In this Part, Jenner gathers multiple responses to loss, inviting the reader to encounter them as singular, then connected, fragments. The pieces that emerge from her writing and research are organised as a collage of prose, lists, quotations, recounts, notes, photographs, retellings, definitions, poems, cut-ups, a diagram, a press release, and a journal entry.

Throughout *“The panorama machine”*, the writer describes her active process of reading, listening and viewing, then responding to the texts she has engaged with in different ways. Writing and research are intertwined in this section, bringing the collection of fragments a kaleidoscopic effect. The fragments shift from prose snippets about “A boy called Joseph” (21), to the narrator recalling books she read repeatedly “As a child” (22). Jenner mines these memories for how they taught her that “each time you read a book, you read it differently” (22) and that “Facts make astounding patterns when placed side by side, and are, in addition,

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<sup>32</sup> To reference Maggie Nelson, (referencing Roland Barthes in the title of their hybrid “autotheory” memoir, *The Argonauts*) the text is ‘constantly renewing’ like the lover is akin to the Argo ship, regenerating plank by plank during its journey, continually becoming new with each utterance of “I love you”.

much less self-conscious than anything writers imagine" (25). This statement manifests in Part Two (and indeed throughout the work). That is to say, Jenner places dates, places, and objects in modern and ancient history "side by side" so that the writer and reader notice "astounding patterns" (25). The mosaic formed by this sequence of fragments suggests continual process whereby "everything is turned around" (1). The "turning around" does not bring the speaker or reader to a narrative closure but instead points to other places, connections, and responses to loss.

In Part Two, the first few words in bold become the title or standfirst for each sequence. A reflexive process of searching begins when the reader is introduced to the motif of "the panorama machine" via the story of "A boy called Joseph" (21). In this sequence, the story of Joseph unfolds as his grandmother takes him on an outing to glimpse the still lives of "A Native Wedding in Samoa", "Eskimo Fur Traders" or "The Emperor's Birthday" through the eyepiece of the panorama machine. Both Joseph and his grandmother are described as enjoying the excursion. The characters often return to the panorama machine, both physically and mentally. On the day that is described, the grandmother carries the residual memory of her experience of looking at "The Emperor's Birthday" by "humming the Radetzky March all the way home on the tram and conducting an invisible orchestra with tiny movements of her lilac-gloved hand" (21). For the boy, there is a negligible physical awkwardness associated with the ritual of looking through the panorama machine, whereby "It doesn't matter that you must sit a little awkwardly to reach from the stool to the metal eyepiece and that you must sit rigidly in this posture if you want to see the pictures" (21). In many ways, the character of Joseph

represents the writer's approach, in repeatedly returning to difficult subjects and embracing their awkwardness. Jenner looks directly at her subject matter, owning particular points of view and opening up possibilities for multiple viewpoints through ambiguity. This "openness" or 'turn[ing] around' (I) aspect of the book continually implicates the reader in the writer's process.

For Joseph, there is also a sadness associated with the panorama machine that is felt bodily because "It doesn't matter that your breath condenses on the metal of the eyepiece, drips onto your face and runs down your cheeks like tears unless you lick each drop as it passes your mouth" (21). That the pictures are reconstructions or representations that are frozen within the machine is also a source of sadness for him, as conveyed in the final line of this opening segment: "Joseph thinks it is a little sad that all the people and distant other lands remain inside the panorama machine, no matter how many times he looks at them" (21). Similarly, Jenner acknowledges many times in *Lost and Gone Away* the difficult distance between language and experience. (For example, in "The muttering poem": "Scholarship also tricks us – / Nothing fills the silence / in this broken aching form" (53).

After the flash fiction story of "A boy called Joseph", Part Two continues to take the reader through "the panorama machine" of places and stories of the past via Jenner's collation of snapshot-like fragments. The process of searching for knowledge about loss is enacted through how these fragments are organised and sequenced. The fragments "make astounding

patterns" (25) through the cyclic way Jenner returns to ideas and images connected to loss, in a similar way to how psychological responses to crisis and loss are repetitive.

In terms of the structure of Part Two, Jenner uses dates as entry points for each fragment. In this order, the reader is taken to the writer's investigations into: 1938 - the year the Anschluss was signed (23) and the year Freud wrote "A Word about Anti-Semitism" (28), a collection of "objects of everyday life" of the ancient world from 425 BCE to circa 350 BCE "grouped in this case by the British Museum in 2001" (24), a list of "all the books I have worn in and worn out" made by the author in 2008 (25), the author's reading of Anne Carson's *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, published 2003 (33), Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt's discovery of mounds of ancient papyrus in Egypt in 1896 followed by Oxford University's invitation to the public to help transcribe the fragments in 2011, the writer's meeting with a prolific but unpublished Central Otago poet in 2008 (58-65), 1954 or 1955: when Elvis Presley sang Bill Monroe's song "Blue Moon of Kentucky" (66), the process of making the documentary *Secondhand Sureshots* in 2010 (68-71), the appearance of the documentary *And Europe Will Be Stunned* in New Plymouth in the summer of 2012 (72-74), Holocaust survivors who spent summers at Raumati in the 1950s and 60s (75-76), the discovery of Bruno Schulz' lost murals in Ukraine in 2001 (78), their removal and the ensuing conflict about this between 2001 and 2008 (84-87), then the writer's notes about this event from October 2013 (89), and finally to Ukrainian writer Yuri Andruhovych looking "out from that room that had been a pantry to the corner of Mickiewicz and Czacki Streets, in November 1942" (91).

As with those which follow, this Part is about looking into or 'turning around' (I) ideas and stories rather than building towards narrative closure. Part Two enacts this inquiry in several ways. Firstly, it begins and ends with the gaze: Joseph's gaze into the panorama machine (21) and finally, the gaze of Andruhovych looking out onto a street intersection in Drohobych (91). These fragments are self-conscious in their looking, reconstructed through descriptions of two contrasting characters engaged in intent peering. The first gaze is young Joseph's, as he is depicted staring at frozen images trapped inside a machine (21). The gaze motif is "turned around" (I) or returned to via the image of Andruhovych watching a corpse and a flock of birds from a window (91) at the house "some people" in 2001 "still call [...] Villa Landau" (78). The notion that both gazes are through a distancing lens (the eyepiece of the panorama machine, the apartment window) reminds the reader of the complexity of looking at loss, embodied throughout the text. Further, the distant gaze here could represent Jenner's concern with writing about the Holocaust from "over here" (176) in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The productivity of the genre-crossing fragments in this Part, as in the entire work, is in the speaker and reader's role in making connections across the text's (re)constructions of responses to loss. Joseph and his grandmother return again and again to the panorama machine, and the "swarm of black birds" in the Drohobych street in 1942 "keeps rising" as "Over and over again something agitates them, they rise, circle the dead man in the street then settle again in the rafters" (91). Here, the symbolic story of the lost art of Bruno Schulz is closed but not closed with a prose extract within which the writer describes another writer –

who knew Schulz personally – looking out of the room in which Schulz created the famous paintings.

The last fragment in this Part also uses a temporal shift as the narrative jolts back from descriptions of the ongoing scandal of Schulz' lost art and its ownership at the turn of the 21st century to the war-time year of Schulz' murder. Jenner's final image in this sequence describes black birds circling a dead man "whose pockets are stuffed with bread crusts" (35). The reader may surmise that the dead man represents Schulz. The reader could also interpret the fragment as an illustration of the trauma of an individual life, and the millions of lives, cut short by the Nazi regime's atrocities and mass murder. The bread crusts may represent the trauma of unfulfilled potential, while the dark circling birds may represent the ongoing intergenerational trauma that resulted. This fragment also brings forth a sense of patterns continuing or, to refer to the Schulz quotation used to introduce the artist's story early in Part TWO, of "a tendency to grow back, to re-generate" (32).

### ***THREE: Point Last Seen***

Part "THREE: Point Last Seen" explores the process of searching for missing people (95) and the writer's research on and response to this topic. This Part also enacts the jarring, unsettling process of searching for someone missing or lost. The hybrid writing achieves this effect by combining fragments about different encounters with (and conversations about) missing

people with Search and Rescue terminology and protocols and the psychology involved in being lost or looking for someone.

The writer introduces this Part by explaining how people respond to her revelation that she is researching missing people: “everyone has something to say” (95). Her research topic prompts listeners to tell her about people they know or have heard of who have disappeared, lost touch, escaped, lost connections, lost cultures, lost family, experienced the loss of children or pregnancy loss or felt absence on a personal, communal, or inter-generational level (95). From here, the narrative expands to consider the story of the Christophers in *Lost Luggage* by Jordi Puntí (96 - 99), a personal recount of the writer having had “more than one experience of someone seeming to disappear on my watch” (106), fragments about what happens when someone gets reported missing, and what happens when people contemplate losing (118, 120) or taking their life (108).

In terms of tone, these fragments flip between being intellectual: “*A sign often indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else. But a sign can also be a gesture, a nod, a movement, a signal or even a wave*” (113), acutely personal: “That Sunday morning I knew only that losing a person is like losing your keys” (111), arch: “The number of books and online guides about how to disappear is surprisingly large, leading me to suppose that a number of people need advice on the subject (125)” or clinical: “After that we think about airways and bleeding (129)”. In some ways, these tonal shifts illustrate the different responses people may cycle through when searching for a lost person, when the flight/flight/freeze/flop response is

activated, which may also be followed by the grief process. They also show how the “generative” voice of the “open text” (Hejinian, *Language* 43) can articulate tensions between language and loss in a variety of ways, just as responses to loss are varied.

In the final fragment of this Part, the reader is again addressed as being one of a collective of people the author has gathered in the hope that “your voices and mine would join somehow – the moment of joining both a sign of and caused by the arrival of some new understanding (135)”. This passage further invites the reader to participate in the author's quest to understand loss. Interestingly, it is the reader and not the writer who reaches a new understanding, as conveyed by the final lines of the fragment: “*That’ll do, you said* (135)”. Here, according to the speaker, it is the reader who reaches a reoriented perspective on loss.

#### ***FOUR: I ring the bell anyway***

Part “FOUR: ***I ring the bell anyway***” (137) enacts some of the complexities of the tensions between language and experience or ‘knowledge’ of loss through its forms and content. “*I ring the bell anyway*” is the longest section. It branches out from stories and reflections about life on the Kapiti coast in Te Rauparaha’s time and today (139 - 153), to the story of hibakusha Akihiro Takahashi (163 - 165), the author’s encounters with Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* (159 - 161) and W.G Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (161 - 162) and the author’s experiences researching the Holocaust from New Zealand.

*"I ring the bell anyway"* directly and indirectly addresses the narrator's concerns with the complexities of researching and writing about the "the unalterable and implacable fact of the European Holocaust" (Herkt, "As seen" 191). Jenner's searches into the Holocaust unfold in the sequences which describe listening to and reading witness stories and survivor interviews, recording discussions with curators at Australian Holocaust museums and the Wellington Holocaust Centre and referencing several nonfiction and fiction accounts. Interweaving quotations from survivors with prose passages recounting the narrator listening to witness stories at the museums she visited becomes a way to foreground the lived experience of the survivors and their intention "that with their own bodies and voices, they will give the story of the Holocaust of European Jews the power of the real" (227). An example of this splicing method is when Jenner weaves the final two stanzas of the Israeli diplomat, writer, and lecturer Dr Moshé Liba's poem "You were not there" into a fragment that describes one of her research visits in which she is briefly "witness for the witness" (227). This passage marks Jenner's attention to listening as a significant method in her research and writing process.

If you did not:

see

hear

smell

feel

taste

Then:

you were not there. (227)

An awareness of the remove that the listener is positioned at when hearing these stories is developed in the later passage which explains how the reader “might sit on one of two round wooden stools attached to the wall at an awkward distance” to lift a telephone piece and hear one of the thirty-two recorded stories in the Holocaust Gallery at the Auckland Museum (242). This “awkward distance” (242) is central to the text, as indicated by the prose passage which appears in full on the back cover of the book:

More than a year ago a good friend, who speaks five languages and reads several more, told me it would not be possible to write about the Holocaust from New Zealand. There’s so little to say here, she said. You should go to Europe.

But this is where I am, I said. That is the problem. This is where I am from, this is who I am, and this is where I am.” (170)

Along with this quotation used as part of the book’s blurb, some of the difficulty of writing “about the Holocaust from New Zealand” (170) is also conveyed through the nightmares the writer recounts experiencing when staying in Sydney on a research trip to the Holocaust Museum<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> I address these in more detail as one of the key repetitions or echoes in the text, in Section ii.

As a result of her reading, Jenner creates a list of rules to guide her research into the Holocaust (225). The list also implies disapproval of some of the approaches Michael King describes in an interview with a survivor<sup>34</sup>. The final two lines show Jenner's self-reflexive "arranging and rearranging" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) process.

1. "I will not phone deaf old ladies out of the blue. I will  
arrange to be vouched for, and introduced.
2. I will not bang on people's front doors with my fist, or  
any metaphorical version of that.
3. I will try to recognise Yiddish words.
4. I will answer questions about my parents, my marital  
status, number of children, their degrees and their  
incomes, without flinching.
5. I will make sure I always have a clean hanky.
6. I will try to say German words correctly.
7. *Schpielberg* is the correct pronunciation of the name of  
the movie director.
8. I will not interrupt old people when they are telling  
me their story, except if there is a fire alarm.
9. I will not cry unless they do.
10. If they are women, they were beautiful when they were young.

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<sup>34</sup> In her 2015 review, Paula Green also points out Michael King's interviewing method "is a stand out example" of an approach she does not connect with ("Lynn is unafraid").

After I find a book with the title *This Crazy Thing A Life*

I add Rule 11: *Life* is crazy. People are getting by (225).

In *Lost and Gone Away*, each of the four Parts is a destabilised yet unified whole. Each connects to the others through repeated strategies and themes. The sequences in two parts of Jenner's book that examine the experience of personal loss and its proliferations are of primary interest to the next section of this reading. These are Part "TWO: The panorama machine" and Part "THREE: Point Last Seen".

### iii. "Rearrangement" and the reader

This subsection considers how Jenner's methods involve the reader in the text's 'rearranging' processes. Considering Hejinian's proposed techniques for "opening" a text, I assess Jenner's use of self-reflexive narrative voice, fragmentation, juxtaposition, and repetition. I suggest that these aspects of craft engage the reader in the text's enactment of what it is about – a series of searches for "knowledge" (*Lost* 26) of what is "lost and gone".

#### ***Self-reflexive narrative voice***

The main voice in this text is Jenner's. Her narrative perspective comprises viewpoints from various facets of her identity. These include the daughter whose mother lost a diamond ring in

the Red Zone after the Christchurch earthquakes, the researcher of "Everyday Life in the Ancient World", the psychologist, the reader, and the writer.

Jenner's candid narrative voice intrudes throughout the work, repeatedly emphasising how she organises and sequences fragments. Consequently, the reader is always aware of the writer's sifting and sorting process. Each Part begins with Jenner's description of the dominant type of writing to follow. For example, in "Part Two: The panorama machine", *"Quotes are justified (to show their canonical quality) and my contributions are unjustified. No pun intended"* (19). Later, "Part Three: Point Last Seen" is described as the space where *"at night, any and all contributions are justified"* (93).

The speaker repeatedly draws attention to the relationship between the first-person 'I' and the second person 'you' in the text. This self-conscious narrator reveals her thought process and changing points of view during the writing of the book, which in turn allows the reader to become more aware of their active reading as they join the speaker-writer on her search:

I am ready to acknowledge now that I greatly overestimated the tendency and capacity of knowledge to emulsify. Each little gobbet of knowledge does no more than adhere to other gobbets. For me, this tendency to adhere, while stopping short of the end result I had hoped for, is still an important finding.

*What is a tendency?* you asked.

A moored boat in an incoming tide will have a tendency to move closer to the shore, but its position will always be a reflection of a sum of forces, I said.

*That'll do*, you said. (135)

The reflexive and self-questioning narrator continually reminds the reader that the speaker/s may be unreliable. This use of ambiguity makes *Lost and Gone Away* an "open text", allowing multiple endings and meanings. For example, the reader may surmise that the dead man in the Drohobych street represents Schulz through the writer's reference to 1942, the date of his death; or that Sappho "may not have been a single person; perhaps she was a school?" (45).

Jenner's use of ambiguity (which requires work on the reader's part that other forms may not) is a characteristic shared across some of her other works. For example, in her first book, *Dear Sweet Harry*, the narrator is intentionally inconclusive about "the facts" of Mata Hari's story (94). Instead, through fragments, Jenner constructs a fictionalised version of Hari's character through Hari's imagined correspondence with Houdini, leaving the circumstances surrounding her death open-ended: either the media-reported execution or an alternative, mythologised version of her escape.

To try to find "knowledge" (26) or understanding, the narrator often makes explicit or implicit references to her research and writing processes. In her search for knowledge connected to various themes of loss, Herkt says, "Jenner wrings meaning out of minute detail and subtly interrogates both memory and the clichés that so easily take its place" ("a New Zealand Perspective"). How a certain kind of knowledge of loss can be articulated or 'rise up' (26) from literature is one of the main concerns enacted in the book. However, any literary search for knowledge about loss will be complicated, as shown through Jenner's repeated self-deprecating claim that her understanding is unreliable or "lacks authority" (26). Section ii examines the echo of a quest for knowledge in more detail.

### ***Fragmentation, juxtaposition, and sequencing***

In their analysis of *Dear Sweet Harry*, Lane points out how Jenner's signature style questions narrative by "offering contradicting information" (53) and by blurring "the line between figurative and literal, and between past and present.... moving between images, characters, and time periods, while maintaining a sense of coherence and unity" (58 - 59). The interrelated techniques of fragmentation, juxtaposition, and sequencing also play key roles in Jenner's collation of *Lost and Gone Away*, rendering it a continual and productive search "where everything gets turned around" (I). In this way, a list of objects from "Everyday Life" in Ancient Egypt (24) is placed on the page next to a list of "all the books I have worn in and worn out" (*Lost and Gone Away*, 25), followed by a prose paragraph on the next page that describes knowledge as "hovering over" a "pile of facts or a book" (26). It is through fragmented

arrangements like these that Jenner develops her themes about the tensions between language and experience, and how these can be productive for the speakers in, and readers of, this work.

The role of the fragment in *Lost and Gone Away* is found in its relation to other fragments. Jenner uses fragments to write about fragments, then finds ways to connect them, and for the reader to notice these connections. Each fragment is therefore part of a series of fragments that become sequences in the text's shared searching. Jenner's experimentation with shifting from one genre or voice to another, from fragment to fragment, creates a leap that the reader takes alongside the writer. Uncertainty is a necessary component of this mobilising effect, making the hybrid text's "arrangement and rearrangement" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) daring and exciting. In this manner, the fragmentation, juxtaposition, and sequencing in *Lost and Gone Away* are crucial to the work's assemblage as an "open text".

The reader can notice the dynamic and reflexive use of fragmentation throughout the book, most notably in Parts Two, Three and Four. In Jenner's patchwork style, her sequential choices generally mean fragments are returned to (or echoed) so narrative threads develop in an innovative, non-linear way. For example, the first sequence in Part Two is the story of "A boy called Josef", told in three sequential short, prose-poem-like paragraphs, separated by an asterisk (21). On the next page, in three paragraphs of prose (with the referenced book's blurb positioned after the first paragraph, centred, and framed by the ruled lines of a square) tells the story of what the writer's beloved childhood book *From Ur to Rome* taught her about re-

reading. Page 23 notes three events of 1938: when New Zealand's Labour government passed the Social Security Act, the year of the Anschluss and the year an "unnamed reviewer appreciated the emphasis Kathleen M. Gadd placed on the *everyday life* of people in the ancient world".

From the sequenced arrangement of these fragments across three pages, a process of gathering and collecting information is enacted in the text. The story of Josef is not returned to, but the importance of *looking*, of literature and words, of decisions about people's freedom and the significance of artworks and objects in revealing a way to understand life "from that time" (105) continues to be referenced throughout the rest of the text. Again, the reader becomes like Josef, looking again and again at these sequences in Part Two (and across the rest of the book) and making their own sense of them. The reader is guided by the intrusive 'I' of the narrator as fragment is connected to fragment, and a sense of moving towards and away from knowledge of loss is repeated.

Fragmented responses to loss in Jenner's text represent a non-pathologising 'turning around' (I) through connections that the writer and the reader make between fragments. These connections are made possible by the narrator's continual disclosure of her research and writing process. The overall effect of Jenner's approach of gathering, reading, researching, and then organising fragments as found ephemera, quotations, images, and extracts interwoven with personal response, reflections and questioning can be thought of as bricolage or "mosaic" (Herkt "As seen", Green "Lynn is unafraid", Reid). Drawing from "eclectic

places”, the way that Jenner places seemingly disparate topics alongside each other to trace and develop connections has been described as “currents that link: the stream-of-consciousness movement, the concatenation of ideas” (Green “Lynn is unafraid”). This careful curation continually draws the reader into its piecing-together process. In this way the destabilised form urges the reader into its ongoing articulation of the complexity of searching for language for loss.

### ***Repetition / Echoes***

**Paula Green:** I just hosted a festival of tree poems on Poetry Shelf – do you have recurring things in your poems?

**Lynn Jenner:** Trees, actually, and people dying. Also people talking.

(Green “Some questions”)

Hejinian contends that in open texts, repetition is a kind of juxtaposition (*Language* 44). In an analysis of her own hybrid text *My Life*, she explains how repetition-as-juxtaposition has a disruptive rather than melodic effect, inviting the reader to reframe the “recontextualized” idea in an ongoing process of meaning-making. Jenner’s repetitions also have this effect. By connecting seemingly disparate fragments, Jenner’s repetitions become jarring sequences, continually assembled by the speaker and reader.

While the traditional literary theory of trauma might read these repetitions as pathological (as Freudian flashbacks, wounds, or ruptures), it is possible that through assembling recurring textual details of personally tragic or catastrophic events, a sense of reconfiguration occurs. Jenner's repetitions are disruptive. Yet they also have a strange unifying quality. Examples of juxtaposing repetition are the motif of waves (eight mentions, in 'If you want to find land', 'Thinking about Waves', 'Looking back from the island'), the high-pitched noise, hum or scream (in 'Hair', 'How, exactly, will that happen?', 'Time is the most artificial of human inventions'), suitcases (ten mentions, including detailed consideration on page 201), the references to other artworks, books, essays and stories (Jordi Puntí's *Lost Luggage* fable, Kurtz' essay on Sappho and mourning, Sappho's poetry, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*, W.G Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Franz Kafka's *A Report to the Academy*, Michael King's *At the Edge of Memory*, Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*), "knowledge" (15 mentions), Point Last Seen (five mentions, including the name for the third Section) and the murals and writing of Bruno Schulz.

Repetition was a key strategy in the original manuscript which sprang from Jenner's active reading of texts and artworks for her PhD thesis. Jenner's description of her process in crafting the work that would later become *Lost and Gone Away* in turn urges the reader to engage with the text actively. Just as some of the writer's approach is symbolised in the character of Joseph in the opening to "The panorama machine" (19), the reader can also feel somewhat like the young Daniel in "Abe's stories", seeking links between "stories

buried inside each other like Russian dolls" (219), as they piece together fragments of a broader narrative. In outlining the framework for her thesis, Jenner writes:

In laying out the path of my own investigations, I have decided to follow the example set by Abraham Jaegar, grandfather of Daniel Mendelsohn, author of *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million*. Abraham's stories always started so wide that young Daniel never quite knew what the story would be about. In the second stage the story wandered around, taking digressions and entering many cul-de-sacs - so many that Daniel always wondered if any story would emerge. In the third stage a particular story would show itself and having done that, it would walk inexorably towards its own disastrous or strange or inspirational end (*Everyday Life* 195).

The published book likewise has several stages, stories, and pathways that the speaker and reader follow. It does however have some marked differences to the earlier thesis version described here, with one difference being in how the text begins. At the start of *Lost and Gone Away*, "a particular story" does emerge – that of the narrator's mother's heirloom ring, lost in the Canterbury earthquakes during Jenner's PhD research. From there, the story "radiates out" from "that epicentre of loss, the Point Last Seen" (blurb). This concept of a narrative radiating outwards, with crucial ideas emerging and then recurring to create echoes or 'loop' patterns brings a sense of cohesiveness to what superficially could initially appear as unconnected fragments. Their implications of non-linear, ongoing journey and return processes are useful

for thinking about this hybrid work. The reading experience of *Lost and Gone Away* is both disorientating and then re-orientating. It is a 'turning around' in Jenner's words (I).

When Adam suggests to Jenner that "it felt impossible to read this book inactively" (01:01:48), Jenner replies that "Certainly, part of my epistemology is that reading is a co-construction and I'm expecting the other person to be constructing their version of it" (01:02:09). This expectation of co-construction is explicitly repeated throughout the book and its productive looping patterns or echoes. Repetitions or echoes (often emphasised by the intrusive narrator) develop connections between the text's fragments and draw the reader's participation in its searches. This subsection focuses on the following repetitions and their effects: intertextuality/nestedness, "knowledge", unsettling sound and silences, cut-ups and gaps, the interplay of past/present/place, and white space and punctuation.

### ***Nested stories: a book about reading and writing***

"On his visits to the family in New York, Abe told Daniel stories, all of which proceeded in 'vast circling loops'<sup>35</sup>, each story containing another, each event needing to be explained by another story and another". (*Lost* 219)

One method Jenner uses to convey the complexity of articulating responses to loss is writing in loops about loops. In *Lost and Gone Away*, the challenge of writing about loss is repeatedly addressed through intertextual and intermedial allusions to other texts and artworks.

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<sup>35</sup> Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006, p.32.

References to works such as translations and responses to Sappho's fragments, W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Sigmund Freud's letters and Walter Benjamin's letters describe one representation of loss in a way that helps the reader understand another. An example of the use of allusions to convey complicated processes of loss is shown in Jenner's repeated references to the novel, *Austerlitz*: "but when I read W.G. Sebald's description of wild blue flowers, growing over the ruins of a bombed German town, I thought I had started to understand what he had seen one day in some warm paddock" (130). Later, Jenner writes of how she keeps returning to fictional characters in her research as a preferred way to represent the trauma of lived history:

Much later, having noticed the contributions made by Billy Pilgrim, the Tralfamadorians, Jacques Austerlitz and a man called Bloomfield from the suburb of Carlton in Melbourne, I add two more rules, these to be applied *ex post facto*.

12. It is important to find things out but even more important to avoid harming natural people.

13. Fictional people do not look you in the eye or feel pain. They are available without appointment, and at very little expense. Furthermore, their well-being is not of concern to any official bodies. They therefore make excellent research participants, and will be considered whenever possible as a preferable alternative to natural people or the natural descendants of dead people (226).

The nested stories in *Lost and Gone Away* enact the writer's research and writing process as the narrator describes the books, stories, authors, and artists that lead to the uncovering of prior or adjacent stories. One narrative leads to another, hides another, or reveals another. This is signified by the discovery of the mummified crocodile wrapped in papyrus with fragments of Sappho's poetry on it. This revealing is astonishing to the speaker-narrator, who exclaims to the reader: "*Oh! The crocodile wrapped in words*" (40). Here, the "Oh!" develops the intimate speaker-reader relationship by including the reader in the shared joy of revelation. Stories are embedded or nested within other stories throughout *Lost and Gone Away*, which the speaker and reader assemble.

The citational aspect of the book is a significant aspect of Jenner's "arranging and rearranging" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) process. Quotations from the author's active reading of historical and contemporary texts connected to her research into "loss, searches and re-constructions" (*Everyday* 277) accompany and punctuate her prose and poetry. In addition, extracts from museum catalogues, recalled conversations, books and articles provide counter pieces and often juxtaposing voices to the narrative voice. Forming sequences, juxtapositions, or echoes, these quotations from, and references to, other books in *Lost and Gone Away* function as important threads in the text's network of connections. In this way, stories endlessly lead to and away from other stories. This is evident in the selection of quotations such as *From Ur to Rome*'s 1937 blurb (22), the list of classical objects from "Everyday life" (24), "Walter Benjamin's dream" (30), "A letter from Sigmund Freud to a friend" (31) and an extract from Bruno Schulz' "The Mythologizing of Reality" (32). Sequenced across several pages, they

allow the reader to make links across the quotations not signalled or explained by the narrator, drawing the reader into the collation process that the book embodies. These small fragments from history speak of what is “lost and gone” and how individuals experience and respond to loss in myriad ways. Therefore, the text’s intertextuality is vital to its destabilised yet cohesive form.

### ***A quest for knowledge***

Another important repetition that engages the reader’s participation in the “open text” of *Lost and Gone Away* is the quest for knowledge. The first of fifteen utterances of “knowledge” occurs near the beginning of “Part Two: The panorama machine” in a fragment that stands alone like a prose poem, followed by two-thirds of a page of white space:

Sometimes, rising up from a pile of facts or a book, and hovering over it, is something I think of as a moment of knowledge. I could use a word like ‘nugget’ to signify the value of a particular piece of knowledge and hint at the exhausting labour of finding it. But since I do not perceive knowledge as or substance you can test with your teeth, a word like ‘nugget’ would be misleading. A shape in ectoplasm would be closer. My knowledge lacks authority, I’m afraid (26).

This fragment (and several that follow) shapes and subverts the idea of the narrator’s seeking knowledge about loss. It is a search for knowledge which is connected with trauma and is

therefore fraught<sup>36</sup>. The repetitions of the word “knowledge” swirl around the text, creating a sense of cyclic anxiety. Moreover, word choice allows for Jennerian ambiguity. For example, the term “ectoplasm” has multiple meanings. In biology, it refers to the viscous, clear outer layer of a cell’s cytoplasm. In a more ethereal sense, it refers to the supposed substance secreted from a medium during a seance. Either way, it seems that knowledge of loss in this text is complicated. “... a moment of knowledge” having the form of “A shape in ectoplasm” has connotations that knowledge can be slippery, elusive, or ghost-like. In a biological sense, this term links to Jenner’s idea of knowledge having a “tendency to adhere” (278). Regarding the spiritual connotations of “ectoplasm”, the term also associates finding knowledge about loss with a kind of haunting<sup>37</sup>.

The concept of a search for knowledge continues throughout the work, as the speaker describes her personal and intellectual quest for knowledge about different types of loss in collusion with the reader. That knowledge can slip away and be lost is examined at points in the text such as in the story of Daniel Mendelsohn’s search for his ancestors (219) and Marianne Hirsch’s interrogation of a “tiny photograph” of her parents taken by a street photographer in Czernowitz in 1942 (203).

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<sup>36</sup> Jenner has explained, “For me, the connection between method and text and trauma, and knowledge actually, is pretty explicit” (email 27 January 2020).

<sup>37</sup> For further reading of critical-creative hybrid writing which explores postcolonial hauntings in literature (particularly that of Australia and Canada), see Katrina Finlayson’s PhD project *Stranger: A creative writing practitioner immerses herself in the Uncanny* (2017).

The hope that knowledge can stick to other bits of knowledge and make something unified is suggested by the speaker who writes: "Desperate to understand a certain set of events, hoping that a clump of knowledge would form itself from crumbs, I have been calling meetings of people I think might have something useful to say" (98). The speaker describes crumbs becoming "a clump of knowledge", many understandings becoming "*a single knowledge*" (98). She also describes knowledge as having the capacity to "emulsify", whereby "each little gobbet" adheres to other gobbets" (135).

In Parts TWO and THREE especially, the trajectory of different knowledges that seem to slip away and then "adhere" (135) can be traced. The speaker's approach to seeking knowledge about loss is intimate and esoteric. The writer-self has conversations with the text's other voices, as mentioned earlier when she describes her hope that "your voices and mine would join somehow" (99). So, the self-conscious narrator is constantly questioning the assemblage process, just as she is questioning the texts she is examining in her research.

### ***Unsettling sound and silences***

*Lost and Gone Away* begins with speculation and uncertainty. These ideas are expressed through a recounted phone call to a "lawyer in Christchurch", following the disappearance of the narrator's mother's diamond ring in the Red Zone after the 2011 Canterbury earthquake (3). The lawyer speaks of "rumours that there has been much more looting (...) than is being officially admitted" (3). This makes the narrator wonder if "perhaps there were other phones

ringing in the Red Zone" (7), connecting her family story to a wider story of the impact of the disaster through the description of an unsettling sound.

Jenner repeatedly uses the symbol of sound to carry a sense of unease and anxiety across the fragmented text. The narrator uses this device to suggest that some of the subject matter of her searches makes her uncomfortable. Unease is signalled through recurring references to unsettling sounds such as the "high-pitched" noise, a "menacing growl" or "roar" (157). For example, in Part FOUR, the narrator recounts, "By chance I turned on the television on 20 February 2012 and saw some of this film" *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, a Nazi propaganda reel about the Theresienstadt concentration camp (155). This unexpected viewing leads her to recollect Sebald's description of Austerlitz watching the film, slowed down, scanning for a possible sighting of his mother. The topic of trauma is alluded to through the speaker's recount of watching some of a Nazi film without any soundtrack, and then recalling a fictional character watching the same film. Quoting Sebald Jenner writes, "The words 'menacing growl' made me sit upright. My heart beat faster, as it does just after an earthquake" (157).

Jenner writes that she has encountered the indescribable noise several times. The fragment then refers to "an earlier time when I had considered making an attempt to describe the voice I heard that night in Sydney", when the word 'roar' is inadequate for the frequency, depth and bass of the sound the narrator heard when trying to sleep in a hotel room near the Holocaust museum she had visited as part of her PhD research. Sebald's description of the "menacing

growl" also reminds her of reading a victim statement given to the police and having a nightmare that "was accompanied by a noise I have never tried to describe" (158). The attempt to describe an indescribable sound exemplifies the central tension of the text: the attempt to find language for loss.

Herkt connects Jenner's use of sound devices in the text with Aotearoa's position as "the world's most distant nation" ("As seen" 192), whereby the geopolitical distance of this country brought the trauma of the European Holocaust here belatedly. "In some matters, New Zealanders still inhabit a nation of echoes. Global events have always arrived in New Zealand with an inherent delay. Jenner's *Lost and Gone Away* is a book of distances, both temporal and geographical. It contains aural and cultural resonances as experienced from the borders, in late time" ("As seen" 192). The motif of waves which ripple through the text could also be thought of as sonic waves, rolling through the work.

In its final pages, Jenner gives the book an "open text" quality (Hejinian, 1983) when the narrator suggests that the work may be "whistling right now at a frequency I do not hear" (262). This alludes to the tensions that can arise when writing about trauma from afar, specifically from Aotearoa New Zealand after interviewing museum staff and survivor guides at Holocaust museums and centres in Sydney, Melbourne, and Wellington. The device of sound shows this anxiety building to a crescendo when the narrator dreams she hears a frightening "roar" emanating from the Sydney Jewish Museum as she spends a sleepless night in her hotel room in Darlinghurst (157) after her research visit.

### ***Cut-ups and gaps***

Interacting with Jenner's use of sound to convey uncertainty is her use of words from other places to see what new poetry might fall out of an existing piece of writing. Layered onto the worry expressed in the text around writing about the Holocaust from "over here" (176), the text also raises questions of ownership. A method that brings these questions to light are Jenner's experiments with found poetry and cut-ups. Alongside the narrator, the reader is made aware of concerns about who the stories fragmented across the text belong to, who might be able to tell them, and how?

The narrator repeatedly refers to these anxieties to show the complexities of finding language for loss, for example, in the sequence that reveals how "The poem about the candle" (50) and "The muttering poem" (54) came about. In this sequence, the speaker describes an active reading of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (a cut-up of Schulz' *The Street of Crocodiles* story collection) around the same time as reading Kurtz' "What Remains: Sappho and Mourning" (an essay about reading Sappho and thinking about how to "remember his brother in a way that was in some way true to the man his brother was" (51)), then responding creatively to these texts.

The genesis of both "The poem about the candle" (50) and "The muttering poem" (53) was in Jenner's playing with absence or taking away. As the narrator explains in this sequence, "The

poem about the candle” is a cut-up of Glenn Kurtz’ essay in which he interweaves mourning his brother and his reading of Anne Carson’s *If not, winter* (51). “The muttering poem” came about through Jenner’s investigation of *Tree of Codes*: Jonathon Safran Foer’s cut up of Bruno Schulz’ book: *Street of Crocodiles* (54), at the same time as she was reading the Kurtz essay. The narrator explains, “Intrigued by this method, I experimented with choosing items from Kurtz’ essay using the same rule: anything, from anywhere, as long as it had the same order as the original text. The muttering poem is the result” (56). So, in the process of creating these poems, Jenner’s texts speak of other texts, as well as speaking of loss, what is not there or has been taken away.

Jenner describes her process as eventually leading to a moment where “I stopped caring about the scholarly search for Kurtz’ meaning and the method used by Safran Foer and started caring about the life of the poems” (56). I see this as a reflexive process through which the narrator reveals their shifting of ownership of Safran Foer and Kurtz’ works into new poems. After taking apart *Tree of Codes* and Kurtz’ essay, the narrator describes “The poem about the candle” (50) and “The muttering poem” (54) as “my poems now, alive in the world, but having strong links to Kurtz’ essay” (56). Here, “The poem about the candle”, “the muttering poem”, and the writer’s commentary about her active reading of these works develop the text’s openness. I read this sequence as an example of the transformative potential of experimental writing, which physically plays with lack and loss by cutting up texts and seeing what comes of “the spaces [...] left” (52).

### ***Interplay of past / present / place***

In *Lost and Gone Away*, reconstructions of responses to traumatic events of the past, whether they are traumas inflicted upon places or experienced by people, haunt the text as one of its most significant echoes. In the narrator's present, the past is always near, informing an understanding of the narrator's and reader's present. This sense of the past being near is often portrayed in the text's representations of place, and the memories embedded in the spaces the speaker visits alongside the reader. This is apparent in the "Rats uncounted" fragment in "Part Four: *I ring the bell anyway*" when an Uncanny spectre of the past populates a description of the present-day Kapiti Coast. The landscape is described as embodying history as the speaker-narrator, walking along Raumati beach near her home, begins to think of what she has been reading about the Māori-European encounter in this place, seeing waka on the horizon and thinking of previous records that described "rats uncounted" (144). This magical realism appears in *Peat* as well, as shown in the interplay of past/present/place in the blurb of Jenner's 2019 hybrid text:

In September 2014 I met a young Māori man working on the Mackays to Peka Peka Expressway. At some point in my conversation with him I became certain that he had a taniwha CLIMBING UP HIS NECK. From now on this [taniwha] will appear in my text in brackets to make it crystal clear that if there was a [taniwha] of the waterways between the hills and the sea, a being who had lain hidden in the shade of the trees beside these watery passageways, and if he has been disturbed, or has come back after a long time, he would not reveal himself to me, a Pākehā woman of Jewish and Celtic origin.

Nevertheless, in September 2014, at the corner of Poplar Avenue and the new Expressway, a provisional space opened in which a [taniwha] appeared on a man's neck, and in my mind. That felt like an important thing.

Also a concern in *Peat*, the trauma of industrial impacts which alter natural environments for corporate ends is a key thread in this last Part of *Lost and Gone Away*. This is conveyed in sequences that show land use and community connection to it as irreversibly changed. Tangata whenua narratives about the author's hometown rise and repeat in this section. An example of this is when Jenner's strategy of writing a researched knowledge of history into a constructed present features in the "Rats uncounted" fragment:

(...) in the 1920s Tikotu Stream was diverted to allow development at Paraparaumu Beach and now runs underground through concrete pipes, as Number Two Drain.

With this knowledge, I start to imagine a pā near a stream you could drink from and a whaling settlement in that place.

Driving along the coast this morning, I thought I would glance up from the road and see canoes and dinghies crossing back and forth to the island carrying vegetables or pigs and sheep, or cooking pots or nails or logs or rope. Every single object counted and precious. Rats present, but uncounted" (144).

The interplay of past/present/place in this book becomes another mode for bringing about a process “where everything gets turned around” (l) for the speaker and reader. In the fragment entitled “The hole” in Part 4 - “I ring the bell anyway”, the act of researching and writing about the Holocaust from the “over here” (176) of New Zealand is compared to the act of walking through Dennis O’Connor’s *Rudderstone* sculpture in the Wellington Botanic Gardens as a kind of Freudian *fort/da*, there/here experience:

According to this sign, if I accept this challenge and walk through that hole, I take myself on a physical and metaphorical journey from old to new...

I let my eyes sweep across all the swirls and shades of the blue. There are some small, irregularly shaped pieces of black in there. I am fine with the fact that there are small clumps of black in the swirls of blue. They are pieces of the Old World that came with us. And human nature being what it is, there might have been blackness here already. But mostly we have blue here. That is the point (238).

In this fragment, the narrator describes moving through the *Rudderstone* sculpture and how this makes her reflect on moving from the ‘Old World’ to the new. She notices that the process of moving from one place to another, symbolised by walking through the sculpture, is complicated. This is shown in her descriptions of the sculpture’s colours. Each side has some of the dominant colour of the other side in it. The narrator explains that she sees this merging as showing how people bring parts of the past or previous place with them wherever they go

(238). So, this fragment could also represent the complexities of writing from “where I am” (170). The hybrid text inhabits an in-between space, opened by Jenner’s strategies and techniques.

Just as in the *fort/da* game, the going “there and back” described in this fragment is a productive process. The movement from the ‘new world’ to the ‘old’ through the Rudderstone sculpture exemplifies the text’s central search for “knowledge”. Through Jenner’s performative writing across this hybrid text, she conveys a sort of going there and back or the ‘turn[ing] around’ (I) that trying to find language for experiences of trauma and loss can produce. *Lost and Gone Away* is an “open text” continually becoming, unfolding, shifting back and forth, following a desire to move between worlds, forms, and genres to find a sense of renewal.

### ***White space, [ brackets ] and the dash –***

“Writing becomes a way of reaching and tethering traces of what has gone. It is, and can only ever be, subjective, elusive, fleeting, partial. The generous white space that gives the text room to waver and shift heightens the allure of fragmentation –”

(Green “Lynn is unafraid”)

Jenner’s use of white space and punctuation is another way she shows the tension between experience and language in the context of loss. Through the visual representation of absence and silence on the pages of *Lost and Gone Away*, the reader and writer are tasked with “holding a big white space” (*Everyday Life* 195) or finding a way to think about or talk about loss. As a counterpart for the sequential fragments in *Lost and Gone Away*, the use of white

space can also be considered performative and productive: as the 'voice' of silence, an articulation of loss, of the white noise of panic and shock, the sensation of looking for something or someone, absence, lack, a gap. Again, the reader co-constructs this use of white space, interpreting its various meanings. These deliberate pauses shown physically on the page are also places for possibility, or in Hejinian's terms, are a technique that "open" the text.

Jenner's deliberate use of white space visually opens the moments between segments, often making the short prose fragments monumental. For example, in the opening fragment of the book, which recounts the story of the missing ring (3) as follows:

***Christchurch, 29 April 2011***

Of course, there are rumours that there has been much more looting in the Red Zone than is being officially admitted, the lawyer in Christchurch said when I phoned him about my mother's diamond ring, worth as much as a new European car, and last seen in a jeweller's shop in Cashel Mall five days before the earthquake.

Then there was a silence.

There are rumours that it is the soldiers, he said.

Another silence.

There's such a lot of property in there at the moment and no one really knows who owns it, he said. Most people have turned out to be very honest, he said. But some haven't.

Here, as with many other sequences in the text, white space serves as breathing space, visually providing a pause around the weighty material being disseminated. The mystery of what may have happened to the ring is performed on the page. This is shown in juxtaposing the long explanatory prose section with the five-word phrase "Then there was a silence" (3). Around each of the "silence" words in this fragment is large amounts of white space, accentuating the uncertainty that the word "silence" evokes. The reader, alongside the narrator, experiences the unsettling possibility of what might have become of the missing possession and many other people's possessions after the Christchurch earthquakes. This is achieved through how the sparse conversation with the jeweller is written and laid out, drawing the reader into the conversation and wondering process as it unravels.

Throughout the text, the techniques of gaps, white space, ellipses, brackets, asterisks, and dashes evoke the absence/loss and searching contexts the writing explores. Within and between fragments and sequences in the book, white space indicates temporal, geographic, or thematic shifts. Each fragment stands alone, with continuing sequences of connected fragments indicated by centre-aligned asterisks surrounded by generous white space. This means that the white space which surrounds, intersects and separates the sequences in the work can be thought of as the voice of silence, reflection or possibility. The white space is a

vital part of the kaleidoscope process the book performs. It is an important technique in making the text “open”.

The most prolific use of white space is in “Part Three: Point Last Seen”. This section has the fewest lines of text, which deal with missing people and efforts to find them. On page 106, the speaker reveals her experience of losing someone she was supposed to be looking after. As with several of the fragments in this Part, it is set out in a prose poem form, at the top of the page, followed by a large section of white space:

***I am surprised and a bit embarrassed*** to say that I have had more than one experience of someone seeming to disappear on my watch. In one of these situations I cannot say that I did anything useful. In the other, I called the police to ask for help, but only after someone told me to. Unquestionably these experiences have sharpened my interest in departures, searches and rescues.

Also in Part THREE, there are several places where startling single lines hover at the tops of pages which are followed by the ambiguity of an empty page: “*It is no shame to be lost. That’s what we say*” (121), “*After that we think about airways and bleeding*” (129), “*It’s very late, but it might still help*” (131). Upon reading page 99’s two paragraphs concluding the ‘Christophers’ story with the questions, “Could it construct something useful out of bits and pieces? Could it reconcile the irreconcilable?”, the reader is confronted with an enacted sense of emptiness

when, after the open-ended sentence, “This was the reply:”, there follows two-thirds of a page of white space.

Jenner also employs white space to represent physical and metaphorical distance. There is the gap between the ‘over there’ that the author is researching and the ‘here’ in New Zealand where she lives, shown in the fragment which explains “More than a year ago a friend... told me it would not be possible to write about the Holocaust from New Zealand. But this is where I am, I said. That is the problem. This is where I am from and this is who I am, and this is where I am” (170). The fragment takes up about one fifth of the page. It is left to hover at the top of the page, with no answer or response below – with what is not said (why does the writer not go ‘over there?’) implied in the spatial emptiness that follows.

The dash is also used in *Lost and Gone Away* to jolt the reader’s perception towards an awareness of the work the writing is doing. To this end, something of the Emily Dickinson-style dash is employed in the sunset poem that follows a prose paragraph about going to the beach after reading Carson’s *If not, winter: Fragments of Sappho*. Entitled “After a day of reading Sappho” (48), the poem in its entirety is quoted below:

I did not find this prize –

I find instead *brightness* that strikes

the eye, I find the universal measurement of time

from her time until there is no time –

I find the gift of light –

But never the sun *dying* for the day.

Here what is not found is as important as what is found, enacted in the poem's language. The sunset seems to both represent and stand outside language and time. The first person 'I', pondering the sun setting at the close of day, grasps for words to capture it. The faltering space or tension between experience and articulation is embodied on the page through the repeated assonance of the 'i' sound, accompanied by the dashes which draw out pivotal lines, and the arresting use of italics to overemphasize "*brightness*" and "*dying*" (Lost 48).

A few pages over, "The muttering poem" (53) appears, using the dash again – bringing a breathlessness to the individual piece, developing a sense of incompleteness embodied in the overall work. Encountering this poem is again an encounter with the productive potential of hybrid writing, particularly the use of white space and punctuation. Take for example, the second half of the poem:

Scholarship also tricks us –

Nothing fills the silence

in this broken aching form.

The candle flickers – I feel

a different reanimation from  
damaged papyrus and open space  
all faithful  
but not the one who lived.  
*This* explains the gravity the tenderness  
This *alone* on an otherwise blank page

The poem is "*alone* on an otherwise blank page" and does not conclude with a full stop. Coupled with the jarring dashes, this use of punctuation then lack of it, draws attention to the speaker's playing with language, inviting the reader / "us" into the "open text" (Hejinian, 2001). Hence, this writing enacts the epigraph "where everything gets turned around" (I) for the speaker in, and reader of, the poem.

A further example of a deliberately playful and disruptive use of white space, incompleteness and punctuation can be seen in Jenner's selection of Jim Powell's sparse, bracket-heavy L-P 67 translation of a Sappho fragment (77):

### **L-P 67**

]nd this overhan[  
]tructive spirit [  
] truly did not lik[

] and now because [  
] the cause neither [  
] nothing much [

The fragment speaks of its incompleteness, puzzle, invitation towards, and defiance of, translation. It is another of the many lost objects Jenner employs as symbols of absence or what is missing in the aftermath of loss and how people try to find words for it.

Jenner herself has explained that she is strongly interested in how text looks on the page and the effects this can create. In the *Better Off Read* interview with Adam, she explains “People receive communication in many many different ways and one of the ways that can be harnessed to communicate in a book is the typography and the design and I’m very interested in having those mobilised on my behalf” (48:22). When introducing *Lost and Gone Away* at the Wellington launch of the book, IIML director Damien Wilkins also pointed out the symbolic potential of her use of white space, proposing that “She allows silence to stand. When you find a white space in this text, you know it has meaning” (09:35).

When I have found white space in *Lost and Gone Away*, I too, read it as a site of potential. Rather than considering the white space as representative of the ineffability of loss, I read it as a space of possibility – as another mode in which the text opens or ‘turns round’ for an active reader’s response. The text’s white space, dashes, italics and brackets become “border” (Hejinian “Continuing”) sites of Jennerian ambiguity, where the reader, alongside the speaker,

construct any number of meanings. In this manner, human responses to loss are enacted in the work the words and layout are doing. The verbal and visual interplay of the white space, dashes, italics, and brackets invite connections to be made, albeit in a destabilised way. The text invites an ongoing reconfiguration of experience through the writing and reading process.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The questions about the brothers all named Christopher and their shared search for their father: "Could it construct something useful out of bits and pieces? Could it reconcile the irreconcilable? (99)" also pertain to the book. As with the story of the Christophers, a sort of reconciliation-without-closure *is* found through the shared search that *Lost and Gone Away* embodies. Following these questions, Jenner writes "This was the reply:" (99), then leaves the remaining two-thirds of the page blank. The Christophers sequence is disrupted by a new sequence, which begins "*We live thousands of miles from each other*" (100). The new sequence consists of fragments that juxtapose a personal story of a missing person with the writer's research into "TV programmes about searches and rescues" (103). Every second fragment<sup>38</sup> in the sequence is italicised, visually representing Jenner's shifts between an intimate and a more erudite tone. Thus, "I am surprised and a bit embarrassed", Jenner reveals "that I have had more than one experience of a person seeming to disappear on my watch" (106), while on the adjacent page the prose fragment suggests "*If you are in the middle*

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<sup>38</sup> Aside from the first few words of the regular font prose blocks, which are italicised and bold, so they become subheadings which are listed on the Contents page under the heading for each Part.

of a missing person incident right now, the conventional advice would be to contact your local police" (107). This double-page, as with the end-but-not-end of the Christophers sequence, shows how the form and content of *Lost and Gone Away* embody experiences of loss and their repercussions. One of the repercussions that *Lost and Gone Away* enacts is that loss complicates, but does not necessarily defy, iteration.

*Lost and Gone Away* does not demonstrate the limitations of some more conventional literary forms in conveying personal and public crises. Rather, it enacts a tension between language and experience that shows how catastrophes, whether intimate or large-scale, can never be fully registered or understood. However, they can lead the narrator and reader towards a reoriented comprehension. The way that irreconcilable processes of loss can be articulated in the "open text" is through its re-imagining of form and 'arranging and rearranging' techniques.

In her thesis, Jenner refers to the "learning process" of her investigations and experiments (17). She also describes how the creative and critical work was intended to "generate an active reading experience, sometimes relatively puzzling and at other times clearer, from which a reader will emerge with his or her own interpretation of what the collections mean at the time of reading and in the circumstances and place of that reading" (24). For this reader, Jenner's collation of fragments, juxtapositions, repetitions, and white spaces representing four years of emotional and intellectual searches enact ways to speak about how the crisis of loss is difficult to speak about. Through hybridity, the book posits co-existent states of question and assertion which are associated with loss. Human responses to loss can seem cyclical or continuous,

while dominant narratives about loss aim towards some sort of closure. Jenner's crafting of the book's different components evoke this paradox by un/ravelling different responses to loss and the struggle to find language to contain it.

Rather than (re)constructing loss, *Lost and Gone Away* invites the reader to navigate the tension between language and experience often associated with loss as a search for knowledge. From the epigraph on page one through to the final fragment, *Lost and Gone Away* enacts a continual process where "everything gets turned around" (I) by the speaker and reader. Through its focus on "arranging and rearranging" (Hejinian, *Language* 43) fragmented sequences about searching, *Lost and Gone Away* facilitates a productive reconstitution of human experiences of, and responses to, loss. The text's combination of strategies and techniques makes this an "open text" giving the reader a key role in this reconstitution.

## Chapter 3. "A brother never ends": Speaking to a life that is untellable in Anne Carson's *Nox*

### 3.1 Introduction

In my book I printed out the text of the poem, and then took it apart. I just read an article in which T. S. Eliot is quoted as saying, "Poetry is punctuation." It was followed by a quote from Jacques Lacan: "The reason we go to poetry is not for wisdom, but for the dismantling of wisdom," which I thought was totally cool. So in this book, I dismantled the Catullus poem, one word per page, and I put the Latin word and its lexical definition on the left-hand side, and then on the right-hand side a fragment of a memory of my brother's life that related to the left-hand side of the page. Where the lexical entry didn't relate, I changed it. So I smuggled in stuff that is somewhat inauthentic. But it makes the left and the right cohere, so that the whole thing tells the story of the translation of the poem, and also dismantles my memory of my brother's life.

(Carson "The Art of Poetry No.88")

Anne Carson (quoting Lacan) suggests we go to poetry for a "dismantling of wisdom" (*Ecstatic Lyre*; *Paris Review*). This reading examines the crafting of Carson's epitaph-elegy-memoir *Nox* as a "dismantling" process. The "dismantling" enacted in *Nox* allows it to become an "open text" (Hejinian *Language* 40) that invites readers to co-create meaning. It also provides a valuable tool for other writers of hybrid texts for responding to loss. *Nox* is a new kind of elegy, one that does not answer the problem of grief and loss but makes something good and useful out of it.

In terms of Carson's strategies and techniques, my case study will examine how *Nox* "dismantles" traditional genres and forms to involve the reader investigating tensions between the known and unknown. From a writer's perspective, I will also consider how Carson's methods have a provocative fixation on making and renewal. To this end, the following discussion will explore the productivity of Carson's "dismantling" in three ways.

In Section i -A new kind of elegy: Carson's approach to finding a way to speak about loss, I will assess how Carson's experiments with form and fragmentation embody the difficulty of finding language to speak about loss. I suggest this "dismantling" provides a way to disrupt, shake, and spill "something that facts lack" (Nox 1.3). Finding new cohesions across fragments from classical texts and her brother's life, Nox "prowl[s]" (7.1) the history of a missing brother by collapsing and reimagining the traditional form and conventions of the elegy.

In Section ii - "Who Were You?" Juxtaposition, as in the un/known, I propose that Nox can be read as an "open" or "border" text (Hejinian "Two Talks", "Continuing") where the speaker and reader reconfigure what is known and what is missing in Michael's history. I will explore some of the book's key juxtapositions, which spring from its central juxtaposition of the un/known. Resisting closure, Nox keeps returning to liminal images. In a Hejinian sense, these discordant repetitions continually involve the reader in meaning-making. Expanding on Gillian Sze and Jennifer Thorp's discussion of "replication" in Nox, I consider how the reader and speaker co-create a complicated history about a complicated history.

Section iii. "Joy in the making": Carson's "dismantling" becomes transformative examines how Carson's reflexive making (and collaborative reproduction) of Nox gestures towards a "focus on the light places" (Sehgal, 2011). I will look at the book's capacity for including the reader in transformative processes, or what Wurth (after Walter Benjamin) refers to as renewal (29). I consider ways Nox becomes a "festive" or "hopeful" reconfiguration

(Silverblatt, 2010), and a provocation for other writers and artists grappling with how to speak about loss. Specifically, I consider how Carson provides cues for those crafting genre-bending texts that work on the borders of translation, memoir, essay, prose, and poetry.

### 3.2 Some background on *Nox*: critical and creative responses

The Carson method involves a kind of mashup of old and new; she proceeds through juxtaposition rather than metaphor-making. What you get is the over-all action of the mind rather than the high-shine lacquer of the apt image.

(O'Rourke, "The Unfolding")

I realize all this sounds both chaotic and dishonest and probably that is the case. Contradiction is the test of reality, as Simone Weil says.

(Carson, "The Inscrutable Brilliance")

Carson is a classics scholar, one whose distinctive style of translation which reinvigorates ancient works is original, "erudite" (Solway, Wiesenthal, Sze, Jansen, Kuiper) and inimitable. Her major translations include *Eros the Bittersweet* (1986), which is based on her original doctoral thesis and traces the idea of eros in ancient Greek philosophy and literature, fragments of Sappho in *If Not, Winter* (2002), and ten Greek tragedies. Notably, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Orestes* are collapsed in *An Oresteia* (2009). Her reframing of Euripides' *Herakles* is shown across her verse novel *Autobiography of Red* (1998) and the *H of H Playbook* (2021), and Euripides' "underread" *Helen* (Wollen, 2020) is deconstructed in *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy* (2019). Many of these books have been adapted into other forms, such as for Carson's regular guest readings and lectures and the interpretation of *Nox* for the stage in 2012.

In a *Paris Review* interview with writer friend Will Aitken, *Nox* is described as the "white book" Carson handed him when they were passing Port Hope. Her childhood home for six or seven years, she describes Port Hope to Aitken as "the place where we all, my brother

and I, met the end of our adolescence". *Nox* is an elegy for her estranged brother Michael, who died suddenly overseas after disappearing from Carson's family life many years before. Although it is an elegy and an "epitaph for him" (back cover), *Nox* also embodies ideas of possibility and creation (as O'Rourke notes). This juxtaposition is perhaps summed up in the writer's desire to "fill [an] elegy [called *Nox*; the Latin word for 'night'] with light of all kinds" (*Nox* 1.1). Collapsing and blending elegy, translation, and memoir, *Nox* therefore defies any singular categorisation. Instead, it's an unusual, genre-blurring book. A reproduced version of a scrapbook Carson made as a memorial to her brother, *Nox* is encased in a box, with pages that unfold in one long concertina. Across these connected pages, Carson's (re)constructed response to the disappearance and sudden death of her brother unfurls, drawing the reader into his "odd history" (1.0).

This new kind of elegy was first made by hand. With design assistance from Carson's long-time collaborator, Robert Currie, Carson's attempt "to evoke the starry lad" her brother was (1.0) involved translating-via-dismantling an ancient Roman elegy, word by word, using definitions alongside visual and verbal fragments. Using her translation of the famous "Catullus 101" poem as a throughline, Carson created a scrapbook of ephemera interspersed with her reflections on history and Michael's disappearance. That is to say, the book is an elegy inside an elegy.

The private work was initially passed around "one person at a time" (Teicher) among those close to Carson and her brother. It was left with a German publisher then lost for a period before a publishing agreement was secured with New Directions. In assisting with the

personal scrapbook's "realisation" (*Nox* flyleaf), Currie painstakingly reproduced the work, experimenting with scanning and photocopying the individual pages and letting varying amounts of light in. In an interview with King, Carson explains that the decision to join all the unnumbered pages together in one long leporello and then encase the book in a fold-out box "was a compromise arrived at for purposes of publishing" ("Unwriting").

The presentation of *Nox* as a fold-out book in a box enhances its originality and its undefinable nature. It also points to Carson's collaborative approach to many of her cross-genre projects, and the way she pushes the boundaries of conventional book publishing. *Nay Rather* (2014), *Float* (2016) and *H of H Playbook* (2021) are three subsequent Carson books that are unusual and boundary-pushing in their experimentation with a book's physical form. Like *Nox*, *Nay Rather* plays with juxtaposing different content on its left and right-side pages. On the other hand, *Float* is "genuinely a collection" as Carson puts it (Simon). The work is a folio of separate folded texts, originally performance pieces, which 'float' from their clear box casing. Visually, *H of H Playbook* looks more like *Nox* than the other two, using illustrated poems and carefully torn fragments in an invigorated retelling of Euripides' *Herakles*.

Upon *Nox*'s release in 2019, reviewers focussed on its destabilising of form, its materiality, its framing device of deconstructed translation, and its "central question: can public good come of private grief?" (Ervin). Poet Jane Hirshfield compared it to Sebald's *Austerlitz*, proclaiming it "a daredevil-defiant and heartbroken confrontation of fracture" ("A Year"). *Nox* was also praised for the ways it "embodies the complexities of loss"

(Zimmerman 88), and how “its process of assemblage dramatizes the way the mind in mourning flits from pain at the specific loss to metaphysical questioning about what, exactly, constitutes a mortal life”, (O’Rourke).

Much has been written about how the work stretches the possibilities of poetry, and *Nox*’s significance in its use of cross-genre forms, ekphrasis, hypermediacy, and translation. Scholarship has examined the work in terms of its hybridity (Thorp, Plate), its use of ekphrasis (Bell, Lloyd, Sexton) and errancy (Fleming “You can”), as therapeutic biography (Czarnecki, Fleming “Talk (why?)”), in terms of its “aesthetics of opacity” (Marsden), its value as a book-object (Bradshaw, Skade), a totem of memory (Bell, Plate, MacDonald, Wurth, Rapatzikou, Morris, Sze, Palteau-Papin) or “media nostalgia” (Tanderup Linkis). Reference has also been made to *Nox*’s relationship to death and mourning (Reinhardt, Palteau-Papin), to the writing of history (Fleming) and to translation (Fleming, Reinhardt, Sexton, Wurth). Others see it as an evocation of disappearances/absences and their opposite: of resistance to disappearance or loss (Wachtel, King, Morris, Fleming). *Nox* has been compared to other elegies (Berry, Czarnecki), books in boxes (Tanderup Linkis, screenfolds (Wurth), mourning diaries (Palteau-Papin) scrapbooks and artist’s books (Fleming “Talk (why?)”, Burt, Bradshaw), as well as for its place within Carson’s body of works, though it is also regularly described as “uncategorizable” (Hirshfield).

The different labels *Nox* has been given (whether focussing on the book’s materiality, its genre-defying role in reconfiguring elegy, translation or memoir, and the ways it speaks of loss) are of interest for this craft-based reading. Since its publication, as noted by Van Praet

(in a review for *Archiver le présent*), critics have given *Nox* many names: “conceptual poem” (Nolan 94), “art-book” (Fleming “Talk (why?)” 64), “grief-work” (Fleming “Talk (why?)” 64, “You can” 10), “quasi-artist’s book” (Wurth 228), “camp object” (Plate 98), “accordion-style [...] pastiche of fragments” (Wiesenthal 189), or “long-poem epitaph” (Wiesenthal 195). Elsewhere, Van Praet herself calls it “un leprelo en forme de carnet” / a leprelo in the form of a notebook (“What is missing”).

In addition to Van Praet’s list of names for *Nox*, I add “an unusual literary artefact” (Gibbons 182), “hybrid text, caught between scroll and codex” (McDowell, 92), “resistant, boundary-crossing text” (Morris), “nocturne with carefully controlled visual and tactile properties” (Stewart), “an intermedia book-work elegy” (Bell 5), “scrapbook elegy” (Palleau-Papin), “autotheoretical work” (Papa 1), dignifying “study of shame” (Parr 341) and “a moving reflection on absence” (Wachtel). This range of descriptions for *Nox* shows its polyvalent characteristics, and how different the book can be depending on whose hands it is in.

The “white book” Carson handed to Aitken on a train while passing Port Hope has had several afterlives. As well as bringing the original personal notebook into the public sphere via the published version of the book, Carson has worked with other artists to stage *Nox* as a spoken word/dance. *Nox* was interpreted for the stage by dancer and choreographer Rashaun Mitchell with collaborator Silas Reiner, and featured projections from the text and live drawing (through redirected light from overhead projectors) by Carson and Robert Currie. The stage interpretation saw several iterations, with its first performance at Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art (2010), followed by a showing at O Miami Poetry Festival

(2011), and seasons at New York's Danspace Project in 2012 and 2013. Nox's versatility as seed material for a dance performance which was shown at an art gallery, a poetry festival and then in a dedicated dance space speaks to its defiance of categorisation, as well as Carson's view of herself as being "a visual artist as well as a verbal artist" (Aitken). Whether encountering the intimate notebook reproduced as a book-in-a-box, or as a poetry, screen, and movement piece on stage (as Papa has discussed) the audience is always implicated in Carson's creative processes.

Carson's creative processes have also inspired many other artists and academics in their own publications, practices and poetics. Maggie Nelson writes that "For decades now, Anne Carson has served as a deep inspiration, provocation, and permission-giving agent for writers, artists, critics, readers, and thinkers of all kinds" (*Ecstatic Lyre* back cover). Along with Nelson<sup>39</sup>, writers such as Emily Berry, Ander Monson, Rebecca Tamás<sup>40</sup>, Annelyse Gelman<sup>41</sup> and Therese Lloyd have all responded to Carson in their own creative works.

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<sup>39</sup> In the autotheory memoir *The Argonauts*, Nelson references how a talk Carson gave in New York City about Simone Weil, Sappho and "the void" introduced her to "the concept of leaving a space empty so that God could rush in" (49). However, although Carson's use of brackets as a response to personal interview questions in a "literary magazine" Nelson received in the mail initially make her feel "ashamed" of her own propensity "to put my cards more decidedly on the table", she explains that Carson's brackets became increasingly annoying to her, as a kind of "fetish of the unsaid" (49).

<sup>40</sup> "spell for women's books: inspired / by the work of anne carson", <https://www.frieze.com/article/rebecca-tamas-anne-carson>.

<sup>41</sup> "My Legacy", published in Landfall 227 *Vital Signs* Autumn 2014, within which the long line short line pattern "was inspired by Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*" (<https://nzpoetryshelf.com/2014/07/29/landfall-227-vital-signs-autumn-2014-i-really-appreciate-picking-up-a-journal-that-places-critical-thinking-alongside-the-telling-of-foes-and-the-musical-lift-and-surprise-of-poems/>)

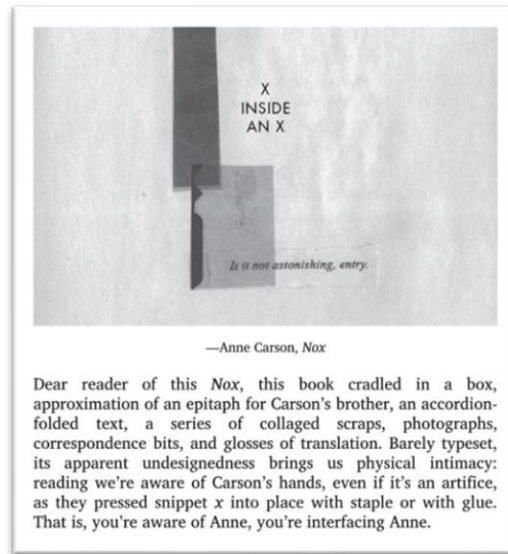


Figure 2: From "X inside an X", Ander Monson's response to *Nox*.

*Nox* is referenced in the critical/creative writing of poets such as Ander Monson's review "X inside an X", which appears in *Ecstatic Lyre* and their *Letter to a Future Lover: Marginalia, Errata, Secrets, Inscriptions, and Other Ephemera Found in Libraries* (2015), and Sikelianos' review/recount "Sentences on *Nox*" (also in *Ecstatic Lyre*). Carson is also widely referenced in the work of other creative writing academics. Along with Jenner, other creative writing PhDs that turn to different aspects of Carson's writing include those by Thorp (who looks at Carson's "Doubtful forms"), Meyer (whose thesis aims "to read Anne Carson through Anne Carson"), Lloyd (who examines the role of ekphrasis in Carson's writing), Stephen Sexton (who writes about elegy, translation and ekphrasis in *Nox*) and Emily Berry (whose thesis frames *Nox* as "elegiac writing"). Several critical-creative PhDs that turned to *Nox* in their research went on to become published collections, including Berry's *Stranger, Baby*, 2017, Lloyd's *The Facts*, 2018 and Sexton's *If All the World and Love Were Young*, 2019. As a reader and a writer, encountering these critical and creative responses to *Nox* (and those

that intersect critical/creative) has been valuable to my research as another way of seeing how Carson's strange elegy continues to be a touchstone for many readers and writers.

### 3.3 “Dismantling of wisdom”: breaking up the text to bring in the reader

**Wachtel:** I read somewhere you quote Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst and philosopher, who said we don’t go to poetry for wisdom but for the dismantling of wisdom. How does poetry do that?

**Carson:** I feel it’s a kind of fervour of mine to get away from whatever body of information I rest on when I give opinions. And I think poetic activity is a method for doing that—you leap off the building when you think poetically; you don’t amass your data and then move from point to point, you have to just know what you know in that moment. Something freeing about that.

**Wachtel:** Maybe I’m being too literal-minded when I think of dismantling because when I think of taking the poem apart word by word—

**Carson:** Yes it is a mantle, the confidence that you can ever know what words mean because really we don’t. They’re just these signs that we pretend to nail down in dictionaries, tokens of usage, but frankly they’re all wild integers. Disassembling it is a way of exposing that myth at the bottom of language.

(Carson, “An Interview with Anne Carson”, Interview by Eleanor Wachtel, *Brick* 89)

Reviewer Lorraine Martinuik describes Carson’s arrangement of visual and verbal elements in *Nox* as a “careful assemblage” (*Jacket* 2). Building on Martinuik’s term, I suggest that within this reproduced scrapbook, Carson’s craft implicates the reader in its “careful assemblage”. By this, I mean the reader has a vital role in the creative processes which unfold from *Nox*<sup>42</sup>. Thorp’s work pointed me towards a Hejiniian approach for this reading. Drawing on Hejiniian’s much-cited call for “The Rejection of Closure” (*Language* 40) as well as the feminist lenses of Julia Kristeva and Toril Moi, Thorp argues that Carson’s writing occupies a liminal space of *poesis*: a constant bringing into being. In this manner, Thorp suggests, doubt and failure become tools for poetry’s enduring value (7). Building on Thorp’s ideas, I’m interested in how Carson’s process opens spaces or thresholds of

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<sup>42</sup> Focussing on the book’s performative physicality, Skade has also explored the collaborative role of the reader in the artistic interactions unfolding from *Nox*, whereby “the meaning that has disappeared through the cracks is replaced by an alternative meaning that Carson offers, and she brings readers face to face with the presence of that meaning” (170).

possibility, which in Hejinian's terms, invite the reader's participation in the "open text". My application of Hejinian's "Rejection of Closure" expands Thorp's discussion of the crafting of *Nox* as *poesis* to consider how its strategies and techniques involve the reader.

Wurth writes "*Nox* is a book about the recording of loss: lost time, a lost brother, lost presence [...] it conveys this loss through a re-visioning of the paper page and a translation of an ancient poem" (20). Both Thorp and Wurth are interested in how the complexities of loss are evoked in *Nox*'s inventive form and content. In line with Wurth and Thorps' arguments, I suggest Carson's invention is the "dismantling" of traditional genres and forms. In *Nox*, Carson interprets the facts of her brother's life and death (and what is missing from these facts) in an imaginative way. Destabilising and merging elegy with translation, memoir, essay and prose poetry, she creates a hybrid text that inhabits a border or "space of appearance" (Hejinian "Continuing" after Hannah Arendt) between the factual and the lyrical.

As Thorp and Wiesenthal have also done, I am applying some of Carson's terms for describing her craft. In *Nox*, and in interviews about how she wrote this work, Carson describes her process as a kind of "dismantling". I do not see "dismantling" as having negative connotations. Rather, I wish to stress its ability to include the reader in continual creation of new forms. I am interested in how Carson has put together a subversive, poetic memoir that draws the reader in as a kind of collaborator. My approach considers how "*you can of course always keep shaking the box*" (*Autobiography* 7, my emphasis). Carson accentuates the reader's role in making meaning from the fragments within the box/book.

A kind of love-affair with making fragments visual as well as verbal, I suggest the “openness” or between-space Carson’s fragmented text generates invites the reader into a search for ways to articulate loss on several levels. On one level, Carson “dismantles” “Catullus 101” to look for meaning about the mysterious life of her lost brother. More broadly, the speaker in *Nox* draws the reader into its search for ways to articulate “other people and their histories as if we are all separate languages” (Sehgun). Because a key characteristic of translation is its association with the incomplete (in that language cannot fully capture the meaning and nuances of the original text) Carson's distinctive style of reimagining elegy, translation, and memoir in this fold-out art book offers a unique mode for articulating loss.

### 3.4 Strategies and techniques

#### i. A new kind of elegy: Carson's approach to finding a way to speak about loss

I just really have no idea what I'm writing most of the time ... I still feel most at home making things into blocks of prose.

(Carson, quoted by Teicher, "A Classical Poet, Redux")

Reviewing Carson's methods of "cross-genre pollinating" (2), Wilkinson describes how Carson "seems to invent a form for each of her works" (3). Similarly, in a thesis on the "Doubtful Forms" of four of Carson's key works, Thorp argues that "it is at the fraying edges of form that interesting solutions are being posed to some of modern poetry's most pressing difficulties" (7). I'm using one of Carson's words for her distinctive mode of invention in my examination of Nox's 'frayed form' (Thorp). This term is "dismantling".

"Dismantling" of form/s is useful for conveying an unhinging, or the breaking up sense of self/world, in response to crisis. Intrinsic to "dismantling" as a hybrid writing technique is that it incites a desire for 're-mantling' in the reader. As Carson explains to Wachtel, "it is a mantle, the confidence that you can ever know what words mean because really we don't. They're just these signs that we pretend to nail down in dictionaries, tokens of usage, but frankly they're all wild integers. Disassembling it is a way of exposing that myth at the bottom of language" (2014). Drawn into the 'exposed myth' that words can never fully articulate experience, the reader wants to find new cohesions within the fragmented text.

For this reason, I will focus on Carson's experiments with breaking up traditional forms as a kind of reimagining. To this end, I now explore Carson's "dismantling" and "disassembling" (Wachtel) of traditional genres and forms. The reader, complicit in the "dismantling", can shake meaning out of the text in different ways.

### ***"Dismantling" traditional genres and forms***

A growing body of critical response to Carson's hybrid writing has focussed on the productivity of her destabilising methods. In a 2017 review of *Float*, James notes how "genre hybridity has long been a hallmark of the Anne Carson brand". A significant way Carson achieves the "dismantling of wisdom" in *Nox* is through genre hybridity, or the "dismantling" of traditional genres and forms. In the 2004 interview with Carson's writer friend Aitken, she describes how the book is based on the "dismantling" of the classical lament "Catullus 101". She explains this as a process in which she "printed out" then "took it apart [...]" so that the whole thing tells the story of the translation of the poem, and also dismantles my memory of my brother's life". The book becomes its own hybrid form, a reflexive gathering of fragments.

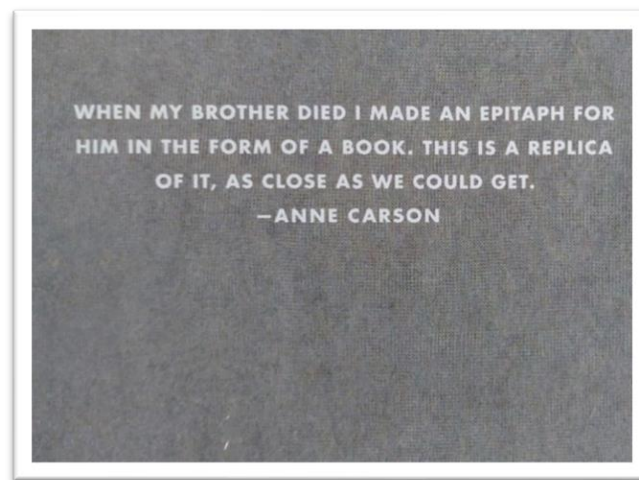
Linked to her strategy of "dismantling" the Catullus poem, Carson's "destabilising" of form and genre in *Nox* has been discussed by several critics (Jennings, Wiesenthal, Thorp, Fleming, Baker, Sze). Destabilisation, Jennings suggests, allows Carson to move between genre borders within a piece of writing as well as across her body of work and in her interviews and lectures: "Juxtaposing genres within a work not only enables her writing to

slip between and beyond generic boundaries, it destabilizes those boundaries, defining genres by relation rather than internal coherence. Carson's poems, essays, and even interviews mirror this relation on a larger scale, informing one another as though they were fragments of a single masterwork" (924).

In the article "*Nox*, unboxed: Anne Carson's Uncommon Long Verse 'Epitaph'" (2020), Wiesenthal examines *Nox* as a case study for what she calls Carson's "poetics of loss" (188). Reading *Nox* as a material object that merges epitaph with long verse form, Wiesenthal discusses how Carson's unique elegy "unfolds" from her prior works so that it "resists the constraints of the bounded text" (193). Alongside this "unfolding", the "poetic economy" (196) of Carson's translation of the Catullus poem allows the work to be at once dense and expansive. Carson's physical processes in constructing *Nox* are both disruptive and invigorating.

Fleming has also explained how Carson's experiments with destabilising forms illustrate a key tension in *Nox*. She writes in the 2016 article "'Talk (why?) with mute ash': Anne Carson's *Nox* as therapeutic biography" that this is "the tension between seeking to understand a life, and the realization that full clarity is impossible. This is a tension between conclusiveness and process—" (66).

Other critics have discussed Carson's destabilising techniques in a broader sense, such as how Carson destabilises prior 'wisdom' including "the mythical origin of Western Humanism", and "social laws, the archive, and logic" (Sze). From this range of critique (and the author's own words), it can be inferred that "dismantling" and "destabilisation" are important aspects of Carson's craft, the effects of which can be traced in *Nox*.



*Figure 3: Carson's quote on Nox's back cover.*

An early indication of destabilisation in *Nox* is signalled by the description Carson uses on its box. In defiance of any singular categorisation, the epitaph-book-replica labels allow *Nox* to perform several roles simultaneously. Further, the reminder that the book is a facsimile of the original suggests that it is an enactment of how any articulation of loss is always a response and can never fully represent it.

The epitaph-book-replica labels also convey Carson's intermedial approach to her craft, whereby one form folds into another. At any one time, she tells Aitken in the *Paris Review* interview, she works on several projects at once. She sets each one up at one of the three desks in her office, then moves between them. "One is academic, one writerly, and one art. I go at these erratically, sometimes to all three desks within an hour. They cross-pollinate one another" (2004). This moving-between approach is mirrored in her crafting of *Nox*, within which she shifts between translation (of the word definitions on the left-hand pages) and visual and verbal fragments of essay and memoir (on the right-hand pages).

The epitaph-replica names Carson gives *Nox* are discussed by Sze, who explains in "The Consolatory Fold" (2019) that the book is "less a material object than a material process" (67). In a materialist reading of *Nox*, Sze explains that "to engage with this artefact ... is to replicate Carson's simultaneous experience of loss and re-creation" (66). Sze suggests that fanned pages of the book bring forth an intersection of "materiality, translation, and mourning" (67). Arguing that replication is "the process in which *Nox* encourages us to participate" (67), Sze contends that the replication that *Nox* embodies "is not merely an index of loss but also, for Carson, the only possibility of consolation" (67).

The effect of reader collaboration in *Nox* can also be seen in Carson's "dismantling" process. This allows different forms, genres, characters, and voices to fold into and/or

juxtapose one another. In the next subsections, I outline some of the intersecting and reinvented forms and genres at work in *Nox*, namely epitaph, elegy, and memoir.

### ***An epitaph-elegy: To contain a person***

I wrote the book because when my brother died I hadn't seen him for twenty-two years. He was a mystery to me. He died suddenly in another country, and I had a need to gather up the shards of his story and make it into something containable. So it's a lament in the sense of an attempt to contain a person after he is no longer reachable.

(Carson, "The Art of Poetry No.88")

**Kenyon Review:** In *Nox*, you outline elegy's affinity to history. Does the elegy, as act or as poetic form, share its lineage with anything else? Is it a poetic mode, an existential mode, or perhaps both or neither?

**Carson:** "Elegy" was a polyvalent genre in ancient Greek poetry, used in the archaic period for exhorting troops to battle, outlining political views, pithy military wisdom, mild erotic description, consolation after shipwreck, and meditation on drunkenness. It was not until the time of Simonides of Keos that epitaphs for the dead began to be written in elegiac couplets and so to become almost synonymous with that genre functionally. That's why I used epitaph as well as elegy when referring to *Nox*. I did not use couplets but I did have in mind a range of function and tone.

(Carson, "Unwriting")

Contained within its small casket-like box, *Nox* is both epitaph and elegy. Yet its fragmentation and accordion-fan physicality also deny containment; there is a fragility to the work, whereby "everything might spill" (*Decreation* 65). This subsection examines the art-object first, and then its vulnerable and volatile content.

A key to understanding the "polyvalent genre[s]" (Carson "Unwriting") that *Nox* works in is through Carson's lifelong interest in classical languages and literature. Having been introduced to the language by her high school Latin teacher, Ancient Greek words and

stories permeate her artistic practice. Carson's description of *Nox* as an "epitaph" (back cover) evokes the Ancient Greek meaning and origins of the term in several ways. In Greek, the word *epitaph* means "upon a tomb". It is derived from *epitaphios*, meaning "funeral speech" (*Oxford Reference*) which nowadays has also come to refer to a funeral procession or textile. Along with Carson's blurb label, the book can be interpreted as an epitaph in its physical form and content. Michael's ashes were scattered at sea, but *Nox* works as a statement in memory of the deceased and a kind of procession. About the shape, weight, and size of a box of ashes, the book is a deliberately unusual epitaph. It is a commemorative piece of writing and collation for a person who has no tomb or headstone, put together by the sister who did not know of his death until she heard about it from his widow, a fortnight after his funeral. Having not seen Michael for two decades, and being unable to perform any funereal rites, *Nox* becomes Carson's tribute to him. It is an object that reaches across distance and time, calling to absence or "mute ash" (7.2), seeking an understanding of a brother who spent much of his adult life drifting from place to place. Like Catullus created for his fallen brother, the work is an epitaph in the sense of *epitaphios*, a funeral oration in memorial for Michael.

*Nox* is a Carsonian "decreation" (2005), exploring the boundaries of the traditional codex to de/create a material memorial for Michael. MacDonald (57) and Morris ("Disappearances") both suggest *Nox* is not only an epitaph to Michael but also an epitaph to the book itself. When the reader opens the heavy casing of the book's "oyster box" (Silverblatt 2010), its connected pages reveal that its cover struggles to contain Carson's

tribute to her brother inside. As well as being an epitaph, it is a new kind of elegy. One of the conventions of the traditional elegy is to make a statement in honour of the deceased, which builds towards a sense of closure. Here Carson materially skews this convention by creating a book that can be broken open. A hard fold-out box hides the ten-foot-long unconventional elegy inside.

Page by reproduced page, *Nox* "dismantles" the traditional elegy form to become its own reimagined, hybrid form. The conventional role of the elegy is often to speak of one loss in order to illustrate universal themes of loss. But in *Nox*, Carson dismantles an ancient elegy as a way to respond to her brother's singular life and death, which she connects to ideas of how history is carried. In section 1.0, the speaker introduces her premise for using history to shape her text. History becomes a mode for considering ways to think about or recollect (re/collect) Michael:

There is nothing more to  
be expended on that, we think, he's dead. Love cannot  
alter it. Words cannot add to it. No matter how I try  
to evoke the starry lad he was, it remains a plain, odd  
history. So I began to think about history.

The narrator compares elegy to history, pointing out that the Greek root of the word "history" means "to ask" (1.1). Elegy is also a form of asking: the poem's function is to ask

what the deceased meant to the speaker. *Nox*, too, asks, over and over, in different ways, “what I ever had as a brother” (Silverblatt 2010) and what can be created from loss and mourning.

In 1.1, Carson refers to “a man named Hekataios... who composed (about 500 BC) a *How To Go Around the Earth (with map)*”. It contains the story of a sacred phoenix. The phoenix mourns by laying his father in a hollowed-out myrrh egg and flying him “to Egypt to the temple of the sun”. Beneath the fragment from Hekataios, a prose fragment unpacks Carson’s understanding of this story, as a metaphor for Hekataios’ own activity:

The phoenix mourns by shaping, weighing, testing,  
hollowing, plugging and carrying towards the light. He  
seems to take a clear view of necessity. (1.1)

Carson’s interest in antiquity pervades and shapes *Nox*’s poetry. Classical elements such as this inclusion of Hekataios and the framing device of ‘Catullus CI’ and bring an ancient thread to this modern, morphing elegy. In the next prose fragment after Carson’s response to Hekataios’ story of the “sacred phoenix” (1.1), Carson begins a discussion of Herodotos’ contribution to her understanding of history: “Herodotos is an historian who trains you as you read. It is a process of asking, searching, collecting, doubting, striving, testing, blaming and above all standing amazed at the strange things humans do” (1.3). Catullus, Hekataios and Herodotos add breadth, depth, and complexity where the writer’s “knowledge” of the

"facts" (1.3) about her brother is scant. These classical allusions and citations cast the searching processes of grief and loss as an endless seeking.

Tracing back to the ancient Greek tradition of "elegeia", the classic elegy form is a song or lament of "mortal loss and consolation" (Hirsch 90)<sup>43</sup>. While navigating the difficulty of expressing a response to loss, the archetypal elegy aims at a conclusive ending. *Nox* defies this expectation and instead becomes an "open text". The text's openness is embodied in the way Catullus' "Poem 101" appears at the start of *Nox*, is translated then torn into fragments by Carson in the middle of the book, and appears again in an almost illegible, obliterated form on the final page. Loss and history do not end, just as "a brother never ends" (7.1),

Another elegiac convention is to cry or call out for the deceased. *Nox* achieves this in an innovative way. Carson's manipulation and repetitions of the Catullus elegy enact a keening or yearning across the entire book. Renowned for its untranslatability, "Poem 101" (also known as "Ave Atque Vale", and "Carmina 101") is the grief-stricken ten-line tribute the Roman poet Catullus (84 - 54? BCE). It was written upon the occasion of his visiting the tomb of his brother, who had recently died in the Troad, Asia Minor. Carson's translating of this poem develops a reimagined lament, or as Sze suggests, a "calling and calling again" (67).

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<sup>43</sup> However, in their PhD thesis, poet Emily Berry discusses the complexities around what defines a contemporary "elegy", preferring to explore the productivity of "elegiac writing" (8).

Traditionally, an elegy will have a component of celebration for the loved one. Carson's new take on this purpose is in her always apparent *making* of the "epitaph in the form of a book for him" (blurb). The delicate cutting out, scoring and tearing of edges, the gluing in, the pencil and charcoal drawings and rubbings, the daubs of gold paint, the staples, the careful photocopying; the way the whole codex/interior is intact as one long accordion inside a box: these intricate methods can all be regarded as the writer's "*inferias...offerings* (3.3)" for her brother<sup>44</sup>.

Carson's loving strategy of "dismantling" gives the written and visual elements equal importance in expressing Nox's elegiac content. As the reader experiences each new page of the text, a haptic sense of unwrapping develops. Examples of repeated fragments that convey a sense of gifting and surprise are the brief italicised phrases including "*In small white sleep mits your hands protrude.*" (1.3), "*Few circles, other lesser circles, but yet circles.*" (1.3) and "*I make a guess, I make a guess*" (2.1). Printed on thin, fragile white paper, ruler-ripped, then glued into the original scrapbook, these little epigraphs resemble the messages inside fortune cookies. These phrases are fragmented across the work, all on small glued-in shards of paper. They are not numbered like the prose blocks are. Instead, they float on certain pages, like little ripples or echoes. These repeated prose snippets are just one strand of the network of fragments which the speaker and reader assemble in Carson's strange epitaph-elegy.

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<sup>44</sup> Lloyd and Skade have each discussed the concept of gifting in Nox in their PhD theses.

## ***A Catullus cut-up: Fragmentation and making***

Making a poem is making an object. I always thought of them more as drawings than as texts, but drawings that are also physically enterable through the fact of language. It was another way to think of a book, an object that is as visually real as it is textually real.

(Carson, interview with Eleanor Wachtel at Montreal's Blue Metropolis Festival, April 15, 2016)

**Will Aitken:** I was wondering about your preference for things that are old and battered.

**Carson:** In surfaces, perfection is less interesting. For instance, a page with a poem on it is less attractive than a page with a poem on it and some tea stains. Because the tea stains add a bit of history. It's an historical attitude. After all, texts of ancient Greeks come to us in wreckage, and I admire that—the layers of time you have when looking at sheets of papyrus that were produced in the third century b.c. and then copied and then wrapped around a mummy for a couple hundred years and then discovered and put in a museum and pieced together by nine different gentlemen and put back in the museum and brought out again and photographed and put in a book. All those layers add up to more and more life.

(Carson, "The Art of Poetry No. 88")

Inseparable from Carson's "dismantling" of elegiac conventions is her mode of translation, which also invites the reader to participate in making meaning. In crafting *Nox*, Carson manipulates translation as an attempt to write into an understanding of her brother's history. Many poets have crafted their own versions of "Catullus CI"<sup>45</sup>. Carson says she spent twenty years attempting to translate it (Silverblatt, 2010). Tracing Carson's "dismantling" of 'Poem 101' is one way to consider how she reimagines the elegy as both verbal lament and physical artwork. Showing her interest in how ancient fragments such as those by Sappho have arrived decaying and "in wreckage" (Aitken), Carson breaks up the

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<sup>45</sup>Writers who have responded to "CI" include Leonard C. Smithers, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Aubrey Beardsley, F. W. Cornish, Frank Copley, Daisy Dunn, Peter Whigham, Guy Lee, James Michie, Roz Kaveney, Marcia Kemp, Celia and Louis Zukofsky, Mike Lala, Tate Standage. In the Creative Component, "Estrella" is my own attempt.

Catullus text and translates it using an “arrangement and rearrangement” (Hejinian, 2009) of words, marks, drawings, and pictures.

Through its physical distressing and ageing of verbal and visual fragments, *Nox* shows experiences of mourning and the struggle of telling an untellable life, from another time. By ripping and soaking the printed words of the Catullus poem and her translation to make some words smudge and fade, then burning the edges of the new version and putting these reproductions into the artist's book, Carson visually “dismantles” the ancient elegy to make her own hybrid elegy. In the 2014 interview with Eleanor Wachtel for *Brick 89*, Carson describes the importance of the imperfect photocopying of the original scrapbook:

If you Xerox or scan something perfectly, it looks glossy like a cookbook but if you let a little light into the Xerox machine and make it a bad Xerox, you get all those edges and life, you get what Currie calls the “decay” put back in. So it was really important to me to have that in the experience of the reader.

Starting with its first word “***multas***”, most of the book’s left-hand page fragments begin with a direct Latin-to-English word-by-word translation from the Catullus poem, in the order of their appearance in the original. The definition then moves to a contextual phrase or series of phrases, becoming increasingly metaphorical through synonyms and examples that shift from literal translation into lyrical phrases connected with grief, loss, darkness, and night. These illustrative phrases are created by Carson’s ‘smuggling in’ the titular word

'nox' (Aitken). For example, in the final phrase of the "multas" definition: "*multa nox*: late / in the night. Perhaps too late" (1.0).

Carson's dismantled definition is matched with a related prose and/or visual fragment on the right. She thus opens up the poetic possibilities of translation and fragmentation. By shifting between the ancient and modern, as well as between found fragments and her own prose, in *Nox* Carson circles grief while recognising the failure of language to ever fully contain responses to loss.

Hito Steyerl contends: "The poor image is no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence" (2009). In making this scrapbook-elegy which foregrounds the "poor image" (Steyerl), Carson's "dismantling" of "Catullus CI" is as much a visual activity as it is verbal. The conditions of the original "white book" (Aitken) being transformed into the "as close as we could get" replica (blurb) was a lengthy process. When Carson collaborated with Currie and later New Directions publishing house, each page was individually scanned, creating another layer of reflexivity. So, the copy is imperfect in the sense of Steyerl's argument for an "economy of poor images" which he likens to the poetics of imperfect cinema in Espinosa's late 1960's manifesto. "Like the economy of poor images, imperfect cinema diminishes the distinctions between author and audience and merges life and art. Most of all, its visuality is resolutely compromised: blurred, amateurish, and full of artefacts" (Steyerl).

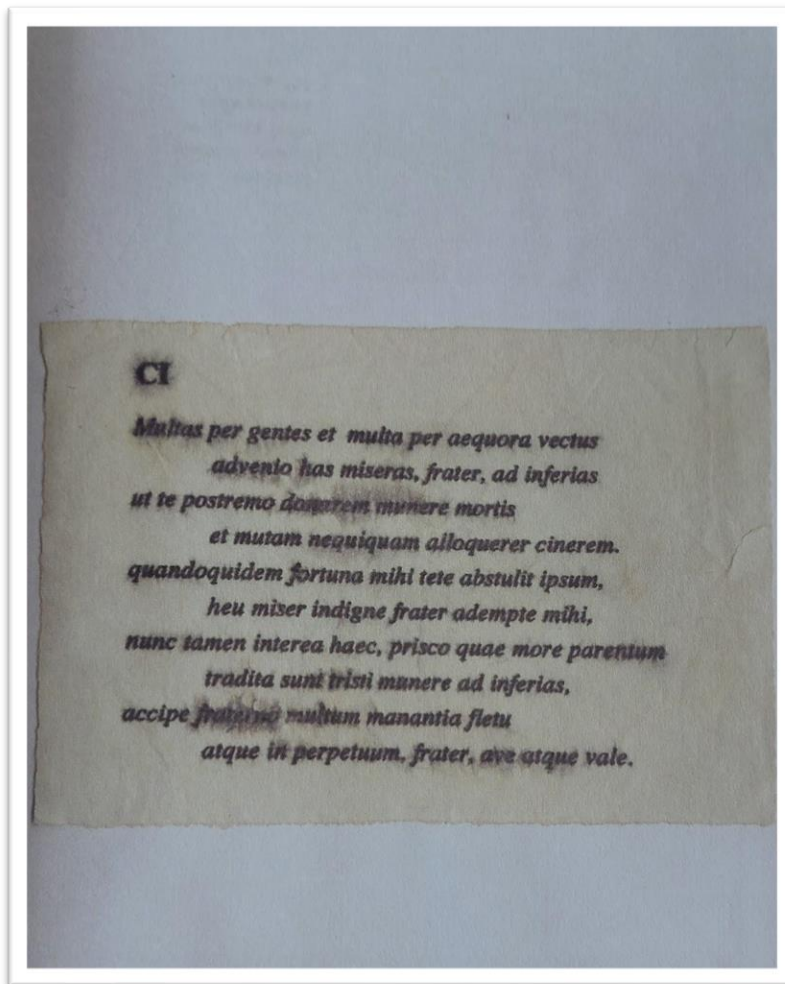


Figure 4: The first appearance of "CI" in Nox.

Through the reproductions of the poem (in different states of clarity, manipulation, or obfuscation) repeated throughout *Nox*, the artist's making of the epitaph-elegy keeps drawing attention to itself. This invites the reader into its creation process. The first dismantled reproduction of "Catullus CI" to appear in *Nox* is the Latin version typed in a black italicised font, printed on paper that has then been tea-stained, causing the letters to smudge. On a ruler-ripped paper fragment, the poem has been glued to a blank white page in the original scrapbook.

Pencil markings over certain words have further distressed and dismantled Catullus' elegy. The title, in this case just "Cl", and the words '*multas*'<sup>46</sup> ("numerous, many, many of..." (1.0)), '*donurem*' ("to present, endow, reward..." (4.1)) '*munere*' ("the action demanded of or requisite for a person..." (4.1)), '*tristi*' ("depressed, gloomy, unhappy, characterized by gloom or distress, bitter..." (8.2)), '*fraterno*' ("of or belonging to a brother, proper to a brother, brotherly, fraternal, honorific term applied to allies" (8.5)), along with the phrase '*ave atque vale*' (*ave*: "Be well! Farewell! Be happy!" (10.2); *atque*: "and, as well as, together with" (10.1); *vale*: "'sovereignty', ... to be physically powerful, have strength" (10.2)) have been subjected to the most smudging. Of this collection of Latin words, '*donurem*', '*fraterno*' and the common phrase '*ave atque vale*' / 'hail and farewell' / 'I salute you and goodbye', (often used in a eulogy for a hero) are distressed to the point of being difficult to read. These heavily smudged words and phrases can also be seen as a summary of the original scrapbook's purpose: a farewell gift, "*inferitas*... offerings" (8.4) or epitaph-elegy in memorial to Carson's brother.

Furthermore, the precise selection of these words for additional distressing illustrates how important the combination of visual and verbal elements of *Nox* are in drawing the reader into Carson's search for meaning. Skade describes this as Carson's "invitation to readers to enter physically into the book" which "provokes readers to perform their own rites in honour of the dead" (168). The haunting connotations of these darkened words echo through the rest of *Nox*. They can also be seen as a key to the reader's encounter with the

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<sup>46</sup> Here, in brackets, I include Carson's subsequent lexical definitions for each of these pencil-distressed words.

book as a creative gift "*donurem*" in honour or "*ave atque vale*" / 'hail and farewell' to the brother / "*fraterno*" who disappeared.

The distressing of the paper and words in the initial glued-in version of "Catullus CI" are a prelude to the "dismantling" that follows. After the first appearance of the whole, intact-but-distressed poem, "Catullus 101" is then translated word by word from Latin (on every left-facing page) into a series of English words and phrases. In this manner, Carson translates the ancient elegy and uses it as a mode to reconfigure her memories of Michael, as well as refract them through a classicist's understanding of history.

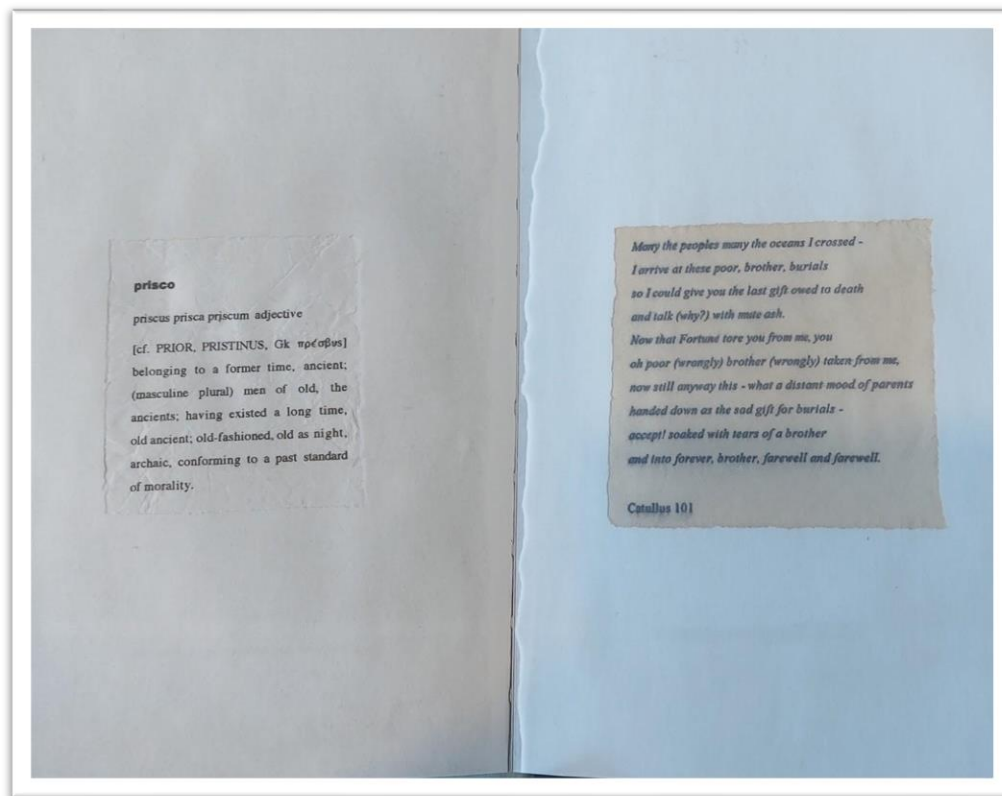


Figure 5: The second appearance of "Cl" in Nox.

The second reproduced version of 'Catullus Cl' is Carson's translation of the elegy, which appears near the end of section 7.2, facing the definition for 'prisco' ("belonging to a former time, ancient"). Fleming explains that "Carson's full translation of the poem only appears three quarters of the way through *Nox*, after the reader has already passed through many versions of the poem's words. This apparently final version of the translated poem sits opposite Carson's entry for the word 'prisco,' meaning (among other things, of course), 'belonging to a former time'" ("You can of course" 88). Carson continues to reveal her making of something new from something ancient as a means to speak to grief and

loss. This “apparently final” version of Catullus 101 is dismantled and re-mantled twice more in the book (Fleming “You can of course” 88).

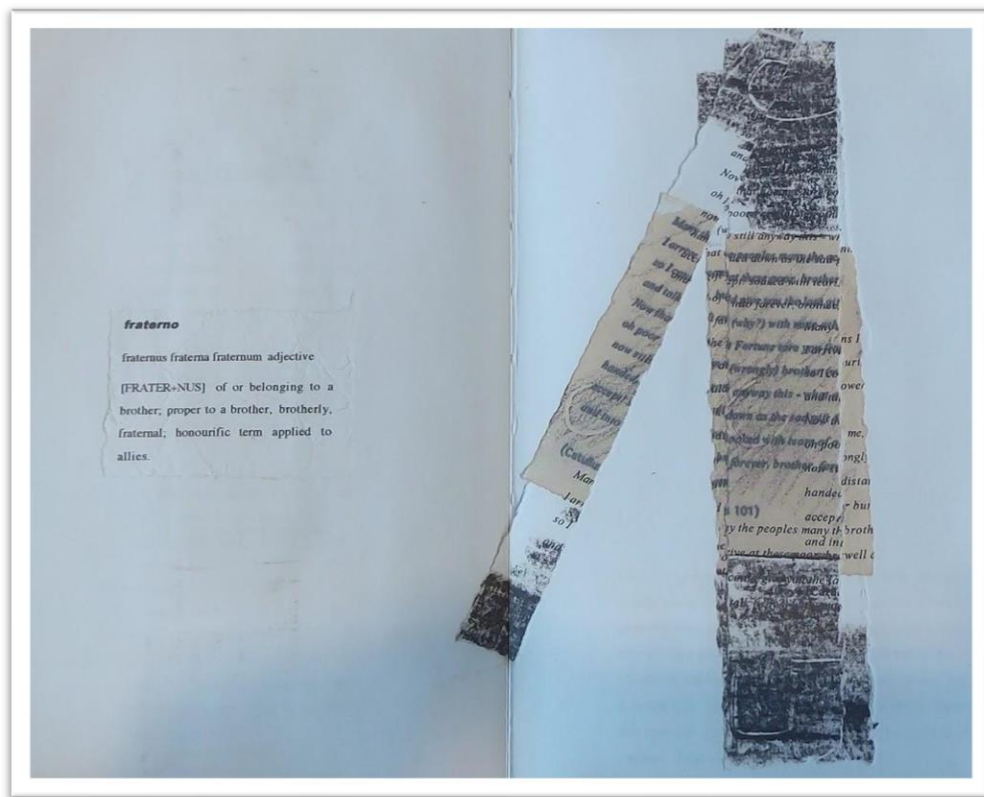


Figure 6: "Catullus 101", fractured.

The third appearance of "Catullus 101" is in section 8.5. Carson's translation of the poem has here been printed onto paper that has then been tea-stained, glued onto the scrapbook's white paper, scribbled over with black crayon, and finally had curved and straight lines scratched into its distressed surface. The entire page has then been torn into three long strips, two of which are glued on top of each other, with the remaining strip glued at an angle that stretches over onto the adjacent page. The left-facing page features the definition for '*fraterno*': "of or belonging to a brother...".

In this version of Carson's Catullus translation, the writer-artist constructs a definition of what her brother meant to her through design and subtraction. That is to say, the embellishments on the right side are just as important as its silences and gaps. Carson's crayon etching method has connotations of childhood art activities, where words or a drawing are scratched into a pre-coloured, then crayoned-over surface. The effect is to reveal something from nothing, to make presence out of absence, or the known out of the unknown, and, to use Carson's words again, to "make it festive" (Silverblatt 2010).

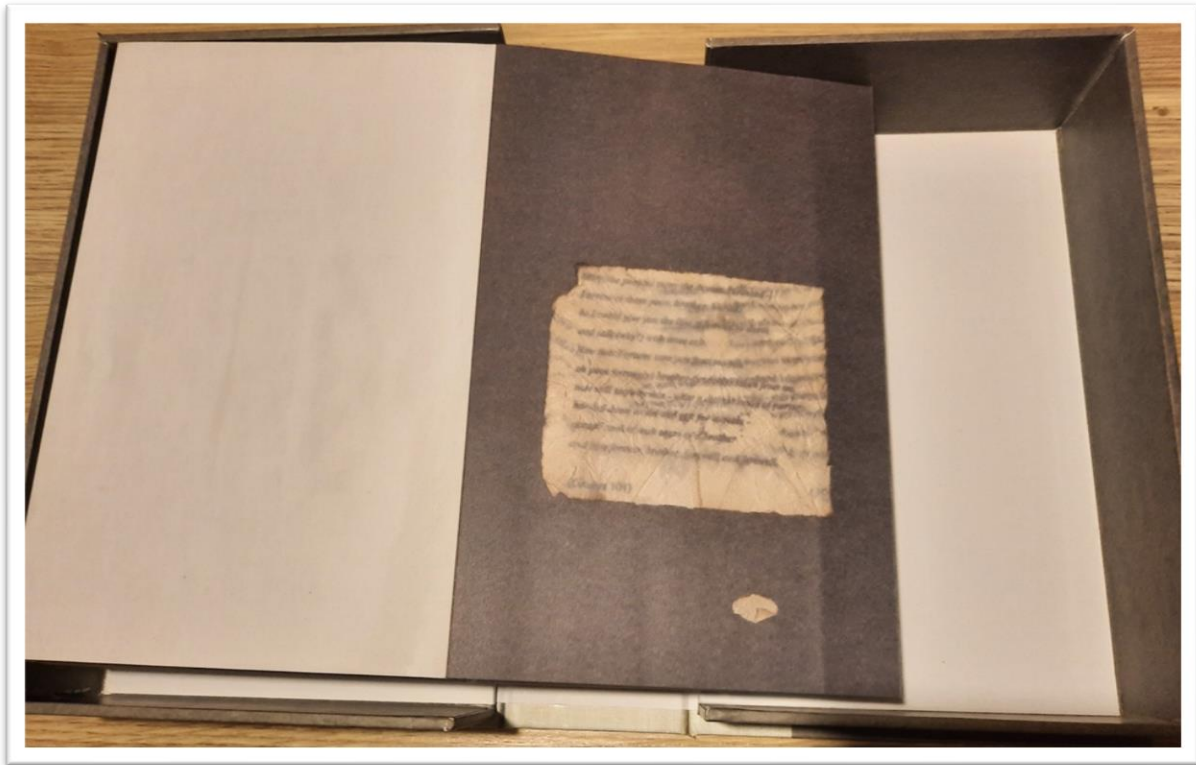


Figure 7: The final page of *Nox*.

The final appearance of “Catullus 101” is on the last page of *Nox*. This is the end page of the accordion fold. It is fixed on an almost black page and faces a blank white page. This version of the poem is barely legible, having been crumpled and creased, tea-soaked, submerged in water, dried, burnt around the edges, then glued into the scrapbook. It is followed only by the slate-grey, tombstone-hued cardboard cover. The layers of distress levelled on CI here are emblematic of Carson’s “rejection of closure” in her artistic translation of the poem and across *Nox* in its entirety.

In the *Paris Review* interview with Aitken, Carson explains that she first thought of herself as a visual artist before she thought of herself as a writer. And it’s the artwork of Carson’s

"Catullus 101" cut-up that instils the transformative nature of *Nox*. Visually as much as verbally, the work makes something new from grief and loss. Through its experiments in making "little kidnaps in the dark" (7.1), *Nox* navigates the un/known. This navigation of the un/known and its transformative outcomes are explored in more detail in the next subsections.

ii. "WHO / WERE / YOU?" Juxtaposition and ambiguity, or tensions of the un/known

Ambiguity and uncertainty: there is no "there" there, there are many theres and they're nowhere and everywhere. Anne Carson personifies that ambiguity and uncertainty; she raises more questions than answers.

("Anne Carson: Ambiguity, Uncertainty, Ecstasy", Bob Foulkes, *The British Columbia Review*, 20 March 2021)

"Originally it was simply a hand-made book (at first empty) that I filled with stuff and thoughts. I don't recall considering mind-body dualism, but certainly, it is a strange thing that people bodily disappear on us while remaining very present otherwise".

(Carson, "Unwriting the Books of the Dead: Anne Carson and Robert Currie on Translation, Collaboration, and History", Interview with Andrew D. King, *Kenyon Review*, 6 October 2012.)

"I realize all this sounds both chaotic and dishonest and probably that is the case. Contradiction is the test of reality, as Simone Weil says".

(Carson, "The Inscrutable Brilliance of Anne Carson", Interview with Sam Anderson, *New York Times* 2013.)

Carson is well-known for her use of juxtaposition. In the Introduction to *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre*, the "first book of essays dedicated to the breadth of Anne Carson's works, individually, spanning from *Eros the Bittersweet* through *Red Doc*" (blurb), Wilkison explains that "contradiction is at the heart of all Carson's work" (4). Similarly, in a review of Cook cites Carson's "genius for juxtaposition" (327). According to McKenzie, "Anne Carson

is not an uncreative writer [...] but her work is “highly derivative, blending poetry, essay, criticism and translation in multi-layered and complex juxtapositions of quotes, allusions, echoes and ekphrastic descriptions” (227). Likewise, several scholars have focussed on Carson’s inventive use of juxtaposition in *Nox*. Proposing that *Nox*’s central can be summarised by referring to Carson’s translation of Sappho’s Greek portmanteau γλυκύπικρον, Morris argues that *Nox* itself is constructed around a paradox (“Disappearances”). From Sappho’s fragment 31, the neologism combines γλυκός meaning sweet, with πικρός, meaning bitter: “The authoritative epithet for eros that Carson borrows from Sappho translates literally as “sweetbitter” (*glukupikron*). The bittersweetness of eros is, for Carson, inseparable from her responses to a brother’s fatal disappearance” (Morris).

Berry writes “Elegists like Anne Carson might set out to seek ways of knowing what has been lost [...] but ultimately it is the experience of ‘not knowing’ that fuels the work” (29). Expanding on Berry’s statement, I suggest one way to describe *Nox*’s central tension (and underpinning juxtapositions) is the un/known. For my reading, the concept of the un/known relates to the threshold or “border” space (Hejinian “Two Talks”, “Continuing”) hybrid texts can open. *Nox* constantly shifts between the unknown of what is missing from its translation and fragments, and the known of new cohesions and reconfigurations. Thus, through the recalled and reconstructed facts and aftermath of her brother’s life and death, Carson involves the reader in the difficult task of finding language for loss. In response to the crayon-etched question that demands “WHO / WERE / YOU”? (2.1) early in the text, the speaker and reader attempt to piece together an answer.

The reader's involvement in piecing together the un/known of Michael occurs from their first encounter with the book. Positioned in the centre of the first reproduced page of *Nox* is a ripped rectangle of paper that reads "NOX / FRATER / NOX" ("NIGHT / BROTHER / NIGHT"), overlaying the repeated handwritten name: Michael. This simple strip of paper and these three words evoke the epitaph role of the text by interspersing the book's title with the Latin word for brother. It also metaphorically shrouds the brother in "night". Yet the white column on which the three words appear could be seen to represent light. On this opening page, Carson names her brother six times, handwriting "Michael" repeatedly, in a scrawl that increases in opacity and size with each iteration. The names fill the page and build like a mantra. They are a reminder of the book's purpose: to piece together the Carson's memories of her lost brother through reimagined elegy and "thinking about history" (1.1). The increasing scale of the handwritten name, visible through the overlaid strip of paper, could also be interpreted as defiant, a repeated naming of the dead brother as a way to continue to speak of and to him. So, from the first page, the interplay of darkness/night/death/the unknown and light/life/the known is suggested.

King emphasises the idea of the un/known in their interview with Carson and Currie for the *Kenyon Review*: "Like Catullus's 'Poem 101', which oscillates in and out of focus across *Nox*, Carson's act of remembrance also moves from one degree of decipherability to another: the process of grief, of both forging and mourning, takes place on a gradient scale where the known and the unknown are not themselves polar coordinates but possible values in a sea of valences. This sea, this shifting topography, is not so much a limbo or purgatory as

an unlit hallway where vestiges of the familiar guide one forward" ("Unwriting"). Drawing on Carson's description of translating as "not exactly an unknown room, where one gropes for the light switch. I guess it never ends" (7.1), King explains that in *Nox*, the role of translation seems to be "to separate the inseparable, to parse the influx of history into the present and the present back into history". In other words, Carson's use of translation evokes a familial, artistic, and academic struggle to find language for loss.

The narrative circles around or "unfolds" (O'Rourke) several layers of loss. As well as the main story of Carson's missing brother, there are also shadow stories about the losses of her mother and, indirectly, her father, who is largely absent from the book. Alongside the sibling elegy, there are representations of loss from antiquity (Catullus' lament for his brother, Hekataios' fragment 324 about a sacred phoenix mourning his father) which illustrate Carson's investigation into how "History and elegy are akin" (1.1). These layers of loss develop the book's core paradox of the un/known. By this, I mean that the contradiction at the heart of *Nox* is the writer making a connection to history and to the lost brother, then "dismantling" that connection. This is achieved as Carson draws the reader into the personal story (using the struggle of translation to depict the struggle to understand a life, or write history), but then distances the reader from its key characters and emotional centre at other times. The reader becomes embroiled in the speaker's attempt to know or understand the missing brother through the translation of the Catullus elegy, all the while being reminded that both translation and loss can only ever be incomplete.

One of Carson's crucial gestures towards the un/known is fragmentation. What is known about Michael is signalled through the few tangible remnants of his life: family photographs; the one letter he sent home that Carson "dismantles" and rearranges; the recalled conversations Carson had with him, their mother, and his widow; the short, typed speech from his funeral. Alongside these fragments of the known, the gaps in Michael's history emerge through the overarching question ("WHO / WERE / YOU"?), the struggle of translating "Catullus 101", and the ambiguity of the empty white pages on the reverse of the published scrapbook. The book is built on a complicated desire, shared by both Carson and the reader, to reconfigure who or what is out of reach (the enigmatic brother's history, the untranslatable poem, articulations of loss).

Meanwhile, the author's emphasis that the book is not "about" her grief (as mentioned in the Sehgal interview) shows a deliberate distancing. This distancing or 'prowling' (7.1) strategy is evident as the text shifts between fragments of what is known about her brother, a word-by-word translation of the poem Catullus wrote for his deceased brother, and prose describing classical understandings of history.

### **"WHO / WERE / YOU"**

His voice was like his voice with something else crusted on it, black, dense - it lighted up for a moment when he said "pinhead" (So pinhead d'you attain wisdom yet?) then went dark again. All the years and time that had passed over him came streaming into me, all that history. What is a voice?

(5.2)

The speaker directly addresses the reader as 'you' across *Nox*'s fragments, such as the scratched-out-of-crayon scribble that reveals the central question, "WHO / WERE / YOU" (2.1)? This puzzle is responded to two pages later in the italicised phrase glued below an ornately-framed black and white photograph of Michael and their mother on a jetty over a calm body of water, "*I make a guess, I make a guess*" (2.1). *Nox* is Carson's guesswork, work which requires the reader's involvement. (Perhaps the first 'reader' of the book could even be considered to be Michael, because *Nox* is written "for him" (back cover)). Carson's fraught connection with the brother who called her "professor" and "pinhead", although "we never had a conversation about ideas in our life" (5.2) is repeatedly reimagined through the book's fractured ephemera.

Michael's sparse correspondence with his family (limited to postcards, phone calls and one letter) is reconstructed by Carson across the book's unnumbered and conjoined pages, alongside her translation of an ancient elegy for another absent brother. The character of Michael is thereby 'translated'. He is the brother from childhood hiding under the stairs, in parallel with the lost brother who met his now-widow during a season spent sleeping in Copenhagen stairwells; he is the author of a single letter to his mother written during decades of living abroad; the strange reticent voice on the other end of the phone; the person who is and is not there, on every page of the text, and its blank white pages on the reverse.

The brother character that Carson constructs is an outsider and a tragic hero: in the photograph of him in snorkel gear on dry land on the cover, appearing wounded after coming home with a bloodied nose at nine years old, then hiding in the stairwell, or

excluded (below the older neighbourhood boys' treehouse after they'd pulled the trapdoor shut, 8.1). Their mother's concern for him is juxtaposed with all these representations of Michael. As Carson explains in the Silverblatt interview, "coming home wrecked" was part of his Lazarus-like "heroic nature" (*Bookworm*). Perhaps in an act of sibling loyalty, there is little reference to the crime Michael committed and "ran away" from "in 1978, rather than go to jail" (2.2). Instead, the speaker sparingly reveals how, "when he began to deal drugs, I got the old sinking feeling" and the fact that he used multiple passports and changed his name (8.2).

Carson's "dismantling" of her brother's only letter home to their mother "that winter the girl died" (2.1) further reconstructs his "heroic nature" (*Bookworm*). One of the "mysteries" Michael left behind (*Bookworm*), the letter is an echo haunting the text, perhaps signifying how it haunted the writer and her mother. It also speaks to how the bereaved covet tokens of the deceased to remember them. The aerogram is introduced verbally on the "WHO / WERE / YOU?" page, then torn into fragments and dispersed across the following five double pages of sequence 2.2. The physical letter appears only as fragments, some as small as a single word or biro marking. These shards of communication enact the 22 years Michael disappeared from Carson's life and her struggle to search for understanding about it.

This echoing letter fragment disrupts the text and prompts the reader's participation in meaning-making. Following the black-and-white photograph of Michael and his mother on a jetty, next to the definition for '**advenio**' "to come (to), arrive (at), reach" (2.1), the two

prior double pages act as a prelude to this section. This pair of facing pages feature a torn shard of an aerogram envelope next to a collage of stamps from Bermuda, Denmark, England, France, and the Netherlands, signifying Michael's itinerant lifestyle. Appearing after the torn aerogram corner and smattering of stamps, the "only one letter" Michael wrote "to my mother" detailing how he "went crazy" after "the love of his life" (3.2) died is folded, unfolded, torn up, scanned, then glued in. Written on thin letter paper with the Kashmir address for a "Deluxe Class Houseboat[s]" at the top, the words Michael sent home are reconfigured over the next five double pages.

Prose section 2.2 also repeats across the double pages in this sequence, juxtaposing the broken letter. It describes how "My brother ran away in 1978, rather than go to jail. He wandered in Europe and India [...]", travelling under a false passport and living under "other people's names" (2.2). This repeated and rearranged response to the words Michael posted home conveys the distress felt by his family at his. It also provokes a longing for answers in the reader. Below, I examine how Carson does this through her collaging of this sequence.

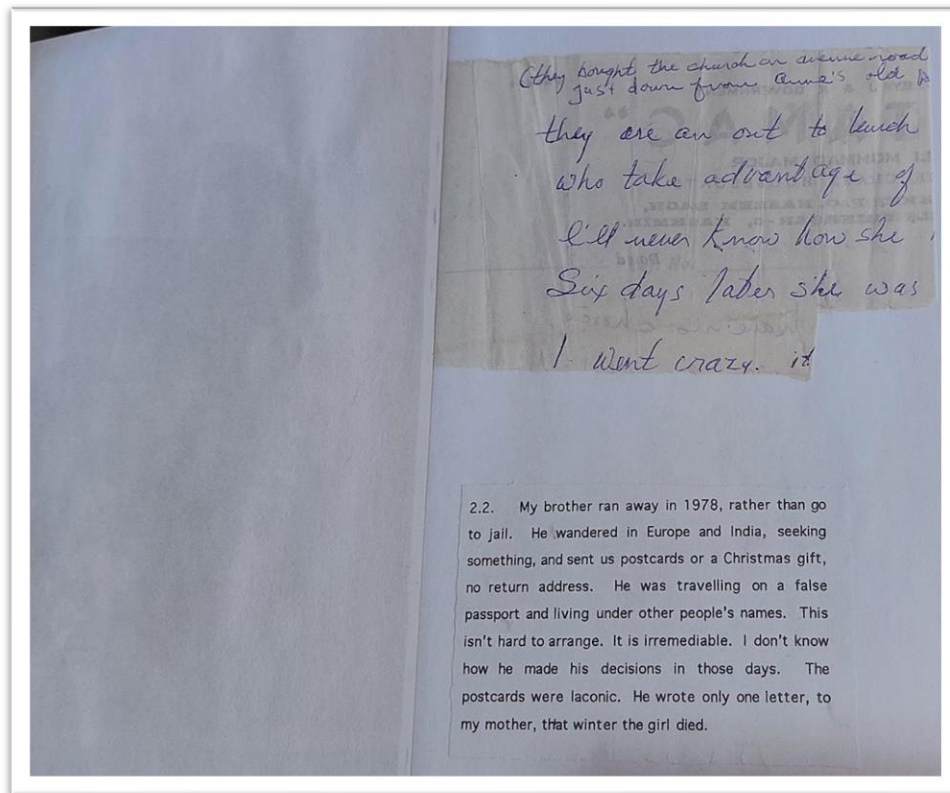


Figure 8: Currie's method for bringing "decay" to the book develops Nox's nostalgic tone (2.2).

The first page of Sequence 2.2 is cloudy white, having been given its look of "decay" during Robert Currie's scanning process (*Bookworm*). The cloudiness evokes the absence of Michael, who was absent from Carson's adult life for so long, and the impact of wanting something or someone no longer there. The prose and torn aerogram are then manipulated and repeated across the next four double pages. Different parts of the letter are revealed and concealed across these spaces, some of which have been shifted beyond the edges of the original scrapbook onto a black area during the photocopying process.

Here, Carson and Currie's "dismantling" of Michael's letter suggests the uncontainability of loss; and the desire for what is gone stretching beyond articulable boundaries.

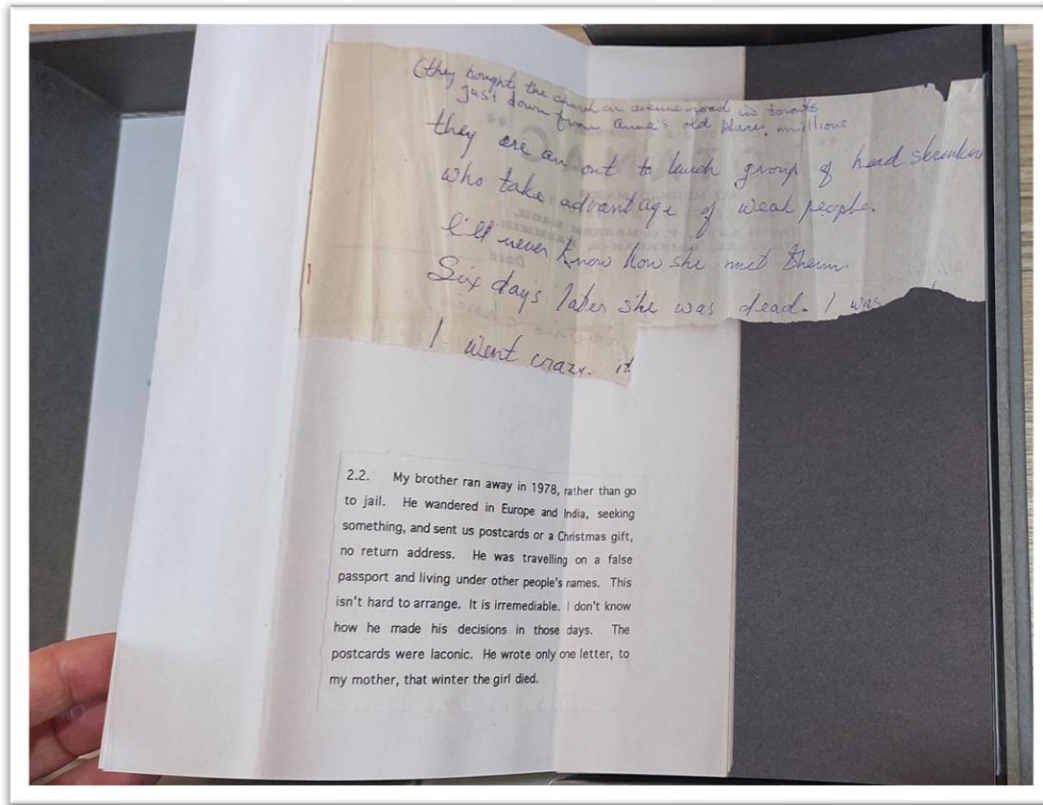


Figure 9: The reader encounters "the facts" of Michael's life through the repeated prose fragment 2.2, and torn pieces of his only letter home.

The fragmented letter and the accompanying prose fragment 2.2 are collected "facts" (1.3) about Michael, gathered from his meagre communications with his sister and mother after he "ran away" (2.2). These repetitions provide a haptic experience of a response to loss. This occurs as the speaker, with the reader, questions "how he made his decisions in those days" when confronted by broken up, recurring statements from Michael's letter such as "Six days later she was dead", "I went crazy" and "have no choice" (2.2).

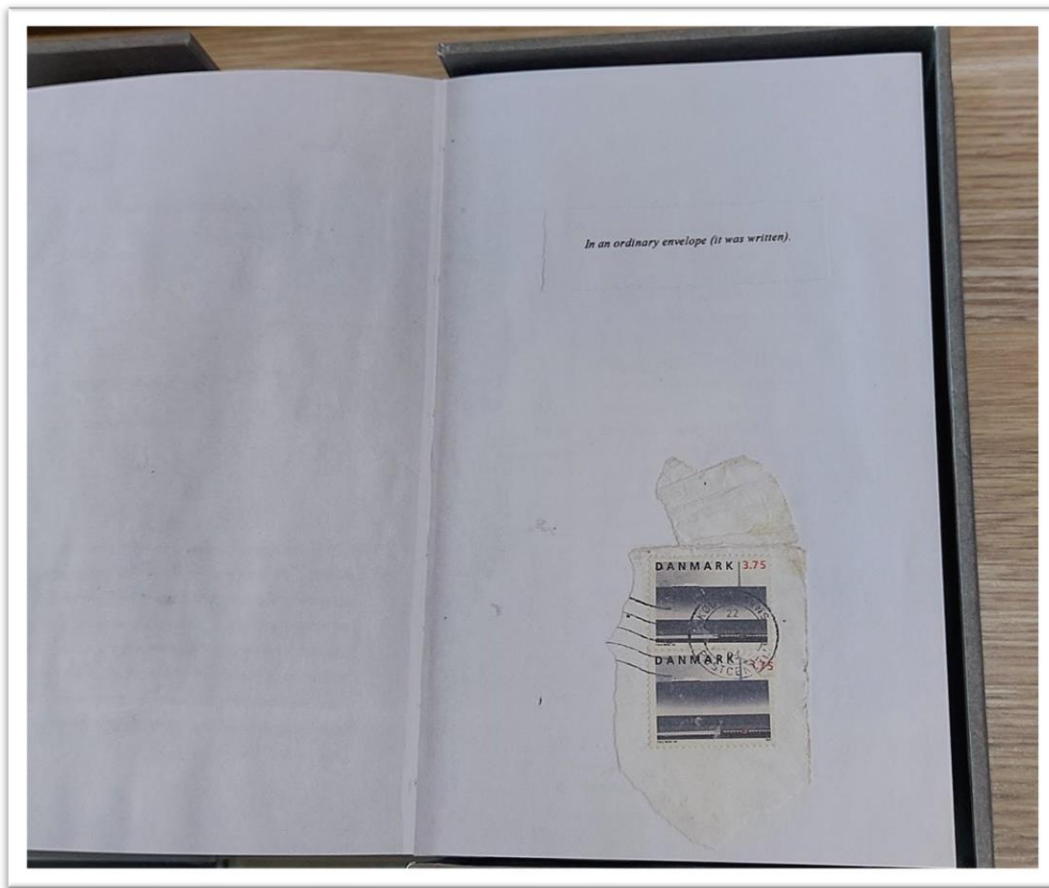


Figure 10: Sequence 2.2 uses hazy white space to speak of loss.

Sequence 2.2 closes with a double page. The first is another cloudy page of mostly off-white space, aside from a thin fold of the prose fragment about the letter along its lower turning edge. The adjacent page is also primarily blurred, imperfect off-white space aside from the italicised "*In an ordinary envelope (it was written)*" floating on a thin strip of paper, above two Danish stamps torn from an aged white envelope.

Here, the use of clouded white space, or what Carson has called the "splash of white paint" (*Nay Rather* 6) again articulates the emptiness and lack left by loss, as well as the desire to 'retrieve' (O'Rourke) something from it. The clouded white space on these two pages also affords breathing space before the enactment of the shock in the statement that follows.

Across sequences 2.1 and 2.2, the reader is drawn into the 'mystery' (*Bookworm*) of Michael via the fragmented letter, and so then also feels the "surprise" at his reported death the speaker describes two pages later (3.1).

The news of Michael's death appears on the page facing the definition for '**has**': "(indicating a person or thing that is present in place, time or thought)" via two brief lines of prose:

My brother dies in Copenhagen in the year 2000  
a surprise to me (3.1).

Here, the juxtaposition of presence and absence, or the un/known is embodied, while also being tinged with understatement that this tragedy was "a surprise" to Carson (3.1). The line-break at the year 2000 precedes the "surprise" to the speaker, so it is also a shock to the reader. The lack of punctuation at the end of the first line also contributes to the jarring effect of this revelation.



Figure 11: The impact of the belated news of Michael's death is enacted in Sequence 3.1.

The reported detail that Michael “dies” (3.1) is also isolated on predominantly white space (aside from a left-side border strip of charcoal imbued with creases and tears, and the present-tense “DiES” etched across the charcoal-smeared prose fragment). Again, the speaker’s response to loss is made material, and the reader is an accomplice in the search for her brother and what his life and death meant.

The speaker and reader gradually uncover some of the cloudy circumstances surrounding Michael’s life and sudden death. The reader learns that Carson built up a picture of his nomadic existence through communication from him to his mother and herself (phone calls, postcards, the one letter) and through a visit with his widow in Copenhagen

(*Bookworm*). Therefore, the letter fragment is a key part of the piecing-together process which unfolds in the book. The impact of his desertion and sudden death ripples and shudders throughout *Nox*'s fragments, continuing the elegiac vacillation between knowing / not knowing Michael, and the in/articulate nature of grief. Further, Carson's "dismantling" process makes this letter speak across the distance of disappearance and death. It is transformative in how it reconfigures presence (the known) out of absence (the unknown).

### ***Gaps and cracks: Translation as the un/known***

Translation ages with you, as it were.

(Carson, *Bookworm*)

Looking at the gaps between the words as you move from one language to another, and the way meaning disappears into the gaps – that experience is what I value most about translation. We operate all the time with language as if it says what we mean. It never does, but you don't realize the flaccidity of that until you are actually trying to make one thing in one language into another language. It's like being on a surface with a lot of cracks in it and looking down through the cracks to something like another world down there that you can almost see, almost express, but not quite. It's frustrating in the sense that there's an ideal understanding down there that's not available but, on the other hand, it doubles reality because we don't live in that ideal world, we live up here, and yet you can glimpse down through the cracks to that other thing.

(Carson, "Writing From the Margins")

I came to think of translating as a room, not exactly an unknown room, where one gropes for the light switch.

(*Nox* 7.1)

Through translation, Carson explores the emotional impact of knowing and not knowing her missing and now-deceased brother and the desire for what is missing from "the facts"(1.3) of his history (Fleming after John D'Agata, *Talk (why?)* 64; Van Praet *Ce qui*).

As a translator, Carson's works often express her interest in how "English falls silent" (*Nay Rather* 4); that is to say, there is always a gap between the original word or expression and its translation. Some words, like the word '*molu*' which Homer uses in *The Odyssey* for the milk of a sacred plant and for "what he calls 'the language of gods'" are deliberately untranslatable. Carson compares this obfuscation to a splash of white paint: "Homer has splashed white paint not on the faces of his gods but on their word". Carson goes on to say that this deliberate act of opacity can be seen in Francis Bacon's paintings, where he plays with blurring and clarity by splashing white paint on faces in his portraits. I consider Carson's manipulation of gaps, white space and "silence" as deliberate "splashes of white paint" (*Nay Rather* 4) or obfuscations that call the reader into the co-creation of *Nox*.

Carson plays with translation in *Nox* to show how language can never fully describe the impact of loss because it is complex and ongoing. In the 2010 interview with Silverblatt, Carson explained that translating "Catullus 101" appealed because Catullus was the inventor of lyric poetry, following Sappho. She was attracted to the "dignity of the elegiac form in verse", while there is also "something festive about the verse as well" (my emphasis). The connections between Carson's word definitions and memory fragments reflect how responses to loss, histories, and remembrance are open or circular. Similarly, Reinhardt describes the performative link between translation and mourning in *Nox*. He suggests that "le geste de traduire informe l'écriture du deuil, le rend possible, comme si la dépossession de sa propre langue performait la perte de soi dans le travail, à la fois  
158  
nécessaire et impossible, du deuil (the gesture of translating informs the writing of

mourning, makes it possible, as if the dispossession of one's own language performed the loss of self in the work, at once necessary and impossible, of mourning)" (225).

Carson's hybrid, reflexive, and experimental mode of translating draws attention to language's failure to ever fully describe experience, especially loss. For example, on the page that features fragment 2.1, the italicised words "*Few circles, other circles, but yet circles*" hover on a torn page with a half-circle painted below it. Underneath, 2.1 describes the speaker's mother asking for Michael's letter "on her death bed". In etchings scratched out of black crayon scribbles, the words "WHO / WERE / YOU" call in the gaps above, between, and below the glued-in prose shards. Here the page embodies what it is about, as the book embodies what it is about, enacting "circles... but yet circles" of "understandings of peoples and histories" (Seghal).

The tactile, self-referential way Carson collects the verbal and visual elements of the scrapbook shifts through an elegiac expression or enactment of grief towards an un/ravelling of it. About two-thirds of the way through *Nox*, Carson herself explains her purpose in translating Catullus:

I never arrived at the translation I would have liked to do of poem 101. But over the years of working on it, I came to think of translating as a room, not exactly an unknown room, where one gropes for the light switch. I guess it never ends. A brother never ends. . . He does not end. . .

Prowling the meanings of a word, prowling the history of a person, no use expecting a flood of light. Human words have no main switch. But all those little kidnaps in the dark. And then the luminous, big, shivering, discandied, unrepentant, barking web of them that hangs in your mind when you turn back to the page you were trying to translate. (7.1)

Here she suggests some of her poetics of translation. Carson describes her process as incremental, a circling or gathering of history and meanings. Her use of the term "web" to illustrate the connectedness and patterns she sees across "human words" is a useful way to think about how Carson shapes the tension of the un/known in *Nox*. Carson's history of the lost brother, and her history of history spirals outwards, decentralised, rhizomatic, looping back on itself. The Catullus poem is splintered and re-invented, the gathered memories of Michael "refuse[s]" (10.3) understanding or translation. But the "little kidnaps in the dark" build up to something "luminous" (7.1).

Translating the Catullus poem is a difficult task, or a navigation of the un/known. In *Nox*, it is a vehicle for finding "a way of understanding [Michael] ... because he left so many mysteries behind" (*Bookworm*).

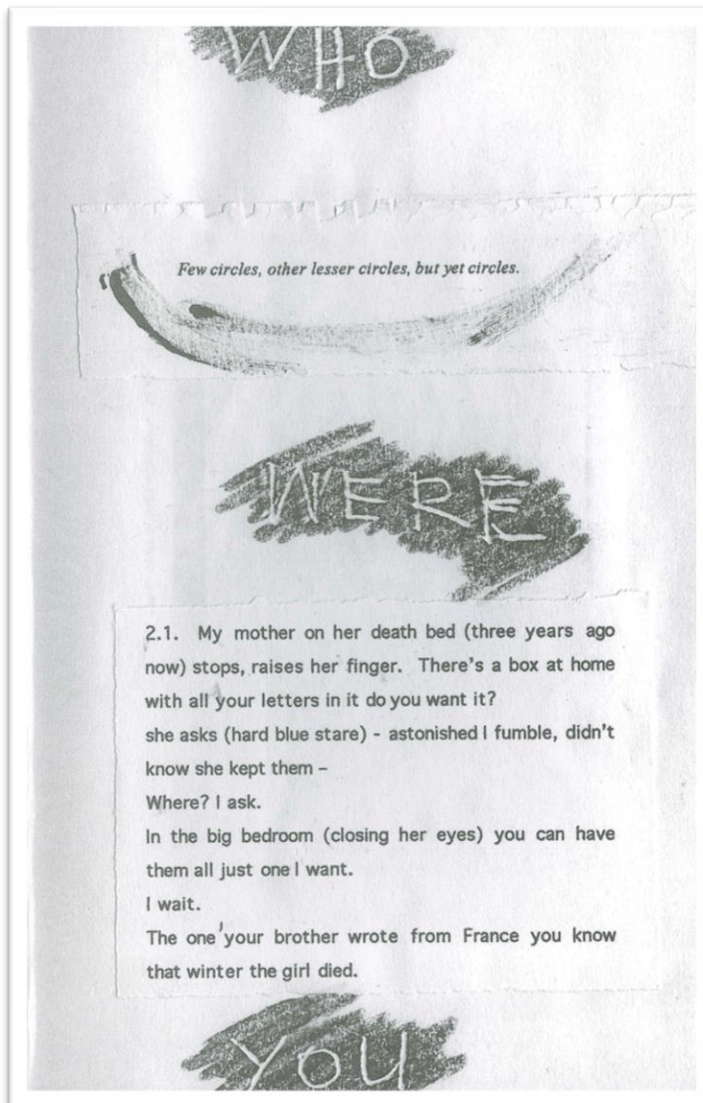


Figure 12: In Section 2.1, a fragment describing Carson's mother asking for Michael's letter is surrounded by one of the Nox's central questions: "WHO / WHERE / YOU"?

### ***Nested stories / shifting voices***

**Mike Baretz:** What kind of rules do you make up for yourself as you write? Specifically, what is your process of finding your voice and deciding how to say things? Is your writing voice the same way you think, or speak?

**Anne Carson:** Well, I think every piece of work has its own voice, and you have to figure out what that is, sort of work into it. It's not the same voice from piece to piece [...] But I find that each thought has a sound inside it. I mean, you can hear in your head how the thought should sound like. Sometimes

there are rhythms and melodies even before there are words, and you have to find the words that fit into that rhythm or melody. But the voice comes with the thought, for me.

(Elkamel, "Half Lives")

In the *Kenyon Review* interview with King (2012), Carson explains how the polyvalence of the early Greek elegy genre inspired some of her crafting of *Nox*. To this end, she layers several voices in her translation of "Catullus 101" to achieve "a range of function and tone" ("Unwriting"). Using a voice that changes between an intellectual tone and a personal, lyrical tone, Carson constructs the speaker as a central character from fragment to fragment, sometimes even within a single fragment. For example, she contrasts the authorial voice of the word definitions and her essay-like discussions of the ways "History and elegy are akin" (1.1) with the intimate voice of the sibling in prose-poetry fragments who examines "*places in the world where you and I saw things*" (3.2). Parr notes that "By the third page, Carson establishes herself as the narrative voice of the text and then, just as swiftly, retreats into the reserved posture of the academician, a posture that affords her a distance from the story she will tell and the pain that it will convey" (349).

The speaker-voice is in places distancing and effacing (for example, in the arrangement of the double page which on the left-side, features Carson's definitions for the word "*fortuna*". Accompanying the lexical entry, the right-side features the solitary, floating italicised phrase "It is for God to fix the time who knows no time" positioned beneath an oblong sliver cut from a black and white photograph of ocean waves with a dyke in the background, which could possibly be Copenhagen harbour (5.3). In other places, the

speaker-voice is self-deprecating, drawing the reader in closer, often within a single fragment. On the next double page after the "*fortuna*" translation, the Latin term "*mihi*" faces a cut-out photograph of an urban street, centred on a footpath and a "Launderama" signpost. Below the image, a prose fragment describes how "My brother's widow takes me to the church called Sankt Johannes where the funeral was held two weeks ago. It is white and clean as an eggshell inside. I like cleanliness. My brother didn't care so much" (5.3). From one page to the next, *Nox*'s constant motion between distance and proximity to the reader and the lost brother is, on one level, a (re)construction of a troubled sibling relationship. On another level, this juxtaposition represents the in/expressibility of loss.

Carson's shifts between distancing and closeness, absence and presence, academic and personal, the unknown and known, ask the reader to participate in meaning-making. A reader joins in the search for a lost brother, and for ways to articulate history. While struggling to understand "who I ever had as a brother" the speaker and the reader scavenge for ways to know or articulate loss.

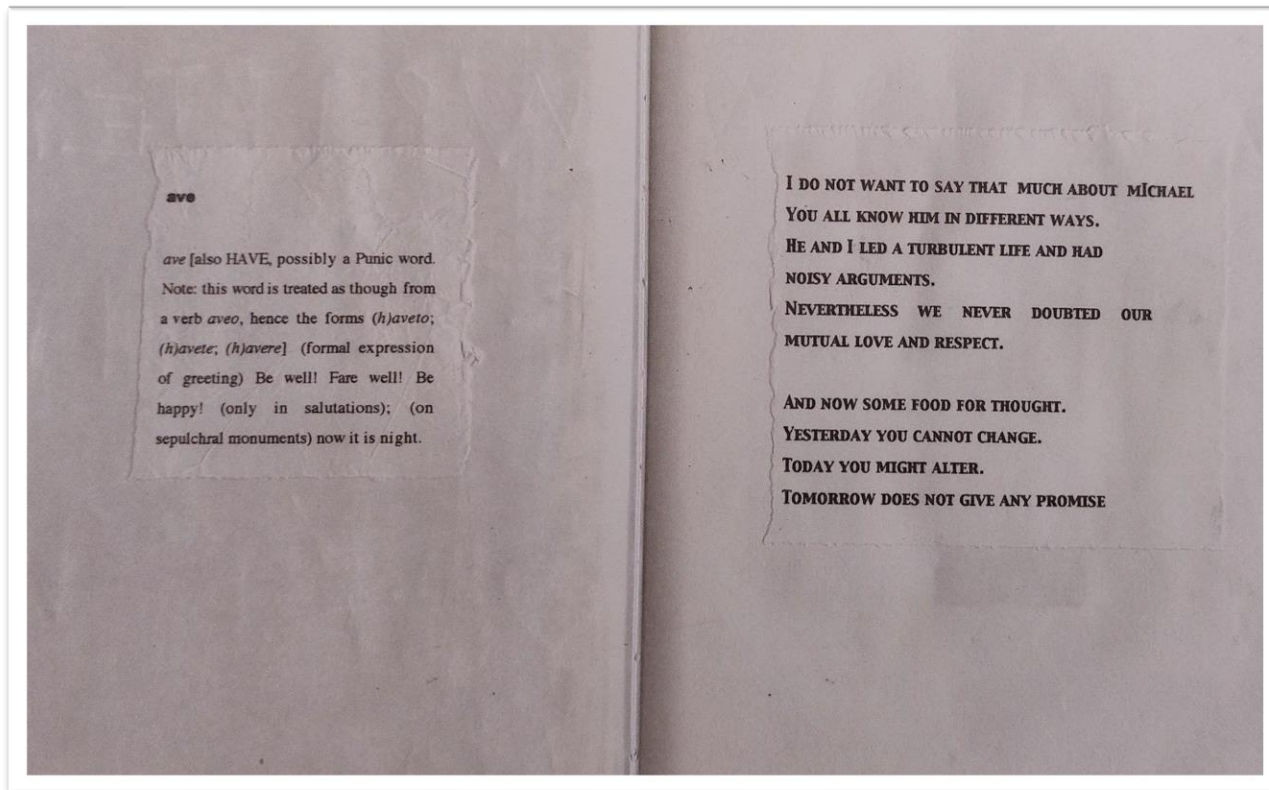


Figure 13: The tribute Michael's widow read at his funeral interfaces Carson's lexical definition for "ave" (1.2).

**Sister, widow, Anna, mother,** father

Four characters in *Nox* emerge as Carson translates their love for Michael: the speaker, the mother, his widow and Anna. Firstly, the entire work can be read as a loving and perplexed tribute to him from his sister. The characters of Carson's family (brother, mother, absent father) are constructed alongside that of Anna (the girl who died (2.2), who was "the love of his life" (3.2)) and Michael's widow. The reported minor voices of the widow, the mother and the lack of the voice of the father form part of the translation Carson undertakes in *Nox*. Their spare, inscrutable language (and in some cases, muteness) echo across the text. Alongside this cast of Michael's kin, real and fictional characters, mostly from antiquity and, in one case, the Bible (Hekataios, Herodotos, Virginia Woolf, the Skythians, king Ariantes, Bashō, Sabi, Lazarus, Giotto, Plutarch, Hippokleides) appear.

In sequence 1.2, the reader learns of Michael's widow. She "took the dog to the church on the day of the funeral", and it was her phone call to Carson who informed her of his death, two weeks afterwards. Carson asked her for a copy of the brief tribute to Michael she read at his funeral, adding it as a fragment in the scrapbook next to the definition for the Latin word "**ave**": Be well! Fare well! Be happy!" (10.2).

In Copenhagen, Michael's widow tells Carson he was the "light of my life", triggering a remembrance from Carson: "oddly into me drops this expression my mother used also" (4.1). The mother's character is developed in the book's shards of letters, recounted phone conversations and prose snippets. Through these fragments, the reader pieces together the devastating impact of Michael's "heroic nature" (*Bookworm*) and disappearance on her: "For years after he left she would glance up every time a car came spinning down the road" (4.1). The mother's devotion and despair were such that she never recovered. Carson recalls her mother saying that when she prayed for him "nothing comes back" (4.2). On her death bed, the letter Michael sent from France "that winter the girl died" was, for Carson's mother, the only "one I want" (2.1).

"I HAVE NEVER KNOWN A CLOSENESS LIKE THAT" (3.3) is one of the few phrases the speaker recalls from phone calls with her brother. This is one of the series of recollected statements she "dismantles" by transcribing in typed capital letters which she then glues into the "white book" (Aitken). Surrounded by the blankness of a white page, this fragment is given generous space. It sits adjacent to the lexical definition of 'ad': "to, up to, into...".

The careful layout of these eight words shows the Carson's attempt to understand or convey a sense of the deep love Michael said he felt for Anna.

Of their parents, their mother appears as the more important character. Carson's father's voice is largely absent from the text<sup>47</sup>. He is only mentioned in regard to how he was laid out in his coffin "years apart" from his wife, "in bright yellow sweaters" (5.5). However, Lloyd has shown how his character is represented in the work's "shadows". Arguing that "the looming figure of the father is a subtext to *Nox*" (72), Lloyd asserts Michael's troubled relationship with his father is implied through Carson's quotation and translation of the Hekataios myth (1.1) about "a phoenix burying its father inside an egg" (Lloyd 73) in the opening section of *Nox*. There is also her coloured-in shadow of the photographer who took the picture of the daughter, mother and son standing outside a grand home on a snowy winter's day on the pages that follow. This shadow figure becomes a symbol of the absent father (Lloyd 76).

Carson's selection and arrangement of fragments develops a sister's understanding of the relationships between these characters and Michael. Thus, these minor voices as well as the absent father (Lloyd, 72-76) contribute to *Nox*'s translation of the in/articulate nature of loss, the un/known, or "... talk (why?) with mute ash" (7.2).

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<sup>47</sup> Parr observes that "Carson's father appears very rarely in her works. It is only in *Plainwater* that we find out that he was a gruff man who, late in life, suffered from dementia and spoke in those years in a word salad whose words changed meaning from day to day" (349).

### ***Carson's "arrangement and rearrangement" of contrasting images***

In a materialist reading of *Nox*, Sze has shown that the ideas and images Carson places next to each other are deliberately complex and surprising (68). The text is rich in contrasts: between the old and the new, darkness and light, closeness and distance, what is known and what is unknown. This makes it important for the reader to participate in the meaning-making of the text. Through juxtaposing translation and fragments of memory, the ancient and the contemporary, the text continually "favour[s] the border" (Hejinian "Continuing"). When the writer puts two jarring visual and/or textual elements next to each other, a liminal "space of appearance" (Hejinian "Continuing") opens between them. This includes the reader in *Nox*'s complicated search not just for Michel, but for ways to articulate the tension between language and loss.

The following section explores some of the book's key juxtapositions, which spring from its central juxtaposition of the un/known. In a Hejinian sense, these are examples of discordant repetitions that invite the reader into the text's "rejection of closure".

### ***White space as absence and presence***

There is something maddeningly attractive about the untranslatable, about a word that goes silent in transit.

(Carson, "On the right to remain silent").

A distinctive feature of Carson's reimagining of the physical form of the book, and how this enacts an engagement with the un/known in *Nox*, is the use of white space, or what duPlessis in "Manifests" calls the "chosen pause or silence" (51). White space in hybrid texts like *Nox* can articulate the silence, emptiness, and gaps of loss. It can also represent a place of possibility and potential, or "make[s] it festive" (*Bookworm*).

As the book unfolds from its casing, pages can be stacked on top of one another or stretched out in one long strip. The reverse pages are blank white. On one level, this could relate to Michael's "mute ashes" (7.2): he is unfathomable in life, unreachable in death. They represent Michael's mystery and silence or the mother's sentiment that "when I pray for him, nothing comes back" (4.2). As Sikelianos notes, "the poet calls out into the space. The brother does not respond" (150). These blank reverse pages convey the gaps and deceits in Michael's history (his lack of communication with his family following his departure, how he changed his name, his criminal activities, the circumstances surrounding his death, and the death of "the love of his life" Anna (3.2), as well as the permanence of mortality).

On another level, this difficult-to-contain, unravelling of connected book-leaves embodies ongoing tensions. The concertina effect of the book versus its stretching out into one long strip where "everything might spill" (Carson *Decreation* 65) demonstrates tensions between closeness and distance, between knowing someone and not knowing them. These tensions fold into other, wider histories and losses. The material form of *Nox* conveys its challenge: to attempt to describe and contain the history of a complicated love and loss, then to transform that challenge into something creative.

The white space that echoes across the reverse pages of *Nox* and within much of the main text is productive in various ways. White space can be ambiguous. It can represent light and openness, an enactment of the brother's disappearance, and the silence or emptiness left after loss.

### ***Thresholds as the un/known: Nox and liminality***

Something inbetween, something so deeply swaying.

(Carson, *Nox* 6.1)

My brother's widow says she rented a boat  
and went up the coast to put his ashes in the sea, at  
sunset, near the castle of Helsinor. She threw  
sunflowers after. You know what they do? (she asks  
me) they turn around on the water.  
Festive, I say.  
Festive in their way.

(Carson, *Nox* 7.2)

... just like him I was a  
negotiator with night.

(Carson, *Nox* 10.1)

Thorp has noted that the "experiment with traditional elegy form" (4) in *Nox* allows it to occupy "a position of formal non-forming, a return to the state of *poesis*, refusing to emerge as a completed poem or retreat into fragmentation but instead occupying a liminal space of continual creation" (4). Night-time, as in the title *Nox*, can be interpreted as a

threshold or liminal space. The title of the book does not appear in the Catullus poem. Instead, this is one of Carson's "smuggled in" words ("Art of Poetry"), repeated throughout the word definitions and corresponding fragments. Carson writes about 'night' over and over. It repeatedly appears in her adapted lexical entries and their accompanying fragments, opening or uncovering meanings about loss. *Nox*, meaning "night" in Latin (Nyx in Greek), was the goddess of night and darkness. Though darkness is pervasive throughout the text, the work is also shot through with glimmers of light. The word "light" is also repeated throughout the text (1.0, 1.1, 3.3, 4.1, 7.1, 9.1), as are references to fire and burning (4.3, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 8.4) beginning with the author's statement, "I wanted to fill my elegy with light of all kinds" (1.0). Thus, 'night' and 'light' are continually juxtaposed in the text, as Carson compiles the tribute to her estranged brother, which, in Hejinian's terms, "favour[s] the border" (2001).

Thresholds represent doubtful spaces, possibilities, and the boundary between life and death. In *Nox*, they may symbolise the oscillation between knowing and not knowing that is brought on by loss, or by a search for understanding about a person's history. The book-object of *Nox* and its fragments operate within a threshold space. Its connected pages open like a fold-out staircase, defying containment, even as the reader unfolds its final pages. The epitaph-elegy-memoir is also the "white book" ("Art of Poetry"): an encounter with the un/known. The book's liminality is layered through its experimental forms of writing and in the art-object itself. The fragments are incomplete, which may also be seen as a kind of in-between.

Additionally, the experience of reading *Nox* is comparable to being on a threshold. At times, the reader is drawn intimately into the writer's tender response to the disappearance and death of Michael. At other times, the reader experiences a distancing in Carson's arrangement of pictures and words. Thus, Carson's art and poetry enacts the tension of both bringing the deceased into the present and showing how far away they are.

Sequence 10.1 illustrates how the speaker and reader are metaphorically on the threshold: in a space between understanding and not understanding what is left when we lose someone. Carson's arranging of Herodotus' words on a small square of paper glued to the back of the torn shard of her brother's only letter home sets this juxtaposition of the un/known in motion.

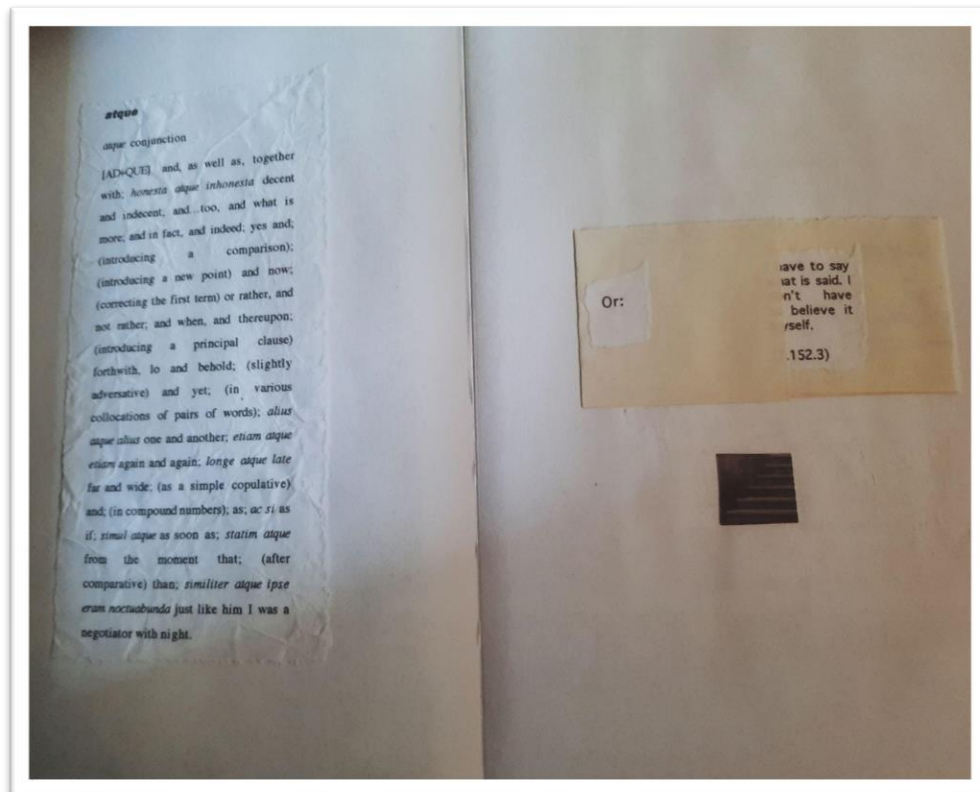


Figure 14: In Sequence 10.1, the facing collage for Carson's "atque" translation is conveyed over three double pages, of which this is the first.

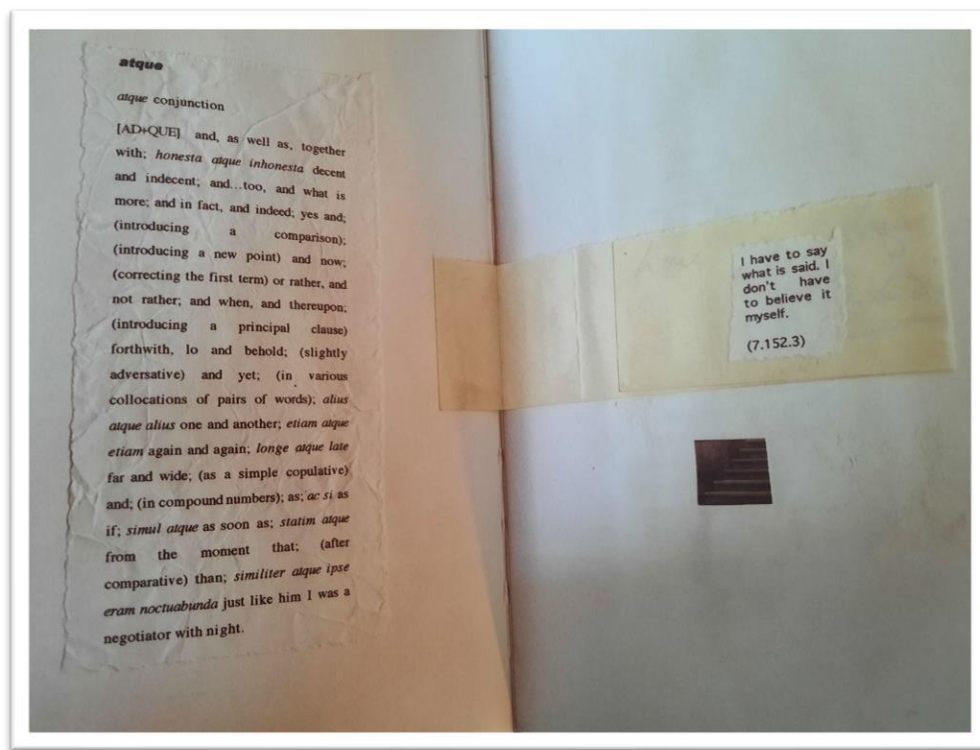


Figure 15: The second double-page for Carson's translation of "atque" allows the reader to experience an uncovering of the "Or" labelled-side of the paper strip to reveal the full quotation from Herodotus.

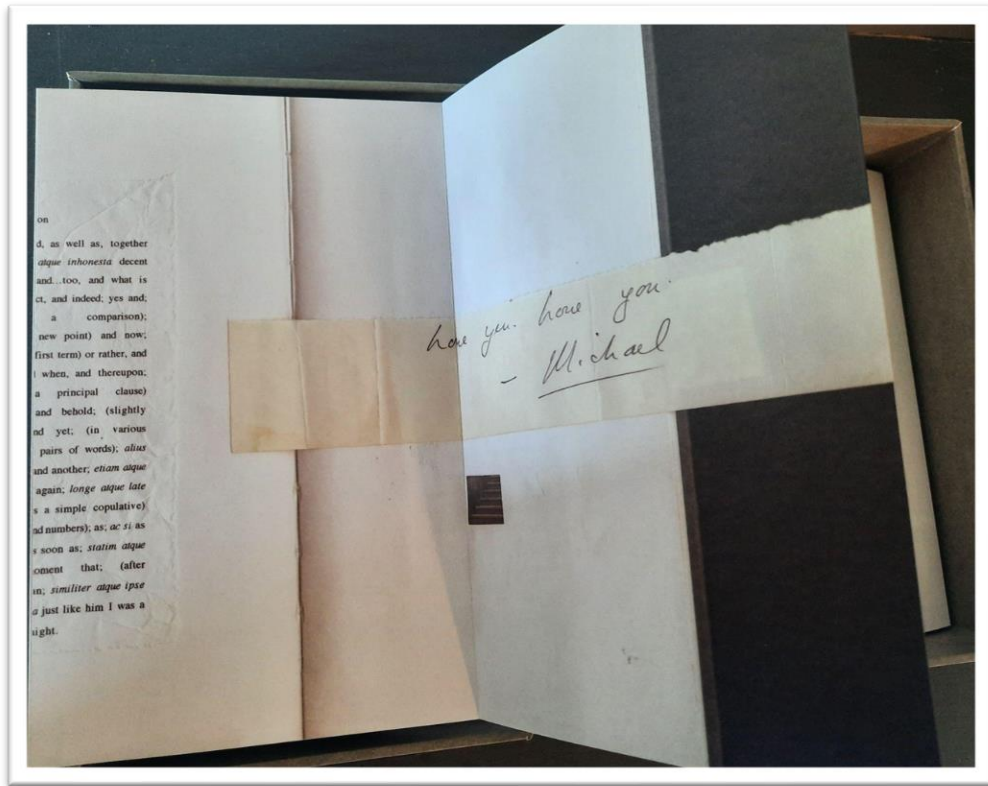


Figure 16: In the third double page of the "atque" translation, the scrapbook has been shifted along the copier glass to show only half the lexical definition and the fully opened strip torn from Michael's only letter home.

Fleming (2016) draws attention to the way the Herodotus quotation "I have to say what is said. I don't have to believe it myself" is juxtaposed with Michael's torn letter fragment stating "Love you. Love you, Michael" (10.1). Fleming contends, "This wrenching textual juxtaposition questions even the most taken-for-granted of familial truths, and emphasizes multiple interpretations, however painful, of Michael's meaning of love" (75). His declared love is hidden, ambiguous, semi-revealed, semi-concealed. It's on a threshold.

In the original notebook, the reader had to physically unfold the strip of paper that concealed Michael's proclamation, although the letter was thin enough that the words "love you" could just be made out through the folded paper. Below the folded strip of

paper, there's a small square photograph of a staircase. The glued-in Herodotus reference and the folding over of Michael's words deliberately distance both speaker and reader from the non/veracity of his sign-off. The intimacy of his comment is obscured, hidden, or secret; the distance the sister feels from her brother is performed in this "dismantling". Carson takes the 'known' declaration of Michael's love for his family, hides it away and makes it uncertain.

Carson's placement of the small square black and white staircase photo cutting below the folding letter strip is also very telling here. A key motif the speaker uses to describe Michael is "in the stairwell" (5.3, 10.1, 10.3). This image, too, is associated with Carson's interest in the liminal space between darkness and light/ presence and absence / the known and unknown. In a prose fragment accompanied by a faded black and white photograph across sequences 8.1 and 8.2, the reader learns how as a child, Michael was teased by the older neighbourhood boys and excluded from their games when they "raised the ladder" of the treehouse. Earlier, the narrator recalls his widow's description of them sleeping in stairwells, drunk and cold, in Amsterdam during the winter (5.3). There's also a description of "stairwell smell (I remember) him huddling in the stairwell... Sunday blood on this face he was about nine and my mother around him with all her hands crying What now oh what now?" (5.3) Crayon etchings and cut-out photographs of staircases repeat this idea visually (5.3, 9.1, 10.1). The focus on these in-between spaces connects to Michael's choice to live on the margins of society, the writer's struggle to understand her brother and the tension between language and loss.

Another site of liminality in *Nox* is that of the childhood home near Bald Rock, Port Hope. This was where Carson and her family lived for several years. It was also a transitional place where, as Carson explains to Aitken, she and Michael faced “the end of our adolescence” (“Art of Poetry”). Teenagers themselves are often seen as being liminal, between childhood and adulthood. At Port Hope, her parents lived for “fifteen years” and her brother “intermittently” (“Art of Poetry”). The place where “light and shadows fall past us now we are racing along, now it is evening, we pass the school, pass the lake, pass the graveyard and Bald Rock rising behind ... but it broke off, we couldn’t get anything to work, again and again we gave up frustrated” (9.1) remains forever connected to her brother and their complicated relationship.

When Carson decides to “study his sentences the ones I remember as if I’d been asked to translate them” (8.1), a lingering recalled phrase from their few phone conversations illustrates Michael’s apparent resistance to returning to Port Hope: “Don’t got back to the farm don’t go alone. / What will you do sit on Bald Rock and look / down at the graves. / Put the past away you have to” (8.1). The irony of the name Port Hope is that it has become a haunted place for Carson, a threshold into the past that summons complex wonderings and anxieties about her brother and mother. These recurring in-between spaces, stairwells and thresholds show the speaker’s ongoing attempts to understand “what I ever had as a brother” (*Bookworm*), which ultimately results in a failure of understanding, instead opening out into cloudy white space in the final written line of the memory-fragments in the book:

He refuses, he is in the stairwell, he disappears. (10.3)

While Thorp emphasizes the notion that the ending of Carson's works "often satisfy an internal rhythm that would be out of place in writing that rejected solidity", I contend that these final words and the white space around them (to use Hejinian's idea of the border in her "Two Auckland Talks" and the essay "Continuing Against Closure") "favour the border" of ambiguity and openness. These nine words evoke cycles of loss and the struggle to comprehend or speak of someone's "thereness" then absence, in death. They are the speaker's final words written about her brother directly. They show the burden of grief the speaker carries, as the subject resists or "refuses" (10.3) final understanding. This carrying of grief is further developed via the ghostly blurred thin photo fragment of a tall tree on the following double page and the heavily smudged and blurred version of Carson's translation of 'Catullus 101' that follows. That Michael "disappears" (10.3) and the final pages following *Nox's* last written words are blank, folding into the oyster-box of the book, also suggests a "carrying towards the light" (1.1). The book-object becomes what it describes: an oration for a late brother.

### iii. "Joy in the making": Carson's "dismantling" processes as transformative

I think a poem, when it works, is an action of the mind captured on a page, and the reader, when he engages it, has to enter into that action. His mind repeats that action and travels again through the action, but it is a movement of yourself through a thought, through an activity of thinking, so by the time you get to the end you're different than you were at the beginning and you feel that difference.

(Carson, "The Art of Poetry No. 88")

It is when you are asking about something that you realize you yourself have survived it, and so you must carry it, or fashion it into a thing that carries itself.

(Nox 1)

The word on the left-hand side evokes what happens on the right-hand side of the page, in a way. But I wouldn't say that it gets anywhere in an explanation of who he was and who I was doing this with his life and death. But going through that process changed the whole situation somehow. I can't say how".

(Carson, "In Conversation with Michael Silverblatt", 2016)

In this section, I look at how Carson's "dismantling" is also a kind of remantling which offers provocations for writers working across hybrid forms. A key provocation that arises from *Nox* is, is this poetry? I also consider how the work as a fragmented memoir provides cues for those crafting genre-bending texts that work on the borders of translation, memoir, essay, prose, and poetry.

Several scholars have discussed the transformative aspects of *Nox*. For instance, Thorp contends that *Nox* occupies "a liminal space of continual creation" (4). Wurth suggests that the potential for "remediation" is found in the book's material form (20), arguing that Carson's word-by-word rewriting of "Catullus 101" is true to what Walter Benjamin called "the task of translating". That is to say, the original is given an afterlife or an

*Erneuerung*/renewal through the act of translating the intention of the work, achieved through poetry (29). Referring to Rich's political argument in "When We Dead Awaken" for writing that "turns round" previous constraints of writing within traditional constructs, Wurth contends that the renewing capacity of *Nox* is a kind of "turning round" (21). From a new materialist perspective, Wurth suggests that Carson's use of translation alongside hypermediacy is a productive unfolding, or what Benjamin called *Entfaltung* (29). The presence and absence of the speaker's deceased brother is mediated through the rewording of "Catullus 101", assembled next to adjoining fragments. So the page becomes a kind of spectre or screen. It is through these processes of re-visioning and re-mediating loss that the work is able to evoke the possibility of "another way" (Wurth 21).

Fleming explains that *Nox* as "therapeutic biography" is "a meditation on the shape of absence itself" (*Talk (why?* 64), (re)constructed around absence: of Carson's brother, of narrative coherence and of interpretation (65). Fleming also describes Carson's (re)construction as "an ultimately hopeful process" of "psychic renewal" (65). I agree with Fleming's proposal about the errant nature of Carson's iterative poetics gesturing toward the incomplete (*You can*) and her emphasis on this gesture being a "hopeful" one (*You can* 111, *Talk (why?* 65). The way I interpret Carson's "dismantling" process is also as a hopeful task. Carson explains in the 2011 interview with Sehgal that she did not want the book to be about mourning because "Exploring grief would have made it a book about me, and I didn't want that. Carl Sagan described the universe saying, 'Well, it's a million miles of dark empty space with nothing in it and no meaning, but there are a few places with light. We

want to focus on the light places.' I think that's a good rubric". Carson's reflexive making (and collaborative reproduction) of *Nox* and gestures towards a "focus on the light places" (Sehgal). Taking a cue from what Sze has said about engaging with *Nox* as artifact<sup>48</sup>, I see a vital outcome of Carson's "dismantling" as being how it represents cycles of de/creation or transformation. In this sense, a Hejinian "rejection of closure" co-exists with a slant kind of "consolation" (Sze) in the poetic memoir<sup>49</sup>. The following subsections explore the role that *Nox-as-poetry* plays in its transformative qualities.

### ***Is Nox poetry?***

Carson is usually referred to as a poet, but just about no one finds that label satisfying: her fans (for whom she does something more than poetry), her critics (for whom she does something less than poetry) or herself.

(Anderson, "Inscrutable Brilliance")

"For many readers, and not a few editors, *Nox* and its 'poetry of a kind you're not used to' has turned out to be poetry of the most welcome kind: a work you can admire and interpret simply by opening the box and unfolding the pages; a book of poems you don't even have to read."

(Burt, "Professor or Pinhead")

If prose is a house, poetry is a man on fire running quite fast through it.

(Carson, "I do not believe in art as therapy", interview with Kate Kellaway)

Scholar and reviewer Biespiel focusses on Carson's reflexive act of translating and how this can be seen as a poetic becoming. He argues that through the process of attempting to

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<sup>48</sup> "To engage with this artefact [...] is to replicate Carson's simultaneous experience of loss and re-creation." (Sze 66).

<sup>49</sup> Related to this idea of "dismantling" is Van Praet's idea (after Jagoda and Wurth) of "network aesthetics" in Carson's poetics, which also links back to Deleuze and Guattari, and their understanding of rhizomatic structures thriving on connections and multiplicity, or to refer to Carson, quoting Gertrude Stein, structures which: "Act so that there is no use in the center" ("Art of Poetry").

translate an 'untranslatable' elegy, Carson's book embodies the act of grieving. He suggests that "... while Carson admits her struggles to translate "Catullus 101," she also performs and embodies its translational potential because *Nox* enacts "Catullus 101" through the act of grieving for her brother. And by doing all of that contained within a small casket-like box contained within a small casket-like box – performing, embodying, enacting and, yes, grieving – Carson stores life into a knowable poetic space, one of the definitions of lyric poetry."

Biespiel, reviewing *Nox* when it was announced as a finalist in the 2010 Books Circle Awards, remarked, "the book contains almost no poems, but it is, undoubtedly, poetry" (2011). Likewise, Baker refers to Carson's use of destabilisation in her translation of Sappho fragments and how this suggests the "imminent void" (133) of Weil's philosophy of decreation. Baker says, "Poetry is itself an act of decreation and of dismantling. Carson perhaps follows [Wallace] Stevens in his view of poetry as 'the unofficial view of being' (Stevens 1951: 40): her work is poetic not because she breaks lines of prose into verse, as [Charles] Simic claims, but because she attempts to chart the emergent emptiness of everyday life at a purely individual, symptomatic level. What makes her writing considerable as poetry is that she does not answer absence, but only points towards it" (138). Carson's pointing towards absence, or "calling and calling again" into lack (Sze 67) is one of the poetic outcomes of *Nox*'s "dismantling" process.

Along with her reference to the Lacan quote in the Aitken and Wachtel interviews, Carson has also spoken specifically about the “dismantling” role of poetry in a panel talk on the prose/poetry distinction. This later appeared as the article “Economy, its fragrance” in *The Threepenny Review* (1997). She describes the essential economy of poetry as a juxtaposition, whereby its sparseness and fullness co-exist, permeating like a fragrance:

If I were marketing the poetry/prose distinction as a perfume, I would call it *Economy*. Not because poetry is the only form of verbal expression that manages its resources thriftily but because this thrift seems essential to poetry. Economic measures allow poetry to practice what I take to be its principal subversion. That is, insofar as it is economic, poetry relies on a gesture which it simultaneously dismantles. (14)

In terms of the “gesture which it simultaneously dismantles”, the economic, unusual, and surprising poetry of *Nox* is at once a disruptive, expansive, and taut artistic act. *Nox* is a work that richly cites other works, is much critiqued, but among other things, is poetry. The next subsection expands on the role of *Nox* as fragmented memoir.

## ***A fragmented memoir***

I guess it's a memoir because it's about memory, but I kept calling it an epitaph, which seems a more dignified form to me, because memoirs tend to be mostly about the memoirist and their salvation from some calamity or suffering. I didn't want this to be about me mainly.

(Carson quoted by Craig Morgan Teicher in "A Classical Poet, Redux")

In *Nox*, Carson also "dismantles" the memoir genre to seek a new language for loss and includes the reader in her search. Though Carson prefers to call it an epitaph because that "seems a more dignified form", the book has been widely analysed as a postmodern memoir (Aitken, Burt, Plate, Sze, Stewart, Teicher).

As reviewer Charlotte Shane notes, "Anne Carson lives for the breaking up, the separation. She's trafficked in fragmentation for a long time: Her career as a scholar of ancient works, which are often fragmentary or have no definite author, required becoming intimate with the incomplete, the impossibility of completion" ("*Anne Carson's splintered brilliance*"). In *Nox*, Carson's "intimacy with the incomplete" is shown through fragmented memories which contribute to meaning-making for the speaker and reader. From the moment the memory book's box is opened, *Nox's* manipulation of visual fragments is foregrounded. On the slate-grey cover with pale grey trim, the clear embossed title and author's name are barely legible. They can only be made out when the reader holds the book up to the light, notices the clear, slightly raised block text through close examination, or runs a finger across the surface<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> The clear gloss of the author's name and book title on the cover is an aesthetic choice Carson also made for her 2021 *H of H Playbook*, another artist's book replica.

The central image on the cover is a long, rectangular black and white childhood photograph of Michael, positioned on top of a daub of gold paint. He's standing on a lawn in front of a house, in goggles, flippers, and swimming costume. The photo is overexposed, faded, aged. In the top third of the image, the reader can make out sunlight through dark trees, which might be pines. There's a crease where the photograph has been folded, damaged over time. As it is only a thin strip of the once-intact larger image, this photograph brings with it a sense of the incomplete, of the un/known, of Carson's search for her brother. There's the mystery, complexity, and bewilderment that the speaker associates with him. The image is unusual: a lone figure on dry land, in a swimming outfit, with no ocean in sight. (Although later we learn his ashes were scattered at sea). There's a defiance in the photo fragment, and a sense of the unreachable. Covered in wide, round googles, Michael's gaze is averted, screened, which connects with the adult sibling in the story who was so unknowable to Carson. The inscrutable, alien-like goggled-face conveys one of the book's many juxtapositions: the concealing and revealing of the central character in this elegy. The imperfect image dares the reader to join Carson as she seeks understanding about him.

Lloyd has noted that few reviewers have drawn attention to the joy in *Nox* (66)<sup>51</sup>. Yet, this visual fragment can also be read as representing the love Carson feels for her brother, and

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<sup>51</sup> "An aspect of *Nox* which commentators and reviewers tend to overlook is that, despite the sombre tone of elegy, the work is also celebratory. Carson's use of images, particularly her collage work, which uses heavy daubs of paint, flower petals and torn strips of plastic, betrays a childlike sense of joy" (Lloyd 66).

the love that remains after loss. Its assemblage introduces the fractured scrapbook style of *Nox*'s interior, as well as the themes (of "why love prevails", 10.3) that echo across its fragments. The long stroke of goldleaf paint alongside and underneath the photograph brings connotations of warmth, playfulness, treasure, things ancient, timeless, and rare to the bookmaker's relationship with the boy in the picture. That the picture has been cut out, centrally positioned and carefully glued to the cover shows the preciousness and vulnerability of the subject matter. The compilation of these elements reveal that this dismantled memoir is Carson's gift for her brother.

As the text unfolds, the reader learns that *Nox* isn't about the memoirist as the main character, which is traditional to the form. Instead, the narrative revolves around the speaker's memories of Michael, their childhoods and his disappearance. Instead of a continuous, reflective perspective from the memoirist, the reader is required to make sense of the memories alongside the speaker. This brings the dismantled memoir a mobilising, productive capacity.

Discussing how the hybrid memoir compares with Woolf's two-fold *Jacob's Room*, Czarnecki (after Fleming) responds to *Nox* and its elements of "grief-work" or therapeutic biography. Since Woolf fictionalises her brother (Julian Thoby, who died of misdiagnosed typhoid in 1906) in her elegiac novel for the young generation killed in World War I, both can be read in terms of their commemoration of a lost sibling. Although Carson herself said "I do not believe in art as therapy" in a brief interview with Kellaway for *The Guardian*

(2016), this possibly intentional fallacy doesn't mean her own art can't function as such. If *Nox* is not intentionally therapeutic, it can be argued that its renewing capacity, or sense of "festive" (*Nox* 7.2, *Bookworm*) creativity has a healing aspect its maker and for readers, or what Sze calls its "consolatory efficacy" (72). Its scrapbook-style "arrangement and rearrangement" of memory fragments alongside the Latin translations enact and respond to cycles of mourning, showing the tension between language and loss in a productive way.

The act of creating the scrapbook, in the first instance and in its reproduction, is playful, indicative of Carson's intention to "make it festive" (*Bookworm*). This playfulness is most evident in the artistic actions (cutting and pasting, stapling, soaking, staining and ageing the Catullus poem, sketches, etching, daubs of paint, handwritten text) taken to collate the fragmented memoir. Through these creative acts, *Nox* therefore becomes a loving, perplexed, and intricate tribute to a lost brother, turning around grief like the spinning of strewn sunflowers on the tide (7.2).

The transformative potential shown in *Nox* is also helpful for creative writers. When asked by Aitken for the *Paris Review*, "Did making the book help you to understand your brother?" Carson replied:

No. I don't think it had any effect whatsoever on my understanding. Another failure of the personal, I guess. I finally decided that understanding isn't what grief is about.

Or laments. They're just about making something beautiful out of the ugly chaos you're left with when someone dies. You want to make that good. And for me, making it good means making it into an object that's exciting and beautiful to look at.

Carson also contends that she writes "to find out what I think about something" ("Art of Poetry"). In the book-object itself and the written text, *Nox* leverages Carson's "dismantling" processes play with the limits of language, ghosts of 'history' and what is left behind after loss. While creating something "exciting and beautiful" ("Art of Poetry") out of grief, she includes the reader in that process. Rather than representing experience, the text is experiential.

Carson's "dismantling" processes are provocative because they are jarring and unusual. They remind other writers and artists of the productive potential of "inventing again and again on each page a new way of doing the same thing" (*Bookworm*), of experimenting with hybrid writing as a way to respond to the complexities of crisis and loss.

### 3.5 Conclusion

**Scott Simon:** (Reading from Carson's "The Designated Mourner By Wally Shawn") Go to the Wally Shawn play. It is hopeless. I mean, production - impeccable. Philosophy - hopeless. Yet it gives me hope. Figure this out. Next day - listening to Sam Cooke. What comes to me in a dawned cafe is, no need to fear death. There will be a tunnel and light.  
Do poets find something to hope for in things that are hopeless?

**Anne Carson:** Sort of. Well, I don't know. I guess they do. I guess they do because if your way of life is writing, then everything that happens becomes a sentence. And so it's - it moves down into that other level of problem-solving, which is grammar and syntax. And that can always come out somewhere - I mean, somewhere you didn't know it would come out - which is perhaps hopeful.

**Scott Simon:** What's the old phrase? That to a carpenter the world looks like a nail?

**Anne Carson:** (Laughter) Yes. Exactly. A task - and a task has a beginning and an end and then a thing made. Poetry - *poiesis* means a thing made.

(Carson, "Anne Carson's *Float*")

Carson's "dismantling" process shows a desire to create, or as O'Rourke explains, 'retrieve' something from grief. When in the 2010 *Bookworm* interview, Silverblatt asked why "Catullus 101" was so hard to translate, Carson said that she had "tried it hundreds of times over the years". On each page, her translation involved a process of continual regeneration:

There is a real joy in the making, however mournful the subject matter. I made it my job on every page to try and do something I didn't know how to do [...] it's a way of inventing again and again on each page a new way of doing the same thing.

Similarly, to Wachtel, Carson remarks that “mechanically, physically, it was just a joy” to translate “Cl” and create *Nox* (*Brick*). O’Rourke has drawn attention to how “Translation, the act of renaming, is clearly crucial to Carson’s method of coming to grips with loss”. In agreement with O’Rourke, I see Carson’s “dismantling” process as a kind of renaming in which she makes something useful from loss. Using her distinctive cut-up method of ripping, staining, distressing, and gluing in, Carson takes apart each word of “Catullus 101”, gathers definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary and generates new phrases illustrating the “saddest elegy ever written” (Hirshfield) which repeatedly return to the words ‘*nox*’ / ‘night’. The corresponding artifice and text further rename echoing notions of history and loss while at the same time build up to something invigorated.

As Carson insists in the 2010 interview with Silverblatt<sup>52</sup>, if the book does show others a possible way to create something from grief, she hopes that the process will come to “make it festive”. These three words, along with the words “I hope so” which she repeats at the end of the interview convey some of the elusive and allusive voice Carson brings to *Nox*, in a kind of art as play. The project of *Nox* can therefore be read as a playful one, using language to show lack in a productive, rather than pathological, way. In creating *Nox* (a book she has insists is not about her grief<sup>53</sup>), Carson produces an artwork that begins with loss, translates an ancient elegy, and continually arrives at an opening into “something

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<sup>52</sup> Fleming also refers to this interview in “*Talk (why?) with mute ash*”: Anne Carson’s *Nox* as Therapeutic Biography”, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> See Seghul interview.

new" (Sze 76). *Nox* becomes a book that doesn't end, representing openness, possibilities, rejection of closure, the un/known.

By experimenting with hybrid forms, writers and artists such as Carson are able to speak of the tension between language and loss in inventive ways. *Nox* suggests that loss can be *articulated* in both senses of the verb. It can be pronounced, and through its pronouncement, connections can be made across fragments. The "concrete and indecipherable" nature of loss (*Nox* 1.3) is articulated through the hybrid form of the text. Continually drawing the reader into its complex and unending search, a book named 'night' in Latin becomes a double elegy, "filled with light" (1.0). This conveys how art can provide something beyond the understanding, wisdom, or "healing" that Silverblatt suggests (*Bookworm*). Hybrid writing, *Nox* shows, can be an articulation of the complexities of searching for language for loss, in collusion with the reader.

Carson's collaborative "dismantling" in *Nox* demonstrates how the breaking apart of genre and forms becomes a reconfiguration. Moving beyond an elegy "about grief" (Sehgal), Carson's juxtapositions of tangible and tangential remnants of Michael's life show the opposite of loss: the productivity of searching, making, and "retrieval" (O'Rourke). Across *Nox*'s connected pages, the artist's translating work continually reveals itself, showing meaning-making as a physical process. This doomed yet "hopeful" (Fleming *Talk (why?* 65) exercise in trying to understand Michael's life and death and ways to write 'history' implores the reader's participation. Carson's "dismantling" process therefore opens up the

continually created and renewing text. Through including the reader in its unending searches, *Nox* can be seen as ultimately uplifting in its refusal of closure in “favour [of] the border” (Hejinian “Two Talks”, “Continuing”).

For writing practitioners, *Nox* is a reminder that the between-spaces of hybrid writing can be a useful and generative tool for translating ‘untranslatable’ responses to loss.

“Dismantling” as a writing process can lead to making something good from grief and loss.

As Carson said to Simon: “Making is always a slightly hopeful thing because once you've made something, it'll — the world will be different”.

## Conclusion to the Critical Component

Writing, like play, is an exercise of the imagination, and as such an exercise of desire that, Carson writes, teaches us 'something about edges'.

(Solie, "On the Irreconcilable Temptations")

**Paula Green:** Why write poetry?

**Lynn Jenner:** Because poetry is an arrow.  
Because it can also be as wide as a sea.

(Green, "Some questions")

Loss is difficult to articulate in life or to respond to through art. Writing about loss in creative forms is complicated by the tension between its ineffability and the desire to describe it. Jenner and Carson's attempts to represent the unrepresentable (the loss of a loved one; the loss of objects, artworks, environments, entire communities) in *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox* are expressions of this poetic struggle. To enact their central losses, both hybrid texts reimagine traditional forms and reject closure. Further, their strategies call the reader into an assemblage or process of meaning-making where the *making* of the text alongside the speaker is important to its meaning. In the writers' words, this searching process becomes a cycle "where everything is turned around" (*Lost* I) or a "prowling" (*Nox* 7.1).

My readings of these two texts by Jenner and Carson suggest that hybrid works offer a valuable approach to conveying complicated processes of human responses to loss. I have suggested that their value is in the way they (re)construct decentralised fragments of experience and involve the reader in their subjective, *sui generis* responses to loss.

Through a reflexive putting together process, both writers have, in different ways, produced books which are organised in juxtaposing fragments that form sequences in a larger mosaic. The connecting of fragments into sequences is achieved through stylistic repetitions which give *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox* their “tendency to adhere” (*Lost* 278). In this way, the trauma of loss is not necessarily unspeakable, but the difficult process of finding language for it is able to be articulated in hybrid texts. The books themselves enact a certain refracted experience of, and response to, loss (as do the individual works within them) leading to a sense of continual regeneration. By implicating the reader, tensions between language and loss can be articulated as a collaborative, transformative, and unending search.

From a writer’s point of view, the hybrid nature of “open texts” including *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox*, brings vitality to their articulations of loss. These works can encourage practitioners to play with different methods for speaking about loss while gesturing toward its complexity. As Jenner writes, “A book is a series of decisions. Sometimes you do not realise you are making them” (147). Jenner and Carson’s writing shows how experimentation with working between forms and genres may open ways of speaking about loss that continuously create something new out of its ineffability.

## Links between the Critical and Creative Components

Influenced by the “openness” of *Lost and Gone Away* and *Nox*, Part Two of this thesis is a manuscript of my own creative writing. Written alongside the case studies and concepts addressed, *A long time to get home* is an encounter with my own experience of loss and the process of writing about it. Concerning some of the themes that emerged from my research question, I see the work as being in conversation with the reading I undertook for my investigation. Furthermore, springing from the kōrero which arose during my thesis examination, I hope that the creative component might begin to operate within Te Wāhi Hononga, or the interface space between mātāuranga Māori and Western knowledge (Haworth, 75).

As part of my research, I read a sampling of hybrid books which deal with loss in some way and were published between 2000 and 2022. These included Rebecca Solnit’s *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2006) and *The Faraway Nearby* (2014), M. NourbeSe Philip and Setaey Adamu Boateng’s *Zong!* (2008), Kazim Ali’s *Bright Felon: Autobiography and Cities* (2009), Zadie Smith’s *NW* (2012), Eileen Myles’ *Inferno* (2010), Ali Smith’s *Shire* (2013), Stephanie de Montalk’s *How does it hurt?* (2014), Claudine Rankin’s *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2015), Courtney Sina Meredith’s *Tail of the Taniwha* (2016), Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2016), Joan Didion’s *South and West* (2017), Patti Smith’s *Devotion* (2017), Karen Zelas’ *The Trials of Minnie Dean: A verse biography* (2017), Sabrina Orah Mark’s *Wild Milk* (2018), Olga Tokarczuk’s *Flights* (2018), essa may ranapiri’s *ransack* (2019), Jenny Offill’s *Weather* (2020), Alice Te Punga Somerville’s *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways to Start an*

*Essay about Captain Cook* (2020)<sup>54</sup>, Banou Kapil's *How to Wash A Heart* (2021) Jessica Hansell's *How To Loiter In A Turf War* and Kōtuku Titihuia Nuttall's *Tauhou* (2022). This survey of hybrid works comprised lyric essays, prose and poetry blurring with memoir (Ali, Rankin, Solnit, Myles, Meredith) and in de Montalk's work, imagined interviews; prose poetry and poetry punctuated with letters (ranapiri); surreal prose-poetry short stories (Mark); fragmentary novels (Offill, Tokarczuk, Z. Smith, Nuttall); artists' notebooks (A. Smith, P. Smith, Didion); interconnected poems which build a fractured narrative (Kapil) and "genre-bending... autobiographical fiction" (Hansell, blurb).

To read my way into drafting my own 24-hour text, I also read and listened to a selection of circadian novels within which the traditional narrative arc is condensed down to one pivotal day. These books were Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), J. D Salinger's *Franny and Zooey* (1961), Charles Baxter's *The Feast of Love* (2000), Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), and Georgia Blain's *Between A Wolf and a Dog* (2016). Jessica Hansell's *How to loiter in a turf war* (2022) also falls into this day-in-the-life category. The one-day parameter provides a useful structure for delving into characters in crisis, and I found Hansell's work especially interesting for its themes of identity and urban gentrification.

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<sup>54</sup> Which I recommend reading alongside the anthology film, "We Are Still Here" (2022): an Australian-New Zealand masterpiece of interwoven Indigenous storytelling created as a response to the 250th anniversary of the "catastrophic" arrival of Captain James Cook in the Pacific: [nzonscreen.com/title/we-are-still-here-2022](https://nzonscreen.com/title/we-are-still-here-2022).

At the “Worldbuilding from Whakapapa” writers workshop facilitated by Ruby Solly (Kāi Tahu, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe), Ruby tells us that it is important to know our own story first before writing about the stories of others. So, while working on the critical component of this thesis, I started writing about and around my lived experience, always in connection to place. Although I started out not wanting to write about it, I kept looping back to loss, continually arriving at it. Investigating hybrid texts did make me feel I was travelling in circles at times. But then I found cycles to be a useful way to think about writing loss. So far, my writing practice has focussed on blurring the lines between prose and poetry, as well as the ways in which a cross-genre work might become a “theatrical poem” (Henderson)<sup>55</sup>, or move from page to stage. An aim of this manuscript is to turn to the genre-blurring potential of two short works. Within and across these pieces, I experiment with different forms to find ways in which they might sing out to each other.

It is through this creative writing work that some of the main preoccupations of my thesis emerged. Indeed, it was in my attempt *not* to write about the thing I couldn’t stop thinking about that the central question to my thesis arrived. At a basic level, I was seeking a toolkit to help with my writing. I was particularly interested in how writing that blurs or bends genre can be of value for articulating loss.

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<sup>55</sup> The play *No Science To Goodbye* (which was based on the writing crafted as part of my MCW at Massey) was first described as a “theatrical poem” by Henderson during its workshopping at Victoria University. This description was subsequently utilised on blurb materials for the play’s seasons at the 2017 Festival of Colour and BATS theatre in 2018.

Experimenting with some of the strategies and techniques employed by the writers in my two case studies, the writing in *A long time to get home* is crafted in fragments through which I hope to draw the reader into a piecing-together process. Early on in my research, I was intrigued by Carson's practice of working across three desks at once and had a go at this myself. Though our place on a cliff overlooking Whakaraupō harbour couldn't really accommodate three desks, the way life worked out allowed for writing space in our garden cabin, a lot of listening to texts in the car or bath and jotting snippets into Notes on my phone, on the fly. As part of my research process, I am a writer who tends to have a lot of tabs open. This has likely influenced my "instinctual writing voice" in the same way that Hugh Ryan suggests has affected the writing styles of his creative nonfiction students. (*Beyond*). The manuscript attempts to capture some of that fracturedness of experience, in a dismantled memoir and a disrupted day-in-the-life.

As Michael J. Stevens reminded the audience at *Whaia Te Ara O Te Kareao*, "colonisation is not an event but a structure". I acknowledge my white privilege as part of where I stand and seek to draw on archival and contemporary Māori knowledge with care in my creative component, in order to contribute to korero that dismantles rather than perpetuates colonising structures. Recognising I am only at the beginning of my journey of cultural competency as takata Tiriti in Te Ao Māori, I am guided by the principles of acknowledgement and respect<sup>56</sup> in my engagement with matauranga Māori. I am trying to work according to the quotation often attributed to Maya Angelou, "Do the best you can

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<sup>56</sup> from Hawthorne's alignment of He Korowai Mātauranga (Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council, 2019) with ways of being when operating within Te Wāhi Hononga (Hawthorne, 81 – 82).

until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”<sup>57</sup>. In Part II of this thesis, I interweave mātauranga Māori from my reading of, and listening to, publicly available texts and talks related to the history of my hometown Wānaka; and interactions I had on March 15 2019 in Ōtautahi Christchurch. My approach in utilising these historical and contemporary texts in parts of each fragmented work was framed in what Jenner describes as an “active reading” process. “During ‘active reading’”, Jenner writes when discussing her own creative-critical PhD project, “the author explores text by climbing inside it, taking elements chosen for particular reasons, and re-using them” (*Everyday*, 27). Rather than enacting the “pale hand[s] eager to take” (Solly, *Tōku Papa* 14), my use of images and stories from the Ngāi Tahu archive is intended to engage with mātauranga Māori as a learner, finding out more so I can “know more, do better”.

I hope my pair of experimental stories will also generate an “active reading” experience, where one of the outcomes might include opening up what Shaun Hawthorne calls Te Wāhi Hononga (The Interface Space) between mātauranga Māori and Western thought (79) in order to generate a meaningful gathering of connections. To refer to Jenner’s intentions again, I contend these may be “sometimes relatively puzzling and at other times clearer, from which a reader will emerge with his or her own interpretation of what the collections mean at the time of reading and in the circumstances and place of that reading” (*Everyday*, 24).

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<sup>57</sup> From *Quote Investigator*, [quoteinvestigator.com/2022/11/30/did-better/#:~:text=Oprah%20Winfrey%20credited%20Maya%20Angelou,choices%20from%20ar130405%20at%20Pixabay](https://quoteinvestigator.com/2022/11/30/did-better/#:~:text=Oprah%20Winfrey%20credited%20Maya%20Angelou,choices%20from%20ar130405%20at%20Pixabay). Accessed 14 September 2023.

I begin at Waiariki/Stevenson's Arm, Lake Wānaka then expand into further physical and metaphysical sites of loss and the act of searching via fragmented prose memoir and poetry. Each of the two different pieces of writing responds to my research question in a different form. Yet each piece is also designed to echo thematic threads and concerns of its adjacent works. In *Waiariki* I (re)construct a collage of memories of a place and a person of significance to me. This memoir emerged from *Where were you?* as a character who kept appearing and eventually became a separate piece of writing.

Once I extracted the fictionalised version of my friend from the circadian *Where were you?* story, I had three aims for *Waiariki*. Like Carson, I wanted "to fill my elegy with light of all kinds" (*Nox* 1.0). It was important to me to build a pastoral sense of place as well as the playfulness and adventure that characterised this friendship into the 'grief-work' of the piece. For example, in "Begin Being", one of the early poems I wrote after the death of my friend, the final stanza begins with the phrase, "Now it's night". The first time I performed this poem publicly, (at the Wānaka launch of *The Hellfire Anthology*), I slipped over the word 'night', twice. Each time I said the line, it came out as "Now it's light". Whatever way I think about this mistake, I mostly prefer to see it as a prompt: to try to dwell on the light rather than the dark in my writing. I hope that I have "let light in" to this piece.

Having lived in Wānaka for a large portion of my adult life, I also wanted to evoke a sort of Romantic nostalgia for how it used to be, in the 1980s, when I remember there being only one subdivision. I also wanted to include something of an unsettled outlook at the waves of

‘settlement’ that have happened to this place, following its establishment of significant wānanga<sup>58</sup>, kaianga mahinga kai<sup>59</sup>, nohoanga and pā<sup>60</sup> by Ngai Tāhu. Post 2000, one of the major property developers to make their mark on the town is called Infinity, and the places where children can learn and play have come to seem much more enclosed these days. However, this is changing. On the morning of September 9 2023, Te Ara Maumahara: a new shared pathway was unveiled and blessed on the Wānaka foreshore, featuring a tiled timeline of local history and a large replica of Te Huruwharu’s early map of the area<sup>61</sup>. The project is representative of the pivotal role of present-day kaitiaki as guardians of the stories of this special place, and their sharing its cultural narrative for current and future audiences.

In *Where were you?*, I experiment with the circadian form to develop a ‘distant witness’ who is on the periphery of the events of 15 March 2019, based on my personal experiences of that day. This fictional day in the life unfolds when, beneath her workroom desk on 15 March 2019, an art gallery guide (who woke up in a strange house with a hangover) gathers her thoughts, dreams, desires, texts, emails, updates, and conversations as a group of students strike for climate change, while simultaneously a terrorist outrage changes New Zealand forever. Told through a sequence of prose fragments, digital interactions, media snippets, and visual elements, the purpose of this piece is to swirl the past with the present as the strength of the

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<sup>58</sup> See Ngāi Tahu Settlement Claim 138, Attachment 12.42 for an explanation of the cultural, spiritual, historic and traditional association of Ngāi Tahu with the area. [www.beehive.govt.nz/feature/ngai-tahu-settlement-138](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/feature/ngai-tahu-settlement-138).

<sup>59</sup> At “Whaia Te Ara O Te Kareao: Follow the Path of the Kareao”, the closing event of Word Christchurch 2023, Atholl Anderson (Ngāi Tahu) described the way that mahinga kai represented food economies, land ownership and mana, “much more than just the everyday fishing camps that they are often portrayed as”. This is why Māori maps such as the ones Te Huruwharu (1844) and Rawiri Te Maire (1898) drew of the interior are so important to Ngāi Tahu.

<sup>60</sup> For further details and diagrams of important traditional Māori settlements around Lake Wānaka, see the Appendix.

<sup>61</sup> See also: the Wanaka App article which outlines the process of developing this new landmark, in consultation with local historians and Dr Michael Stevens (Ngāi Tahu) [wanakaapp.nz/news/news/installation-of-te-ara-maumahara-begins?id=64b75eda3470e00028469889](https://wanakaapp.nz/news/news/installation-of-te-ara-maumahara-begins?id=64b75eda3470e00028469889).

young people around her leads the protagonist to confront unspoken guilt and grief experienced by her younger self.

**The Creative Component:**

***A long time to get home***



Cover image: Created with the help of Artificial Intelligence at <https://creator.nightcafe.studio/>. The following terms were used as prompts: "Archipelago / A long time to get home Stevenson's Island lake Wanaka dark academia liminal twilight Sketchlab wet wash academic art hyperdetailed."

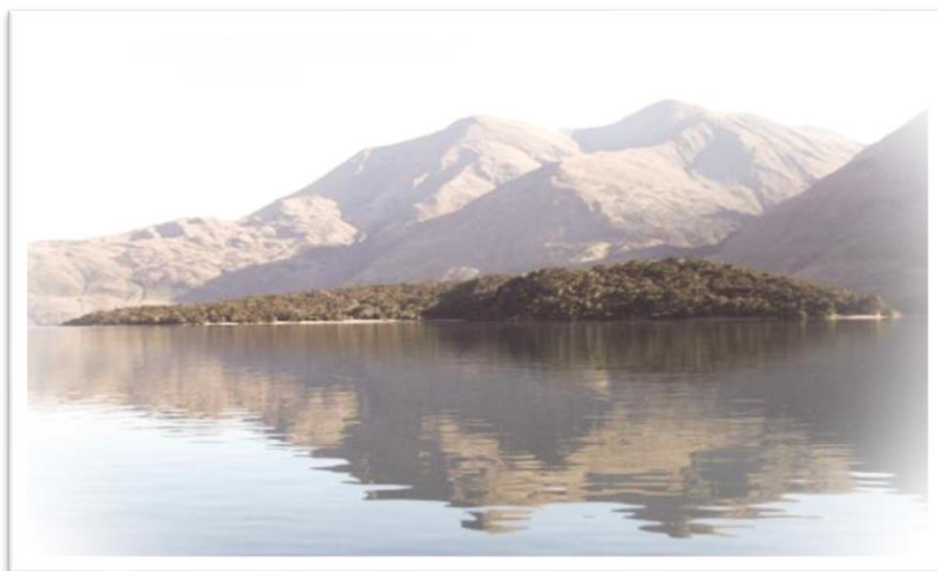
***Waiariki***

*If you are writing an elegy begin with the blush.*

— Anne Carson<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Nox, *New Directions*, 2010, (7.2).



I have not been back there, but my thoughts return to Waiariki/Stevenson's Arm, that body of water and the island, over and over. These are times when I might be sifting sand, or remembering sifting sand, the tiniest bits of greywacke and schist sluicing through my fingers. There are times when I might think of the last time I saw you, standing in the kitchen. For months I kept the beers you left in our fridge. *Estrella*, it says on the label, Spanish for 'star'. I can still see you, walking across the lawn that July afternoon. Your swagger. Grey jersey. Faded jeans. R M Williams boots. The box of Estrella under your arm. Carrying the stars.

(There are still times when I think you're still here, just for a moment, then the conscious brain kicks in and reminds me.)

I think of your family. I know I can never begin to imagine what it's like for them. Your story isn't mine to write. Instead, I let my memories resurface and float, (re)arrange them here.

\*

They used to say these islands shifted with the wind. Te Peka Karara / Pōkainamu (Stevenson's Island) is part of Lake Wānaka's four-island archipelago. Ruby Island, Mou Tapu and Mou Waho lie in the main stretch of the lake, while Te Peka Karara / Pōkainamu is found deep in Waiariki whenua, the narrow southeastern arm. The Ngāi Tahu website tells me the name Te Pekakārara was recorded by the southern Ngāi Tahu leader, Te Huruhuru, and Pōkainamu is the name recorded by the southern Ngāi Tahu leader Rāwiri Te Maire<sup>63</sup>.

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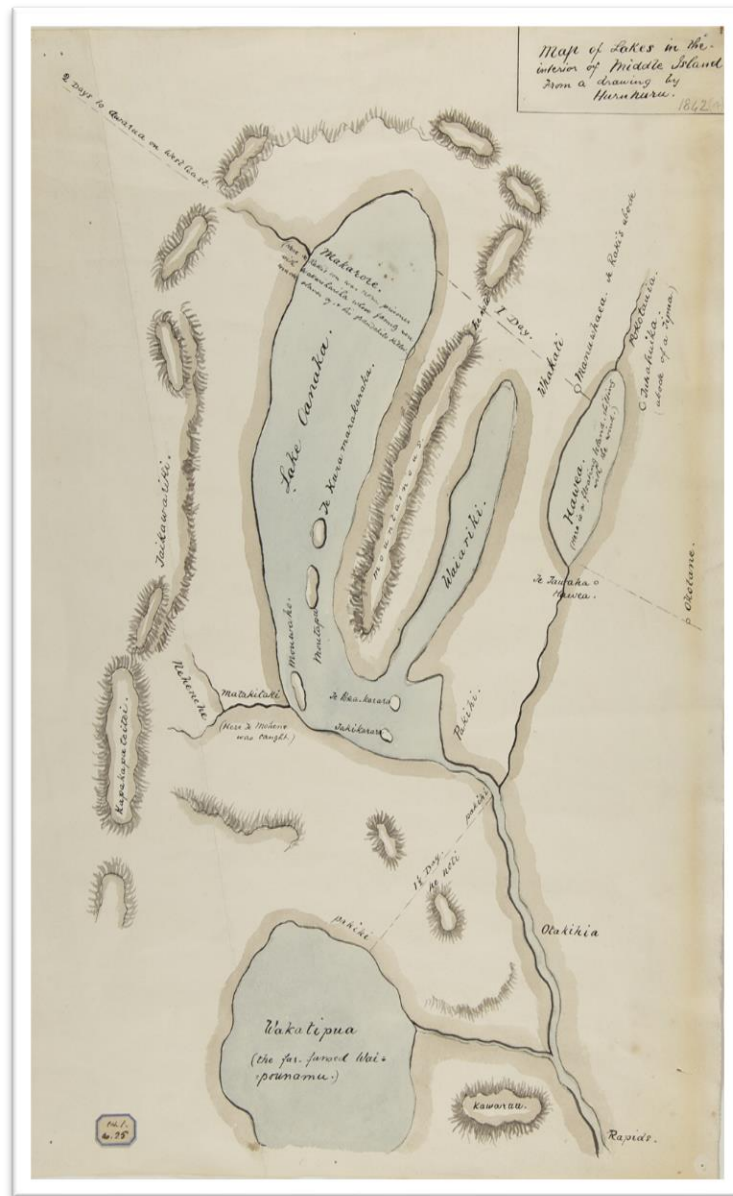
<sup>63</sup> *Kareo*, the Ngāi Tahu digital archive, holds 66 records related to Rāwiri Te Maire: [kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182070/2/6/14528?RECORD&UNION=Y](http://kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182070/2/6/14528?RECORD&UNION=Y)



The rich knowledge of the topography and named places (including Pōkainamu) in the map provided by Rawiri Te Maire “a rangitira of considerable status” who lived at Manuhaea, Lake Hāwea show the significance of these mahinga kai as “an integral part of the permanent settlement of Ngāi Tahu, for which we have never been properly compensated” (Anderson, Whaia)<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> For an in-depth record of the system and significance of mahinga kai and how for Ngāi Tahu, they “represented food, ownership and mana” (Anderson Whaia), see also: [www.otago.ac.nz/press/books/the-welcome-of-strangers](http://www.otago.ac.nz/press/books/the-welcome-of-strangers).

The first name for this eastern branch of the lake is Waiariki. *Wai, ariki*: water, chief. The island does not appear on the early map Te Huruhuru drew of the area for Edward Shortland in 1844, when Shortland mistook Waiariki for a separate lake.



*Te Huruhuru's map of Wānaka, Hāwea and Whakatipu Waimāori (Wakatipu),  
based on original pencil drawings by southern Ngāi Tahu rangatira Te Huruhuru for Edward Shortland in 1844.*

Reference: S13-151c: Te HuruHuru Collection: Ngāi Tahu Archive.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> [kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182074/4/2/15843?RECORD&UNION=Y](http://kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182074/4/2/15843?RECORD&UNION=Y)

This map was created on the banks of a river, while a mokihi (reed boat) was made to carry Te Huruhuru and the white man across the Waitaki.

"Jan. 13. ---Mokihi completed; but as the wind was strong from the N. E., Huruhuru put off launching them till the morning. Huruhuru's leisure in the evenings was employed in giving me information about the interior of this part of the island, with which he was well acquainted. He drew, with a pencil, the outline of four lakes, by his account, situated nine days' journey inland of us, and only two from the west coast, in a direction nearly due west of our position.

One of these, named Wakatipua, is celebrated for the "pounamu," found on its shores, and in the mountain torrents which supply it. It is probably the "Wai-pounamu," of which the natives spoke in reply to the inquiries of Captain Cook and Mr. Banks, who supposed it to be the name of the whole island. The three other lakes, Hawea, Waiariki, and Oanaka, had formerly inhabitants on their shores, who frequently went to and from Waitaki to visit their relatives. Huruhuru pointed out on his chart the positions, and told me the names of several of their places of residence, and described the country through which the path across the island passed. He even told me the names of the principal streams and hills which it crossed, and of the places where parties travelling that way used to rest, at the end of each day. I was persuaded that his information was to be relied on, as I had the benefit of hearing the discussions which were held between him and another old man, who also knew the country, on the propriety of halting at this or that place on account of either of them being more or less convenient for catching eels or wekas; a matter of great importance, when it is borne in mind that it would be impossible to carry food for so long a journey, and therefore that it would be necessary to stop frequently to obtain fresh supplies"<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> 1851 - Shortland, E. *The Southern Districts of New Zealand: A Journal, with Passing Notices of the Customs of the Aborigines*. - Chapter XI, p 200-218. [www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/?wid=2881&page=1&action=null](http://www.enzb.auckland.ac.nz/document/?wid=2881&page=1&action=null). See also: Anderson's *The Welcome of Strangers* (125).

These islands have stories. On a bright September morning, one those crisp spring days when the Southerly has swept the sky clean and the lake is like liquid silver, a lone korimako was singing, calling *attention, attention. Stay, wait for a while, and listen. Listen.* Beginning with a blessing led by Kai Tahu, the last tile was laid on Te Ara Maumahara, Wānaka's shared lakefront pathway. The tiles of the memory path tell of moments in 1000 years of history.

"Snaking its way along the pathway that runs between McDougall St and Dungarvon St, Te Ara Maumahara features 645 etched historical tiles noting significant events that took place in Wānaka and the Upper Clutha, New Zealand and the world during the previous millennium"<sup>67</sup>.

Marking the start of the pathway, a large engraving of the map ariki Te Huruhuru drew in 1844, depicting in great detail both Lake Wānaka and Lake Wakatipu, their islands, mahinga kai, rivers, mountains, valleys and tracks.

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<sup>67</sup> [www.odt.co.nz/regions/wanaka/last-tile-laid-memory-path-officially-reopened](http://www.odt.co.nz/regions/wanaka/last-tile-laid-memory-path-officially-reopened)



At Ngā Kōrero ahi Kōpae o te rohe o Wānaka / The Campfire, Kai Tahu Kaumātua Darren Rewi says he'll only tell a Pakeha audience things he wants us to hear. Reminds us that some of what can find on the internet was recorded by observers like bookkeeper, historian, ethnologist and bookseller Herries James Beattie, and after a while, the old people used to say there's old Beattie on his bike, what story can we tell him this time?<sup>68</sup> In the poem "White white mistletoe", Ruby Solly (Kāi Tahu, Waitaha, Kati Māmoe) writes

The old uncle traversed the southern rivers  
waiting for Beattie to show up on his bike;  
pale hands eager to take  
what could never be written down completely (*Tōku Papa* 14).

(In 1920, after persuading the Otago University Museum to fund a year-long ethnological survey, Beattie was paid five pounds a week to visit isolated southern Māori communities and gather stories from the elders. He conducted his interviews in English, so his questions would often be translated by a younger member of the hapu. He gave his hosts small gifts but did not pay for the interviews or always acknowledge his sources in the books he published based on his findings<sup>69</sup>).

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<sup>68</sup> See also: Richie Hewitt's investigation into Beattie's stories of Southern otter in Otago lakes: [odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown-lakes/did-beavers-once-live-south](http://odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown-lakes/did-beavers-once-live-south).

<sup>69</sup> To read more about Beattie's publications and the strengths and weaknesses of his approach, see: [teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b16/beattie-james-herries](http://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b16/beattie-james-herries).

Ngai Tahu's Kā Huru Manu Cultural Mapping Project indicates Ngai Tāhu leader Haimona Pohana Rakiraki (Waitaha, Kāti Huirapa, c.1815 - 1895), also known as Rakitapu, is said to have lived at Waiariki before escaping the Pūoho raids for Te Karoro (Willsher Bay) or Port Molyneux<sup>70</sup>. At the closing night of a writers festival during winter 2023, I pick up *Tāngata Ngāi Tahu* and the book falls open at the beginning of the section dedicated to Rakiraki: "one of the few southern Māori from whom we have a recorded account of life in the interior prior to Pākehā arrival" (207).

\*

Stevenson's Island and Stevenson's Arm were given their colonial names for John Stevenson. In 1866, Stevenson took over as manager of Mt Burke Station at the entrance to the Arm after the first station manager Chas Candy when Candy moved to North Canterbury. Stevenson left in 1871 for Taieri.

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<sup>70</sup> [www.kahurumanu.co.nz/](http://www.kahurumanu.co.nz/)

On Burke and Brittain's East Wanaka Station, the first manager in 1861 was Mr Chas. Candy, who, with his wife and family, lived there for about five years. They were refined, educated people, living in almost complete isolation, but industrious, kind-hearted, and hospitable to a degree. On leaving the station, which had then passed over to the Otago Land Company, they settled in Canterbury, near Rangiora, where their descendants are still living. The next manager was Mr John Stevenson, father of Mr Stevenson of the travelling picture show. He a few years subsequently, acquired a farm on the Taieri Plains, and there he passed away about 14 years ago.

*Early History of the Wānaka District, Otago Witness, 10 April 1923*

\*

We used to go camping up the Arm. At a sheltered spot with tall gum trees edging into the shallows. A local farmer tells me the trees were planted in the old days when there was a homestead there. As kids we spent many summers at this spot, playing on the beach that looks out onto Te Peka Karara / Pōkainamu.

**c.1980**

Sunlight on water. Sun on skin. Sound of small waves, rolling in. There are people we know, and some we don't, nearby – but we don't mind, because we are in our own world, down here on the sand. Beyond the edges of this photograph, our siblings play their own games. The adults are higher up the sloping beach, where they watch us but leave us be. Two kids by the lake with some facecloths and a bath. Perhaps this is *the first day of love*.

**c.1982**

We are riding white horses in the afternoon sun. I cling on tight – you're more relaxed, holding on with one hand, the other free, nonchalantly. We lead the stampede, galloping in wide circles in the afternoon sun. Up and down, around and around, our horses move in tune with the looped melody that spins and spins from the carousel's music box.

I'm wearing the smocked dress my mother likes me in, with a pressed white collar and pleating. You've flung off your t-shirt hours earlier in the heat, now just in blue shorts, faded red sandals and sunhat. There's a bandage on my left foot from where I broke it, on the farm. But it doesn't hurt. The sun climbs as we ride further and further away from our parents. Later I will win a tiny mirror in the lucky dip barrel. You'll shoot ducks and spiralled targets in the arcade. There will be toffee apples. We'll leave our sandals in the grey sand. I'll take off my bandage. Wade into the lake, sunlight on our faces, on the waves. The water

fresh, clear, clean. You reach across and hold my hand as we ride, higher, higher –

★

## ***The 80s***

In SKIN JEANS dungarees, squishing up with you four in your mum's Subaru. The car smells like barley grass and dust and home-spuns and popsicle sticks. We're on our way to Treble Cone, or maybe the A&P show, the maze, or the airport, maybe the lake. Listening to Enya and Radio Central: *The whole world's talking about Jones's, Jones's, Jones's of Wānaka! Sail away, Sail Away, Sail Away.* After a birthday party lolly scramble at Beacon Point Road, I swap my malt Macintosh for your Toffee de Luxe. At night your mum tucks everyone in, bringing sliced apples or oranges for beside our beds, scratching our backs. Your carefully assembled model planes swirl above us while we sleep.

★

## **water / damage**

Moments become fragmented. Encapsulated snapshots. An archipelago, out of time.

Because how can you – ? How to archive a relationship? These are just gesture, conjecture, response. A mixture of flight / flight / freeze / flop. On a certain moment, time, day. To a certain event, in a certain place, the uncertainty and certainty of it.

## **ascertain**

/,asə'teɪn/

*verb*

1. find (something) out for certain; make sure of.  
"an attempt to ascertain the cause of the accident"

\*

short flight-following 1pm serious - - hard wonderful hard magnificent heartfelt: tight same  
challenging cold deep deep other normal routine small rural long amazing other Aspiring  
calm calm few much "operational confident" routine much involved absolute

## L I G H T

*comes in waves.*

\*

**circa 1982**

It takes a long time to get home. Somewhere two kids are leaving the kitchen. Somewhere, a mother has given instructions. *Can you two do a job for me? Go and pick up the milk from the gate.* It is one of those days where the Southerly has swept the sky clean. You are wearing denim dungarees. The little label on the front says SKIN JEANS. It's one of the first pairs of words I learned how to read. We're both wearing soft leather sandals. We have never been to the end of the drive by ourselves before. There are two cattle stops to cross. The gaps between the bars are wide enough to fall through. The bronzed metal is hot from the sun. You go first and wait for me to cross, because you've been across the top cattle stop before, with your brothers. *Go fast, don't look down,* you tell me. I pretend I'm not scared and I almost trick myself too. Out in the paddock, bees find their hives, again and again. You lead us far away from the pastel-coloured hives, through the long grass on the other side of the drive. I hold your hand when we get to the part where we can hear the bees. We walk past the mānuka forest, where the big boys have made their forts. They play War Game there sometimes, and we're not allowed, because we're too little. The boys come back with helmets made of barley grass, and secret codes that they use to talk about us. But we don't care, because we know each other's favourite colour and have known it our whole lives, since we first decided what our favourite colours were and got matching Mickey Mouse watches (Yours: blue, mine: red). We are going to the end of the drive for the first time. We're getting the milk for the Weetbix and Quik. Our parents are dear friends, so we spend lots of time together. I often stay at your house for part of the holidays. The drive is rocky and dusty. The air smells of blueweed and thyme. Cicadas sing

then shed their skin. Cicadas sing then shed their skin. They live for seven years underground, before they get to sing their song in the sun. That's what the book says. You have a new red trike. We arrive. Six milk bottles nestle in the white crate. We each lift one end of the crate handle, and it's so heavy, it takes a long time to get home. We have to keep stopping, because the milk is so heavy. We have a rest and then start again. It takes a long time to get home.

\*

Joan Didion wrote, *Life changes fast. Life changes in an instant.* One Christmas, I drank too much pink gin and started telling a friend about how I wish I had never suggested to you that we go and look for the bath. *If we're going to do it, it should be soon,* I said to you over the phone. The two searches have become connected for me somehow. As if one were a factor in the other. Both in proximity, these watery sites of search and recovery. I was a distanced witness at each. And the first search was my idea.

**c.1986**

Little you believed in fairies. You showed me where they lived—in the hollowed-out spaces of the beech trees around the campsite up the Wilkin River. The dads made us swim in the snow-fed water every morning: our daily wash. The bigger children went hunting while we explored the forest near the main tent.

Our camp got washed out that year. When torrential rain soaked through tent flies, packs and jackets, the parents decided it was time to leave. We evacuated down the river to Mākarora *place of a thousand sandflies*, staying at the roadside A-frame motels as the rain kept pouring. Those little wooden triangles are still there. I can't help but give them a saluting smile each time I drive past, on trips to or from the West Coast.

In the early years, we went camping every summer. Our dads drove the boats, choosing the safest route up the braided rivers, or if the lake was rough. The adults knew the sheltered spots to set up. Your dad often flew in, days in advance, taking the older boys to get everything ready, building long drops and stringing tarps from ropes.

These trips were also made possible, we knew, by the glorious Hamilton jet engine: made for going fast, skimming across the shallowest waters, and able to perform *Hamilton spins*. These were like another vehicle for our dads, who had matching jet boats that were part of their lives long before we came along.

We always took two loads. The first trip was for transporting the gear, the second for the kids. Someone would get out first and tie the boat to a mānuka tree on the bank. When we were very small, the parent on the boat would pass us to the one on dry land. It felt like we were always doing that in those days, travelling between the two families. Going on adventures where someone could throw you firmly but gently into the open arms of another. We knew there'd always be somebody to catch us.

\*

**2017**

Off Te Peka Karara/Stevenson's Island, we went looking. For the sunken bath full of booze from a notorious party our dads hosted in their twenties.

**2018**

A year later, LANDSAR were looking for you. I watched from the beach as the search went on around me, on Te Peka Karara/Stevenson's Island.

\*

A pretty island in East Wanaka Arm is Te-Peka-karara (the fern reptile), from the numerous lizards abounding there. This island is known locally as Candy's or Stevenson's Island.

*Otago Witness, Issue 3369, 9 October 1918, Page 47.*

\*

With a land mass of 65 hectares, Te Pekakārara/Pōkainamu is just 60 metres above lake level. The island is flanked by Mount Gold (1304 m) and Mount Burke (1417 m) to the east and by Parakārehu (Stevenson's Peninsula), or simply The Peninsula, to the west.

\*

You always stood with your arms slightly out, like you were ready for anything or about to execute a difficult martial arts manoeuvre. To leap up and shake someone's hand in that *firm grip, look them straight in the eye* way our fathers required, or to take on the world.

But now you're not in the world. In this physical world anyway. But I like to think I feel your spirit, hear your voice in so many places. These mountains, islands, the bush and lake.

& an ampersand looks like

a looped thread, or the beginning

of a butterfly knot

\*

people used to say

people used to find things

the mere knowledge that you're

in a little world surrounded with indescribable

*There are people who find islands somehow irresistible.*

\*

### ***How to tie an alpine butterfly knot***

*Make an 8 with the rope*

*Wrap it around the support*

*Fold the upper loop down*

*Pull it around and pass through the lower loop*

*Pull ends to tighten*

*The finished knot forms a loop*

Fragrant lupin, woolly mullein, blueweed, thyme, matagouri. Boat fuel and dust. Apricots and pick-your-own berries. Number 4 Coppertone suntan lotion: the smell of Central Otago summer. Slap of cool clear water. Us running loose on wild long afternoons. How time used to pass so slowly –

& suddenly we're at a teenage garage party drinking Gimlet, Speight's and Bully Hayes and everyone's wearing a version of the same (jersey, 501s, Chukka boots) dancing in sort of a circle in that awkward teenage way and there's Violent Femmes on the stereo and it reminds me of *you, it reminds me of you*

Throwing little plastic parachute men out the second-storey window on Beacon Point Road. Running down to find them in the dry grass below. Watching *Race for the Yankee Zephyr*, *Annie*, *Old Yeller* and *Bambi* on BETA. Riding trikes then BMX bikes down the dusty drive. Playing Uno and Cheat. Holding the wildcard. War Game, Spotlight and Go Home Stay Home with your brothers and cousins. Learning to swim with Duncan Laing at Moana Pool, him standing on the side pacing after us with a big stick. When we were little, it seemed we learned everything at the same time, for a while. But when you learned to dive, I didn't. I was scared of the deep. Gradually I began to realise we were quite different, though we'd always be close. We had sleepovers until one summer when I was assigned the guest room and didn't know why. Perhaps our mothers conspired.

★

## **Because / some days**

Because some days you're catching tadpoles with your brother on Christmas Eve in the pond at the edge of the subdivision, with a big net. Because you want to get your niece and nephew something original and living for Christmas.

Because some days you're off coffee. Some days you're on the mend. Some days you're on a bender and you'll be up for days and days because some days you're the flame, yearning.

There has been a miscommunication.

Don't leave anything in the room.

Turn on Out of Office Auto-reply.

Because you can't turn this into myth. Because of the way he stood with his arms out a little bit. Because of how he started his sentences with words like 'Now...' like he was someone much older.

Because now you get your advice from listicles and google searches and platitudes like On your worst day, wear your best outfit; Grief is work. Your brother passes the net. You swoop and swoop, hoping for a flash of movement, a glimpse of tiny see-through wriggling things with eyes and tails and barely formed legs, "indicator species" suggesting a healthy ecosystem. At dusk these past few nights, you've heard frogs, so you know they're here.

Pass the net back. Stand and listen in the dark.

**c.1992**

Christmas holidays, Dublin Bay. *It'll be calm, up the Arm*, Dad says. In the blue and white togs my mum gave you for Christmas, you push the boat out, then jump in the back, ready to throw the rope. The lake is cold and clear. Dad speeds past Burdon's Beach. Floors it. Zips through a narrow gap between the main cluster of willows and an outlier sapling in the water, a couple of metres from shore. He loves to take that daredevil line, showing off. We scream and laugh, holding on tight to the windshield bar up the front. (Now, looking back, moments flash by like this. We've shot through the gap.)

Looking over your shoulder to a mānuka-fringed pebble shore, I see the place where my aunt and uncle are camping by the beach. They've been coming here since the station farmer said to my uncle "You should camp at the bay for New Year" at my parents' wedding in 1969. Our boat slides past their camp, the chairs and chilly bins lined up on the beach close to the shade of the trees, and behind that, the row of tents and vehicles on the grass. We wave. The people on the beach wave back.

The other reason we're heading for the Arm is so I can learn how to drop a waterski, away from the spectators on the beach. When I first learnt to waterski years earlier, I was put off by the performance aspect, hating the pressure of all the adults on the beach insisting I give it a go. *Come on, just do it. We want to see you try. Don't be chicken. We're all*

*watching*. I cried, ashamed for not wanting to learn in front of an audience, ashamed for crying. The sun beating bright on the colourful umbrellas, the grey and white stones on the beach. I tried again and again, but couldn't stand up on the skis.

Dad and you agree on a placid part of the Arm, away from the choppy waves in the main bay, away from the eyes on the beach. I jump over the side, and you hand me the skis. I slip my feet into the rubber bindings. They're a bit big for me. I lean back and let the tips float to the surface. Effortlessly, you throw the rope, and of course, it lands close, with a splash. I grip the handle. Dad revs the 350 chevvy jetboat engine. The boat tugs the rope then my body. I pop out of the water. Soon, I'm gliding across the silky surface. Holding on behind the boat while you're watching me and Dad keeps turning to check I've stayed on. The landscape flashes by as I slide across the lake: deserted beaches on both sides of the Arm. Lion-brown mountains rise from the water, hemmed with green and grey beaches of schist-stone and sand. Matagouri and mānuka cluster on the hillsides, towards the shores. There are occasional stands of cabbage trees, signifiers of ancient food-gathering sites and gardens en route to the pounamu trails of Te Tai Poutini.

You give me the thumbs up. I take the weight off my right ski, ease my foot out of the binding. The ski releases, sliding away behind me. The water is flat, but I'm wobbly. I drag my big toe in the water, like you've taught me. *Be patient, wait til it feels right*. The mountains and beaches keep rushing by. You're smiling, at least that's how I think of you in this memory. You were probably not close enough for me to see, really. I slot my right foot

into the lower binding of the single ski. My weight shifts back, and the ski digs into the water, carving its own waves. You're pointing and signalling for me to cross the wake. Dad keeps turning around to look. I did it! I'm on one ski! I bend my knees to absorb the first crest of the wake, then the next. I go back and forth across the wake, holding on, holding on, between sky and lake. My arms ache. I point back towards our camp with my thumb. Losing balance, I hit the inky water. The boat circles around and you're pulling me on board, then picking up the skis. Eyes streaming as Dad ferries us fast, back to the beach. The wind, the waves, us three, grinning

\*

On the phone sometimes  
at night, my mother tells  
me things, little things, when  
we're both on our third wine,

*Nothing*

██████████

████████████████████

*of it all.*

\*

When you were missing, the lake and sky were grey for days. A pall cast over the town. The day of your accident, it wasn't calm up the Arm. A winter storm whipped up the lake. White horses raging

Early that day, I'd been talking to a friend on the phone, discussing how windy it was. We wanted to go for a walk and were trying to think of somewhere out of the wind. *If only there was a tunnel walk*, we joked. I hung up and continued planning the next term's teaching. *BANG!* another friend texted when a thunderclap roared over the lake.

★

*And so here we are*

"Coming into contact with  
the limits of life"

On a Kreuzberg bridge  
a pair having the up-all-  
night-fight. Black swans drift

Measure distances

in the dark. Waves sound like traffic

sounds like waves. Waves

We could be pharaohs  
just for one day. Monoatomic  
gold. Leave Friday.

A baby giraffe  
is called a *calf*. This makes us  
laugh and laugh and laugh.

Calving also means  
to shear off, splinter, detach —

as in the ice caps.

"One of us will be  
the survivor. It's going  
to be very sad."

Beneath a street lamp  
in Oberkampf, a busker sings  
*Better be home soon...*

She shoulders a great  
sadness, brings winter with her  
when she walks in, late.

Good in a crisis  
a quick metaboliser  
a definite plus

*Something's happened, she*  
*says. Possibly the worst thing.*  
Wait. What do you mean?

I'm sorry what? What  
Just happened? This calls for new  
skin, new everything.

They've invented bionic  
skin, you know.  
It even feels pain.

(To have no digital  
footprint. Your bits & bites  
all real, tangible.)

The difference between  
dying & being killed: to  
fade or be taken.

Surrender. Hands in  
the air. You feel it in your  
wrists. This mad music.

The new nostalgia:

*One more time* we're gonna sell-

a-brate. Keep dancing.

\*

We got married twice, as little kids do. The first make-believe wedding was when we were about four years old, in the Bay of Islands. There was a dinghy we'd take between the two boats our parents hired for the holiday. Back and forth all day we'd row with our brothers. We had Snax biscuits for our reception.

Another time, your oldest brother married us in the sandpit at Dublin Bay. In Third Form we were frustrating the heck out of each other, as teenagers do. The friendship was something to get teased about. We jointly decided it was time we got divorced, so your brother was master of that ceremony too.

\*

I had just seen you, ten days before. You were first to arrive, a dozen Estrella under your arm crossing the lawn... and last to leave at my birthday party. Standing in the kitchen after everyone had gone on to the next thing, you said you'd come too. I might have hugged you, or at least I know I was all gushy that my oldest friend would be there to carry on into the night –

They used a butterfly knot to get you out.

★

**c.1987**

Your mother calling across the paddocks, *Boooooys, dinner!* You're in the orchard, picking blackberries. On the hill, by the duck pond, a line of geese like fat ballerinas saunter into the shade. The sky: 1B5 Science book blue. Tiny translucent red spiders tickle my feet. You see me. Juice running down your cheeks, white teeth. *I'll race you*

Back then, it felt like we roamed the whole district.

We could triangulate the boundaries of our known universe with familiar stories and sites, navigate our own pathways in the spaces between. The peak of Mt Roy was where the big boys hiked one day, taking a mirror to shine back at us to signal they'd made it. Across the lake, above Waterfall Creek, the vineyards of some of Central Otago's first grapes. In the middle of the lucky horseshoe-shaped bay, Ruby Island beckoned. Tall pine trees and mānuka groves thrived on it then. Before the fires. In a flat patch of moss and grass, there are still rocks in place from the original covered dance floor which was built there in the 1920s. We once tried to make it to Ruby Island on the water bikes you could hire on the shore. But those bikes and little legs couldn't get very far. We got out to where it felt quite deep, beyond the blue line, and from the pottle nestled between us, ate salty hot chips smothered in Kingsway diner's homemade sauce.

**c.1982**

We both visited each other's kindies. I liked the tree huts at your kindy, you liked the Tonka tip trucks at mine.

\*



The pattern swirls. The patterns swirl.

**1996**

In the spring of our last year at school, you sent handwritten letters to family friends and connections overseas in your spidery ink pen writing. You and your best school mate headed off to Spain to work on a farm for summer, maybe longer. Your version of a gap year. I spent a Northern Hemisphere winter in the States, then started university. In my second year, you were in a Hall, I was flatting. We didn't see that much of each other; both caught up in different trajectories of life at uni, making new friends who were taking the same courses as us. Most weekends you'd be out at Taieri airport, learning to fly or home with your family. I went to the bars that we could get into with fake id: *Arc cafe, Bath St, Gardies, The Empire* and *The Crown* if there was a gig on. This was when the drinking age was twenty. One afternoon while hanging out with a mate, we sloped around to your Hall for a visit. You seemed so focused, and diligent – working on an Economics assignment at your cubicle desk – while my focus was more on delinquency.

★

There is a long history of parties on Stevenson's Island. Long before the Bachelornauts party of 1961, the Theodore paddle steamer would ferry people to the island during summers around the turn of the twentieth century. There were picnics with brass bands and billy tea and all kinds of cake...

NEW YEAR'S EXCURSION.—We had a fine New Year's outing. The Cromwell Brass Band came up and Messrs M'Dougall and Sons gave them an excursion to East Wanaka in honour of the occasion. During the voyage, the band played several popular airs, which the other passengers enjoyed very much. The weather was very fine, with a cool breeze. The company disembarked at Stevenson's Island for lunch, and soon tea was brewed and many different kinds of cake disposed of, and the most of the passengers arranged for an hour or two's stay, but the band desired to get to Pembroke by 4 o'clock, so the whistle gave the signal to troop aboard. In the evening the brass band gave a highly enjoyable entertainment in the Lyceum Hall to a large audience, many of whom came from the surrounding districts. The band decided not to extend the usual courtesies to the press, so that I am precluded from giving details. However the performers were evidently highly pleased with the appreciation frequently shown by the audience, and at the large house and the order and decorum observed, so that the band will no doubt cherish the memory of the kindness and hospitality shown to them by the Wanaka people. There was also a large influx of tourists, and the hotel accommodation of Pembroke was consequently taxed to the utmost.

*Otago Witness, Issue 2393, 11 January 1900, Page 29*

\*

Your favourite quiz category was always Aviation. You told me this would be the topic you would choose if you got to go on Mastermind.

\*

People also ask

★

1999

In third year you came to my 21st with your flatmate. Arriving at the dive bar I'd hired, looking at the band setting up, the 90s versions of my friends in various states of grunge, *You're such a greenie*, you said. You had a good laugh with my Dad, calling me a bit "alternative" in the way the term was used back then. *Alternative* meant the music we listened to, I guess. As well as our outfits, the lifestyle we tried on from movies like *Reality Bites* and *Empire Records* mashed up with rave culture we learned from the Eudemody tribe and a wannabe affinity with Flying Nun legends we were hearing for the first time on Radio One. I made mixtapes for road trips so I could play Nick Cave's *The Ship Song*, *Purakanui* by Jetty, *She Speeds* by Straightjacket Fits and The Chills' *Pink Frost* over and over.

★

You started seeing a childhood sweetheart. Took her flying at Taieri airport, performing perfect barrel rolls while she laughed in the passenger seat. I was glad you were happy, had found someone special. Felt protective of you in a sisterly way. Wrote a poem for your wedding, which I travelled back from London for. Your moves to *Footloose* for your first dance are legendary, masterminded by your wife. You even wore knee pads to perform some of the technical parts, which you'd rehearsed for weeks. I still see you smiling, spinning, flying, so keenly...

★

First, you were missing. I hoped you had swum, then spent the night in the bush. We waited on Stevenson's Island while LANDSAR did a grid search of the area. We kept our distance down on the shoreline, but I watched them abseil down cliffs, scan each rock and tree for clues, debris. Your helicopter was too deep for their divers to reach, so we waited and waited for the Navy to arrive from the North Island to get you out. I walked to the top of the island with my brother and your cousin. The dusty track through the mānuka so familiar and well-worn after so many visits, camping trips, picnics. Lichen like snowflakes, blooming on schist, as we trod the path higher, higher. We stood on a rock, looked down at the site, the blue blue waves, *fathomless fathoms*

*I couldn't fathom*

/ / /

/ / /

*fathoms*

*fathoms*

/ / /

/ / /

*fathomless*

/ / /

My brother handed out little metal cups of whisky. There was a toast to you; then there was silence, the walk back down. Your cousin told silly jokes, and kept things light all day. *A bloody good game of hide n' seek you're playing*, he'd say. I went home, then watched from Dublin Bay as the Navy launch left Burdon's Beach for the Arm, at dusk. The recovery happened in the dark. They took your body away for the autopsy, and the days stretched on endlessly. The lake and skies stayed grey, the pall over this place, your home. All I wanted to do was lie down. In the flight / flight / freeze / flop analogy, I think this is the flop response. My mother made me get up and out of the house to do jobs. We made club sandwiches for your family, the volunteers, the police and fire service. Cutting the crusts off with an electric knife. She sent me out to deliver them. Made me stack wood, and bring it in, every day. Ahi kā: We kept the home fires burning. I searched up our old messages, emails, letters. Found photos and the bangle you gave me for my 21st.

\*

The mums are letting us walk with the older boys up Mt Iron on our own, then all the way to the maze by ourselves. This is a really long way. But the sun is high and the grass is dry and we have much to discuss as we go. *How deep is Lake Wānaka? How high is Aspiring? Who is your favourite M\*A\*S\*H character? Which is the best Hubba Bubba flavour? How late are you allowed to stay up? Have you ever seen the Goodnight Kiwi?*

At the top of Mt Iron, we look down at the maze and all the tiny people and cars. If we look carefully, we can work out the way through. The trick to the maze is to always go left. Or crawl under the fences. Take the Emergency Exit if you panic. Once you've found the four flags in the corner towers, the maze leads you to Puzzling World, where we spend hours playing with the puzzles for free. My favourites are the wooden ones that you had to make fit certain shapes, like the 3D star or the map of New Zealand. You like the one with the metal ring you have to get from one side of a series of loops and tracks to the other. It's really hard. Climbing the slope to Puzzling World's crooked house makes me feel a bit sick. We look at Einstein and the Mona Lisa looking at us from the holograms on the walls, watching where we are going. Your big brother has been given money to buy ice creams, if we're good. So we will listen to him and not run off by ourselves because we hope we can have a goody gumdrop the proper size, not a kiddy cone.

★

Thinking about it now, the Mt Iron to maze trip was actually a genius way for our mothers to get five kids out of the house so they could have an afternoon to themselves. This was probably also the motive for sending us to see *Crocodile Dundee* unaccompanied while they went to a different movie when your family came to visit ours in Dunedin. Outside Green Island theatre, we acted out our favourite lines over and over *That's not a knife; that's a knife!* While we waited to get picked up.

★

**c. 1986**

There are gooseberry bushes hidden in the mānuka, and tightly-woven white spider nests in the matagouri. If you poke one with your fingers, you can see all the little babies. Below your place on the hill, with the long driveway, we can walk straight down to the lake. The big boys learnt how to make a fire at Cubs so we toast marshmallows there, at dusk. Just us kids. Behind your place are poplar trees, hills and paddocks. We drive diggers in the sandpit, run through orchards, make huts, forts, tunnels, rafts, ride go-carts, BMXs, squash into the bath, walk down the dirt road to your grandparents' place, measuring distances in our own way. When everything could be anything because we could make it up. This was where we played.

\*

The Holidays.—The holidays passed off very enjoyably. Mr Sachtler, at Pembroke, held his annual ball on January 1, and it was well attended. On Boxing day both the steamers went to Pigeon Island with a large party of excursionists. The p.s. Theodore left Pembroke first, but the s.s. Makarora reached Pigeon Island before her, and the two steamers were moored side by side, the Theodore's passengers going across the Makarora to land. On landing both parties united their forces and had a very enjoyable time. On New Year's day both steamers took up a large party of excursionists to Stevenson's Island. These excursions are so enjoyable, and the fares so cheap, that large numbers of people come from Cardrona and Cromwell and other places and enjoy themselves immensely. The residents unite in paying much attention to visitors, and relate items of interest and anecdotes.

*Otago Witness, Issue 2446, 30 January 1901, Page 34*

\*

Until I was 12, my family lived on the Taieri Plains, twenty minutes' drive from Dunedin and three hours to Wānaka. My grandmother lived at Dublin Bay, so on most holidays and many weekends, we went to Wānaka. I'd get carsick every trip. Because my two brothers were much older than me, I'd often go to your house to play. Sometimes I'd stay for the entire school holidays, especially if my mum was rostered on at the hospital. So all my childhood memories with you have a festive feeling about them, a feeling of \*holiday\* \*holiday\* underscored with the keening of lake waves, as I gaze and gaze at the past, moments flashing

*like sunlight*

*on water.*

★



nzsothebysrealty.com

2017

As an adult, I'd returned to live and work in Wānaka. My parents and oldest brother moved there permanently too. At the kitchen table, my father spreads out the real estate agent's plans for the newest subdivision. *There are no playgrounds or green spaces in this plan*, he says.

*Tell me about the Bachelornauts party again, I ask.*

*We put a West Coast forest in the Hāwea Hall. George from Haast arranged for suitable space on two trucks which were almost overloaded in forest greenery, giant king punga, ferns, flaxes and the like. The decoration in the hall found us deep in a green forest. We had a Western band going, there were two old baths on clawed feet which were full of ice and wine, there were several barbecues going on, and the kitchen of the hall was busy sending out large amounts of replacements to trestle tables.*

*The party ended in the early stages of morning, and someone said, "Where shall we go?"*

*Another voice went up, "To Stevenson's Island!" There just weren't enough boats available at three in the morning, so those who couldn't find a boat were rewarded by the fact that I had arranged a chartered launch for those left behind from Wanaka to the island, leaving Wanaka at 9am and arriving about 10am, that probably could take about 60 or 70 people.*

*Other people could take their cars and be ferried across to the island. It was a mini Dunkirk at 2am. As soon as the boats touched the shores, people stepped out or fell out, walked four or five paces, and just dropped. There was a line of sleeping bodies on the beach.*

*It wasn't until about 11am, people were waking up and we spied the launch coming to the island. When it was about 150 yards offshore, we saw the wine and ice and champagne bath from the night before from the Hāwea Hotel being hoisted on the shoulders of those on board. We thought all had been drunk the night before, so what was a bath doing coming to the island?*

*Then Bachelor was captured on foredeck and manhandled into the bath. The call went out, "Lower the longboat, and Bachelor, row like a bastard!" Of course, there were no oars, so he had to kneel, long hands like paddles going on either side, and the front of the boat had a bow wave. But, lo and behold, behind his bum, no one had thought of putting the plug in, and there was a jet of water about four feet high. It was a race against the incoming water. He lost... and sunk to loud applause.*

★

## The Main Divide

river channels look like kelp looks like shadows on the mountains

dinosaur spines          eyes          brush strokes & worry lines          lines    lines

river channels look like shadows look like kelp on the mountains    if we were still kids

we might still think of how if we were    god or giants we could stroke their velvet sides          mountain

ribs    &    gullies river channels look like shadows

look like kelp    a skiff of snow          patches of light    changes in tone

chiaroscuro on the mountains          dinosaur spines    eyes    brush strokes & worry lines          river

channels look like shadows look like kelp on the mountains

river channels look like shadows look like kelp on the mountains

river channels look like shadows look like kelp on the mountains

river          channels, channelling

the main divide.

**March 8 2017**

We're on a borrowed boat with our fathers and two of their old schoolmates; the Bachelors. We're anchored just off Stevenson's Island and you're asking Dad if we can remember exactly where the bathtub sank, so you can *triangulate the spot*.

*Where was it, Robert? Can you remember where it went down?*

*Well, we were on the beach, looking out – everyone had just collapsed on the sand as soon as we got there – so I think she went down twenty yards or so off that little headland. Johnny was paddling like a madman when– Sheebah! You should have seen it! A huge rooster tail went up as she sank to the bottom of the lake. With all our booze, in that bath. If you find it, there'll be bottles and bottles of the stuff.*



And now you're getting some rope and a buoy and putting on your James Bond wetsuit, the one you put on straight over your clothes and everything stays dry, the one you wear to impress clients. You dive for crays for oligarchs and oil magnates, film stars, singers and once, a Danish prince. Showing visitors from overseas your favourite parts of New Zealand, from a tent camp retreat you run with your siblings. Sharing the experiences of the backcountry you grew up with. The media use your Facebook profile photo in their stories about you. The one with you in your wetsuit, holding a massive crayfish.

\*

When my mother and I found the original party invitation, at the bottom of a tea chest that had gotten wet in poorly-sealed storage in a garage, I floated the idea. Your eyes glowed with the possibility, the adventure.

*We'll go on a hunt, for the bath.*

*Sooner rather than later?* I asked, because no one was getting any younger and my father in particular was getting close to his *use-by date* as he used to say, thanks to *Mr C*, his cancer.

\*

**THE  
BACHELORNAUTS**

invite you to a

**BALL**

at

**HAWEA**

on

Friday, December 29, 1961

R.S.V.P. Craigmore, Timaru.

*From Wanaka six miles the hall at Hawea;  
We hope you'll all join us from far and from  
near;*

*A visit from Venus, soothsayers declare,  
Is due on the lake in the evening air.*

*This astro-contingent, the customs declare,  
Drink Strontium 90 mixed with their beer.  
No we must politely reciprocate taste  
In dress and concoctions or capsules well laced.*

*In the morning that follows the night before  
The space-ships will launch with a hiss and a  
roar  
To island idyllic in the midst of the lake  
Where we'll bask in the sun in a planetary wake.*

*When Gagarin's gone  
And peace is restored  
There's ski-ing and fishing  
For those who are bored.*

*The New Year approaches  
For better or worse,  
Let's stay and enjoy it  
Though pained by this verse.*

Bachelor had to swim most of the 150 yards to shore. The excitement woke us all up, and gramophone records strummed up, generators were going, and it was a ho-ho fun time again. There was a succession of mini parties over the next three days in the water, on the water, under the water- it was baking Wanaka sunny weather, too hot to sunbathe, but lots of other things to do, until everything wasted out either of funds or energy.

\*

What would I name for you? (What do we rename for you?) There is not one place I go to remember, but many. Where your soul might have leaped. Places I remember when you were here, what you were like. I try

*not to think of*

tiny shards in manuka

branches,     like stars

★

(How not to)

ensure erasure

████████████████████████████████████████

████████████████████

★

One thing I worry about is  
being too obsessed with the past.

fragile love. survival. sunshine

and the line

light – time – dark

## Begin Being

It's the same moon, but it's different –  
these mountains you've known as long as  
you've been knowing, who knew you before you  
even started to know, look different now. Your  
new glance is slant, askance as you take in  
this autumn miscellany:  
manuka, matagouri, an empty beach  
slate-grey sand in ribbed  
corrugations beneath your feet

*Also known as wild Irishman, matagouri is the only  
native plant with thorns. For much of the year, it has  
few leaves. But it's the stems and thorns that  
let light in*

Keep walking till you're  
knee-deep in the lake, walk  
til you're standing  
in blue clay. Meanwhile  
somewhere near Hororata

a farmer drives north, in his green ute  
with his dog on the back. Dust follows  
the truck as he cuts his way across  
the Canterbury Plains. Irrigators rush past  
like giant strands of DNA. He's listening  
to Dire Straits, "Love Over Gold"  
and when *Telegraph Road* plays  
when he passes Darfield's Telegraph  
Road, he laughs.

And now the texture of what you're standing  
in changes. It's lost its firmness. Much of the year  
you've felt the ground has been like this. You  
think about the mud we chucked at each other  
as kids, then made into sculptures left to dry  
on the rocks on the shore. Keep walking  
towards the blue line  
which was once the edge of the world, the ledge  
where things get deeper and darker and you can't  
see the bottom anymore.

★

Didn't you keep your clay man for a while, in your bedroom?

Didn't he sit, grey-blue, watchful on your window

ledge, looking out to the lake? And was there a moment

when you knew you couldn't keep him, knew

he couldn't stay? (Was that when you began being,

was that when you knew?)

Now it's night. There's a Southerly. A pale blue poukana moon

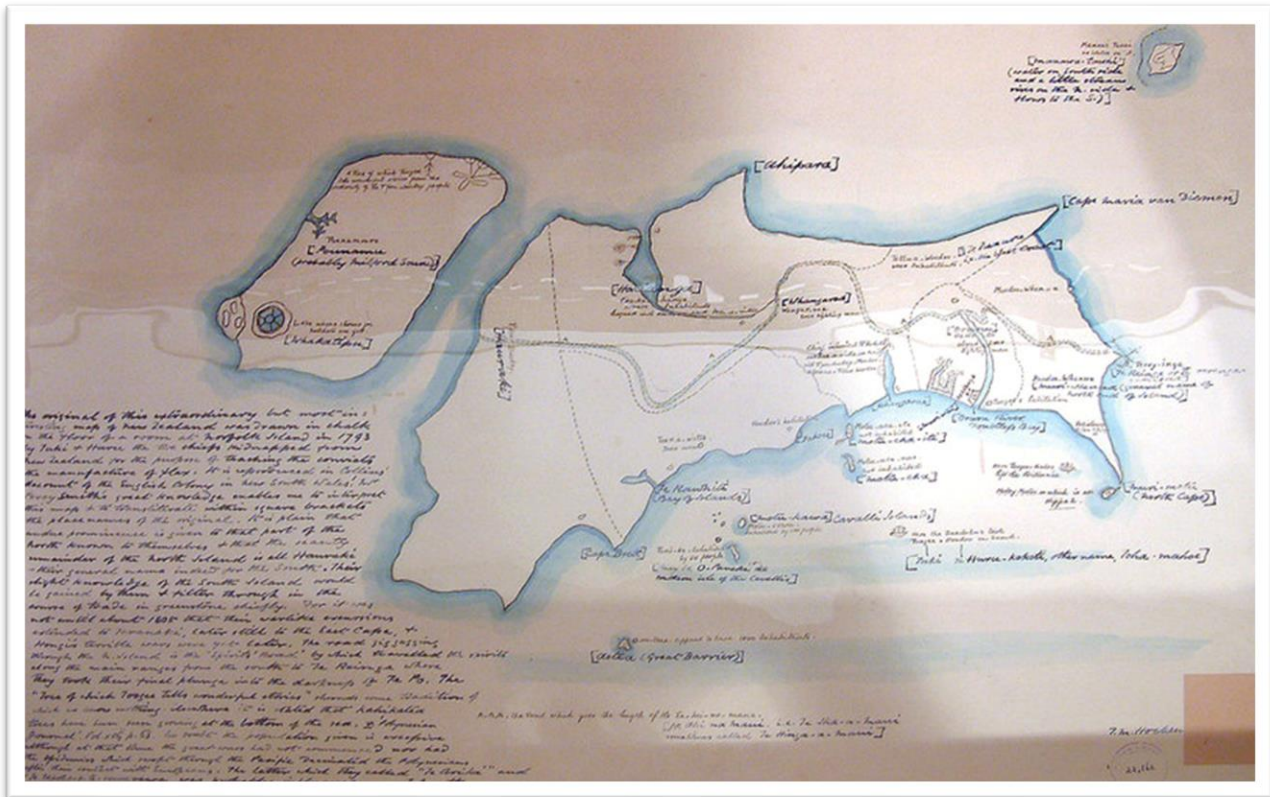
holds a tricky vigil over the bay. A curl, a frond, a biscuit, a scrap:

*You saw me standing alone.* And the farmer keeps driving north

and he's never coming back.

★

In 1793, a map at the Hocken library tells me, Tuki Tahua drew a dotted line through Te Ika a Maui to show Te Ara Whānui: the spirit pathway to Te Reinga. Did your spirit follow a line to your leaping place?



*Reproduced Map of New Zealand originally drawn in chalk on the floor by two Māori rangatira, Hurukotiki “a high born young rangatira from the Bay of Islands” and Tukitahua “a priest’s son from Oruru” (Salmond, Tears 127).*

(You have to go into a special room, a room that has a quiet cosiness, and wear special white gloves, to look at this map. I think of Solly's line, *pale hands eager to take*.)

While on a fishing trip off the Cavalli Islands, Tuki and Huru were “kidnapped by a British government supply ship” and taken to the penal colony of Norfolk Island to teach the convicts how to work with flax. After they explained to the Lieutenant Governor Philip Gidley King that making clothing from flax was not their area of expertise, the pair lived with the governor for the next six months, having been promised he would return them to Aotearoa New Zealand. During this time, Tuki taught King about tikanga, “for instance, that when a person dies, a gentle wind (or hau) carries their spirit along a pathway to Te Reinga, the north-west tip of the North Island, where it plunges from a tree into the ocean” (Salmond *Tears*, 128 – 129).

\*

quid amor valeat nesciam *why*  
*love prevails, I have no idea*

— Anne Carson<sup>71</sup>

Driving over the Albert Town bridge from Wānaka to Hāwea, I start thinking of an anagram inside an anagram, *Stop pathos, Ha!* The road dips, the gradient lifts. Everything's all crepuscular and I'm thinking *Stop pathos, Ha!* Like you can never stop writing sad things? There's a sadness in everything but it's also kind of funny? Don't even try to stop pathos. It will laugh at you.

---

<sup>71</sup> Nox (10.3).

Your snorkel scoots across the surface as we watch. Back and forth, back and forth, you systemically search the section the old boys have decided is the spot. You've tethered buoys to a long rope to mark the boundaries of where they think the bath might be. You are meticulous, appeasing us. Giving the blokes a good show. You trace the place, swimming back the past for four mates who partied here in '61 while the Soviets raced the Yanks into space.

There and back, there and back in the Bond wetsuit that keeps your ironed shirt bone-dry, you're determined to find it or at least give the old blokes a show. We track your progress because you've also attached a buoy on a rope to the belt on your back so we can see where you are. *There's so much silt* you say when you surface. *It would have shifted over the years, and got covered in silt and weeds. Buried deep.*

We didn't find the bath that day. I suppose the likelihood of finding anything fifty odd years later was low. Sands have shifted. Weed haunts the silt lakebed above layers and layers of glacial sediment. Over the bow, you offer what you did retrieve: a builder's ladder, a rusted oilskin hat, two ancient flagons. We ogle these drowned objects, like taonga.

And that and the journey were enough for us.

★

I look at the carousel photo again, trying to figure out the year. I look to the edges of the shot. Is that your brother behind us, in the red shirt? My father in his leather shorts and Aertex, his protective arm, reaching across. I have a bandage on my foot. So it must be after I broke it on the farm, while out walking with Dad.

\*

**2021**

I have not been back to the island. But I will ask my brother to take me there, one day soon. We will stand on the beach, grey sand and stones beneath our feet. We will take the track through the scrub, up the hill to the peak. Mānuka leaves will brush our arms and I'll reach out to feel their small green leaves, smell the honey scent of their tiny white blossoms.

*Mānuka mean, kānuka kind*

Take some bark and rub it between your fingers. If the tissue is soft and smells strong, then you can be sure it is kānuka: *kind*. If the tissue is harsh to the feel and only mildly aromatic, the tree will probably be mānuka: *mean*.

A pair of flitting fantails might follow us, chit-chatting. We'll purse our lips and make squeaking sounds to talk back to them in their language. Pīwakawaka, messengers from the other side.

At the top, we'll stand on a broad, lichen-crusting rock. We'll look down at the site, the deep blue water, the waves, then out and way back to Wānaka village. Mt Burke on our left, the Peninsula on the right, the lake stretching for miles between the mountains. No houses, no lights in the gathering dusk. We will stay until dark. We will salute the first evening stars, to the west.

And somewhere in the unseen spaces, you and I are singing Jimmy Barnes in your tent beside the lake on New Year's Day.

*I'm like a man with no heaaaa-art, I just don't belong*

*I can't help it when yooooooooour love is gone*

And you're calling me at boarding school, for girl advice.

And you're showing me the dive watch you got for your birthday. All the things it can do. Measure depth, plot points, descent –

And we're having a midnight feast that you won't remember in the morning

because I woke you up but you were still dreaming

And you're laughing, laughing

And your head is inclined, intent, in that way that shows you're really listening

And you're starting your statements with *Now...* in that way that adds urgency,

authority and complicity

And you are touching your son's thumb to yours saying, *Put it there, partner. Right on!* Like my father used to do with us. (Or is it ride on? I'm not sure now, and neither of you is here to ask. Anyway, it's not so much the words, but the action that matters. I'll find a way to keep saying *Put it there: right on, ride on...*)

And you're standing with your arms slightly out, like you're ready for anything...

And I am skimming skimming across this surface

and somewhere two kids are leaving the kitchen. On one of those days where the Southerly has swept the sky clean. We're going to the end of the drive for the first time. We're getting the milk for the Weetbix and Quik. And there are two cattle stops to cross, and bumble bees and viper's bugloss and huts in the manuka and miles of sky. And the milk's so heavy, we have to keep stopping. But we can take forever if we need to. It takes a long time to get home.

**Estrella**  
**(Catullus 101, after Carson and Lala)**

Weigh anchor – for two kids crossing the lake in a dinghy to catch skinks. Years back.  
They've yanked the starter, sparked the two-stroke motor, steered (through the waves)  
away from the row of tents by the beach. Unmoor. Tai hoa. Take a breath. Try to speak into  
this karoro-dusk. Since some Deus ex machina has conspired to steal your grasp from my  
shoulder, so that you and I may no longer talk as you lean forwards into the words in that  
way you had, ka kite, friend, *taken / not given. Now (at least now) these objects of our*  
*history* float to the surface, rearrange in this elegy – *take these gifts, raise this*  
*glass of whisky tears.* Hau. Estrella means star. Carry the stars. Silent, ashes. Water damage  
– the passage. Push the boat out. *Put it there, partner. Haere ra.*

***Where were you?***

**March 15 2019, 4am**

A light switches on. A small, wide-eyed child with caramel-coloured hair is peering in down at her, holding a cereal box. Staring. "Hello", the child says. And keeps staring. Propping herself up on her elbows, Frances feels a familiar headache kick in, the kind that makes her feel like she's been hit in the back of the head with a shovel. She seems to have slept on a sofa, a Chesterfield, in some kind of office. Book titles lining the two nearest walls shift into focus. *Crime and Punishment* nestles next to *Oh Baby!* and a stack of vintage 70s *Vogue* magazines. They appear to have been organised chromatically.

"What's your name?" asks the child, who has a constellation of honey-puffs stuck to her flannelette pyjamas.

"I'm Frances, and you're..."

"Reko. After the Tūtūrau chief! Master explorer and storyteller. Do you want breakfast?"

Frances falls back into the sofa. "Ah, breakfast? No, no thank you. I just need to lie here for a while. It's very early."

"Ok."

The child pads out of the room, a couple of honey puffs falling to the carpet in her wake. Frances turns to her side, holding a hand over her eyes. Should have asked Reko to turn off the light. Opposite her is a large bay window, with a view to the sea. In the mauve light of early morning, she can just make out yacht masts lining the marina. Can hear their halyards clanging in the wind. She must be – in Lyttelton. At least a fifty-dollar Uber home. Eighty or more to work. What day was it? Thursday. Book Club was last night. They were reading Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*; at Frances' suggestion.

Frances shoves the mohair blanket and duvet aside and moves over to the window. A cargo ship's lights stud the horizon. Closer in, in the belly of the harbour, the clang of machines, shifting, loading. Containers and cranes dancing a mechanical ballet. She feels another, deeper, familiar ache. Guilt or regret? The booze blues?

*Falling out of love is like  
forgetting how to read music  
You won't know when or why  
but one day you'll discover  
You can't read the notes anymore.*

**5 a.m.**

*It is 5 a.m. All the worse things come stalking in  
and stand icily about the bed looking worse and worse  
and worse.*

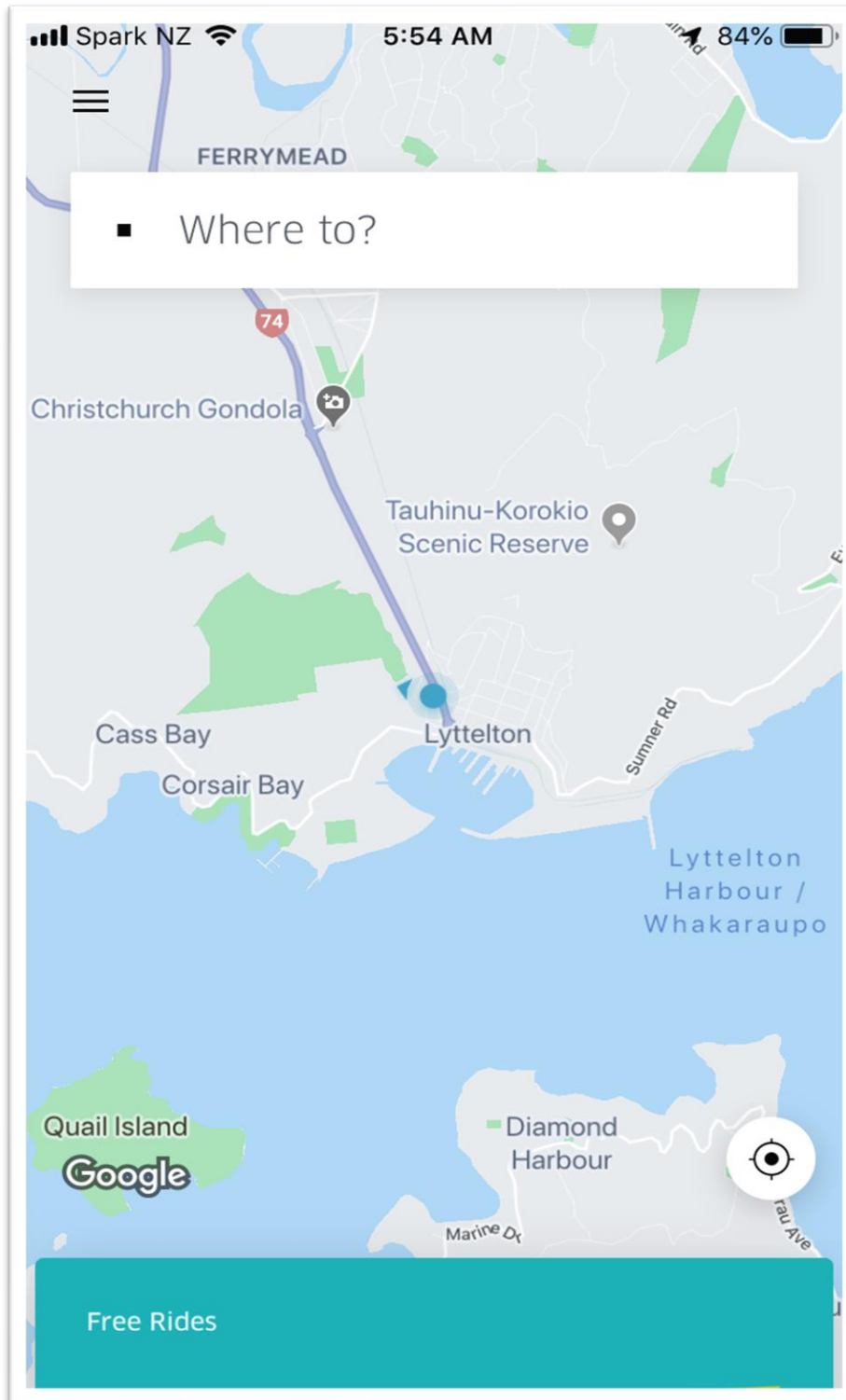
— Fleur Adcock, "Things".

She'd been dreaming of – what was it? Something just beyond her reach was returning in flashes, images, little relapses of a dream. A residual image, a palimpsest, some sort of imprint of a heated discussion. Did that really happen? A debate she couldn't back out of because she'd started it. Something taboo, unspoken amid this circle. People she didn't know very well. But wanted to like her. She'd overshared something. What had happened? A strange, layered dream. That kept repeating.

**5.54am**

*Tomorrow's coming 'round  
A hairpin curve in the road  
She's got a run in her stocking  
And she's missing the heel of her shoe...*

— Poe, "That Day"



"Bridge-et! Bridge, Bridge, Bridget JONES! Bridge-et! JONES! BRIDGET JONES! BJ, BJ, BEEEEEEEEEE JAAAAAAAAAY!" Across the still-rippled bitumen of a quake-ripped road, the neighbour's morning banter with his chocolate labrador as he heads out the door to his job in the city reminds Frances she's running late for work. She has to get across the city. Get the truck. Get changed. Go to the gallery. Or maybe she could call in sick... Lyttelton is taking a long time to get their infrastructure fixed too, she thinks, watching Bridget Jones shuffle towards Bridle Path Road with the dressing-gowned, mug-in-hand neighbour.

\*

"Can you tell me a story?"

Reko has returned. "I bet you're good at funny stories. You were funny last night." The small child climbs onto the far arm of the sofa, and perches there in honey-puff speckled pyjamas. Wide-eyed. Watchful. Waiting.

"Two stories: a made up one and a real one, please. Something about the fairies that live here. And tell me about your kids. Where are they?"

"I don't think I have the right kind of stories. And I haven't got any kids."

"Oh." Reko tucks her feet under the duvet. "Do you have any pets?"

"No. I have a lot of plants though. I grow heirloom fruit trees."

"What does that mean?"

Frances folds and unfolds the corner of the floral duvet cover, revealing its *Cath Kidson / LONDON* embroidered label. She worries at its raised writing with her fingers, as if to rasp some sensitivity back into them. "Forgotten fruit. Old-fashioned plums, almonds, apples, pears - that kind of thing. The type that your grannie would have eaten, when she was a child. It's like bringing back a little bit of history, today."

"I like pears."

"Me too."

"Do you think fairies like pears? Do you think they nibble on pears that have fallen on the ground - those ones you see that have holes in them? Is that from fairies eating them with tiny tiny spoons? Can you do plaits? Could you plait my hair? Plaits around buns, like Thumbelina?"

"I suppose... they might. I suppose fairies might like pears. No, I can't plait hair I'm afraid. Anyway, Thumbelina plaited her own hair, because she didn't have any parents. I'm just going to close my eyes for a little while, ok? The sun hasn't come up yet."

★

She did not have the knack for doing a plait. *Braid, fold, weave, crease*. So many kids' books and YA novels feature an orphaned protagonist, Frances thinks. They're so often abandoned, betrayed or neglected by their parents. Does every generation identify with the trope, or is it now even more so, for *the youth of today*, inheriting the climate crisis, inaccessible housing prices and the rest?

★

*Thread*, by its nature, is composed of lots of smaller threads, twisted together. In computing, "A piece of code is thread-safe if it functions correctly during simultaneous execution by multiple threads." Thread is also "something continuous or drawn out: as a: a line of reasoning or train of thought that connects the parts in a sequence, as of ideas or events". It can be used to describe something solid, as in part of a screw, or clothes. It can also be used to describe liquid; the topic of a conversation on the internet, or in the physical world.... *Thread*: the main drift or gist. Or to pass through ...

★

**6.17am**

"The cleaner's looking after me today. Mum's gone to work and I'm sick. I have a fever. Hot head. Hot hot hot".

The last line of sunrise is like a mandarin-peel tendril, stretching across an inky horizon.

Reko beams. She lines up her toy car collection along the windowsill, chromatically. Tow truck, ambulance, fire truck, police car, racing car. All vehicles linked with disaster.

*Siren:* We teach children to make siren sounds, at the same time they learn to mimic the noises of the farmyard. The first Sirens lured Odysseus off-course; these days sirens make us wonder if this is real or a drill, where they're going and if *it could be someone we know*. Some people touch a button in a form of superstition, when they see an ambulance go by with its siren on. Siren, siren, sigh                      sigh.

Why did she drink so much nine-dollar wine?

"Does your mum have coffee in the house? And Panadol?"

“Dunno. We could go exploring though, to find some. Reko was a chief, who knew lots of crossings and paths by heart”.

*Au Au Aue Hā... he!*

“That’s the waka ama. Reko was famous for how fast he could paddle waka and mōkihi. Across the Mataura, Mata- Au, Waitaki...”

Reko takes Frances' hand and pulls her across to the window.

*Au Au Aue Hā... he!*

They can hear the paddlers, but they can't see them.

Frances wonders if maybe last night she blurted out something about – no, she wouldn't have, surely? That old homesick feeling again. Followed by a more medical nausea.

"Where's the bathroom, my love?"

"Down the hall, at the end".

That's right. She stole away into the bathroom for what was probably a suspicious length of time last night. Found herself clinging to the basin, grimacing into their Pintrest-perfect, Hollywood-lit mirror. Willing jagged breath to even out again. What is it about the bath toys in other people's bathrooms, the bright plastic teapots and Barbies with crew cuts that give her the pangs? Bathrooms are so fucken confronting she thought indulgently as she splashed cold water on her face. Twisted the old-fashioned Methven taps back, hard, because one kept dripping. Parted and re-parted her hair. Smoothed it twice, three times, then tied it back with a sparkly elastic band she pilfered from a stash in a jar on the shelf.

\*

**6.45am**

*Every hangover, after all, is a mystery; every hangover is a whodunit.*

There's a note on the kitchen blackboard, scrawled overtop of another note which had been rigorously and clumsily rubbed out.

*Frances - Help yourself to anything. Off to work. We Will Talk - tonight.*

The capitalisation of "We Will Talk" was somewhat threatening. About what? In her dream she'd seen people arguing, someone crying - and now she was becoming worried that maybe this dream event actually happened. The last thing she remembered was the neighbour coming over, just as they were getting into some intense conversation about the book. He offered them a sample of a new strand of hydroponic weed he was trialling, for his blog. He just needed some "opinion leaders" to share their feedback. A book club was the ideal focus group. Open to new ideas, able to articulate their thoughts clearly. He would record their comments on his phone. And it would be fun - that had been the plan. They wrote their reviews as haiku on the kitchen blackboard. Then started talking in haiku, she recalls.

*Ultra-heavy*

*indica delivering a*

*one-of-a-kind buzz*

*Sweet sedative, hugs*

*like a straitjacket fresh from*

*the dryer.*

★

Does liking liminal spaces make you less able to make decisions? What was it she had said or done? The faux-pas, she guessed, was linked somehow to the book they were discussing. She needed an Uber, soon, or she'd be late, in an obvious way. If she arrives during morning stand up, or just after, she'd be able to rock in, unnoticed. But right before the first tour group, in a rush – she was bound to be clocked by someone.

"This one cries; she has holes in her eyes. This one spits. You have to put them in cold water to see what happens to them." Reko lines up her LOL Surprise dolls along the bench. Frances glances at the row of pretty future landfill, murmurs *mmmmm*, and continues opening kitchen cupboards, looking for coffee and painkillers.

Reko holds one doll under the kitchen tap and waits.

"You peel away the plastic til you find your very own teeny tiny LOL Surprise inside the egg."

"I see."

"Read out the clue: this one says *Break A Leg!* It changes colour when it gets wet."

"Really?"

'I know 'cos I cheated. I love my girl. There are no boy ones."

Frances finds a jar of organic dandelion root coffee. No caffeine, but it will have to do.

Waits for the Uber to take her home to her car. Shuffles last night's Cards Against Humanity deck into a series of found poems she photographs then leaves on the kitchen table.

Maybe there will be time for a shower, and/or breakfast, if she's quick.

You better lose  
yourself in the music

The moment you own  
it, you better never  
let it go

You only get one shot,  
do not miss your  
chance for \_\_\_\_\_.

Arguing.

Losing custody

Fleeing the  
country.

Lowering your  
standards.

Microaggressions.

Asking to see  
the manager.

Livin' la vida loca.

Quality custom  
upholstery at  
unbeatable prices.

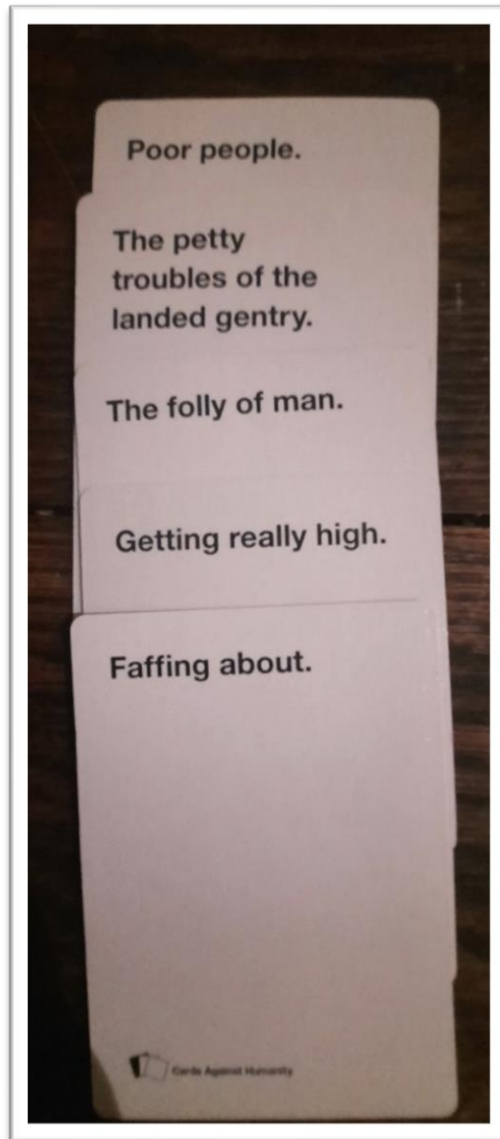
A meeting that  
could've been  
an email.

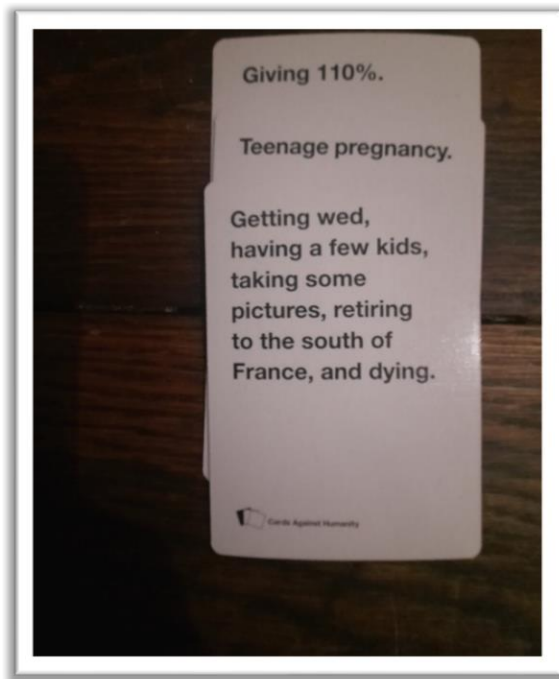
Looking at an  
infographic and  
saying "wow."

Big, smart money  
boys tap-tapping  
on their keyboards.

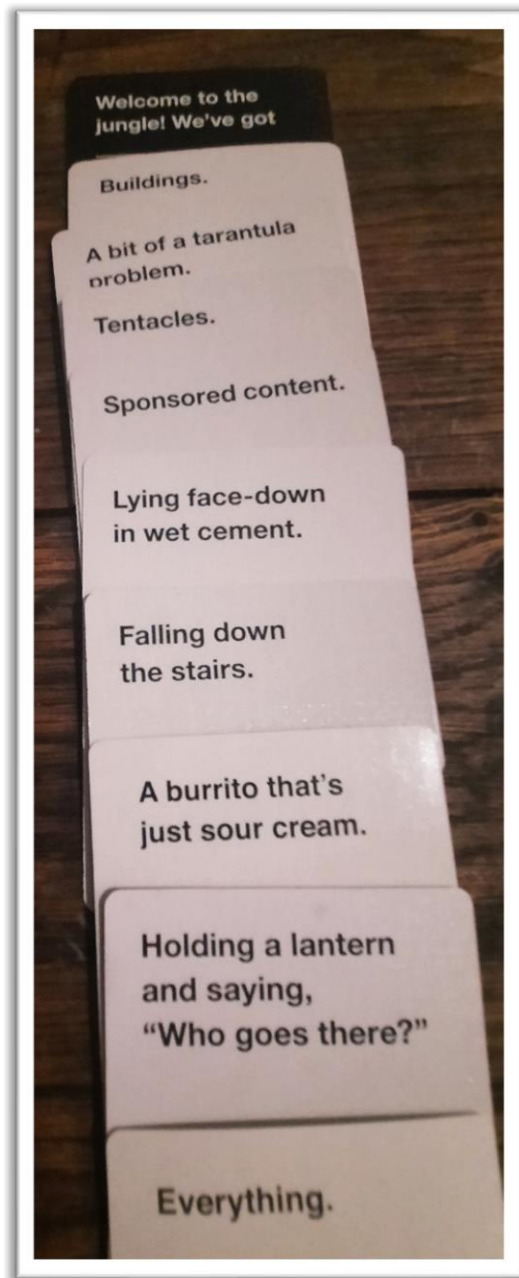
Systems and  
policies designed  
to preserve  
centuries-old  
power structures.

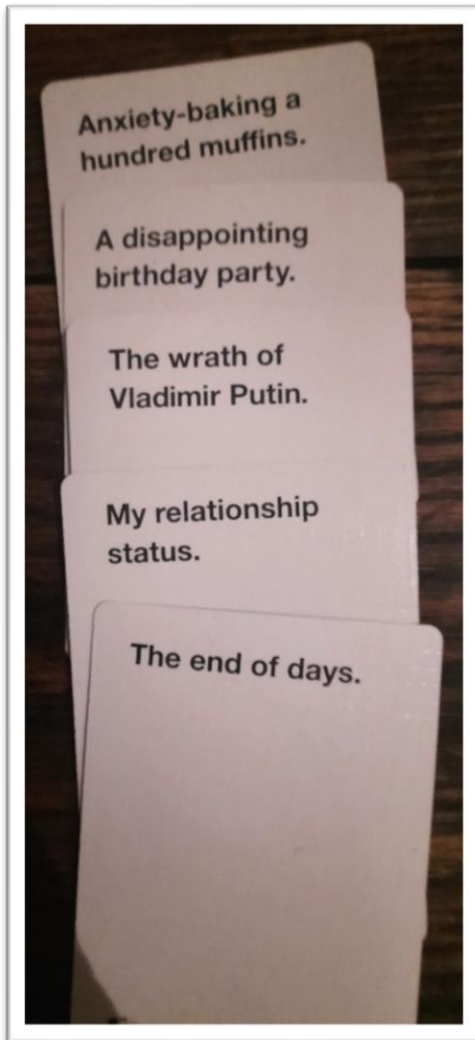
How strange it is to  
be anything at all

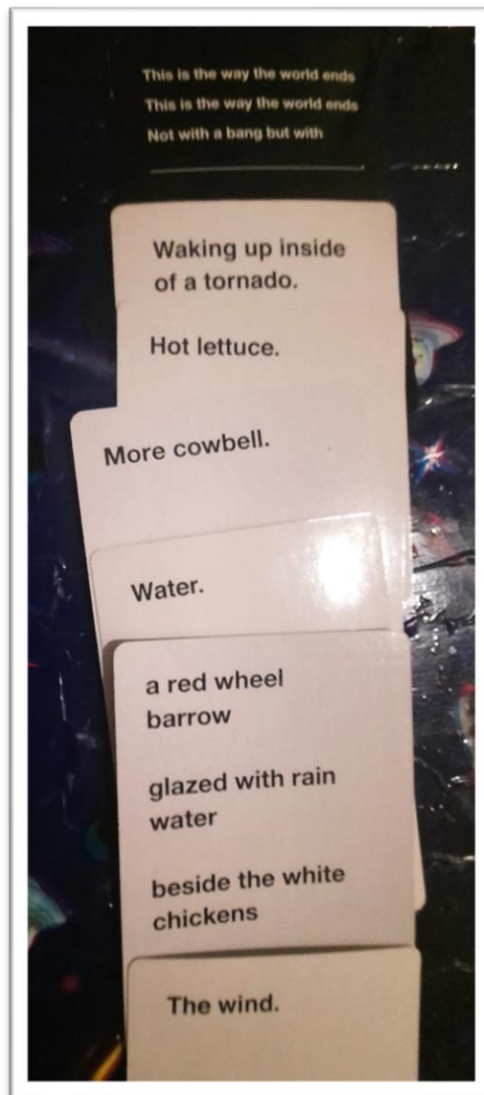


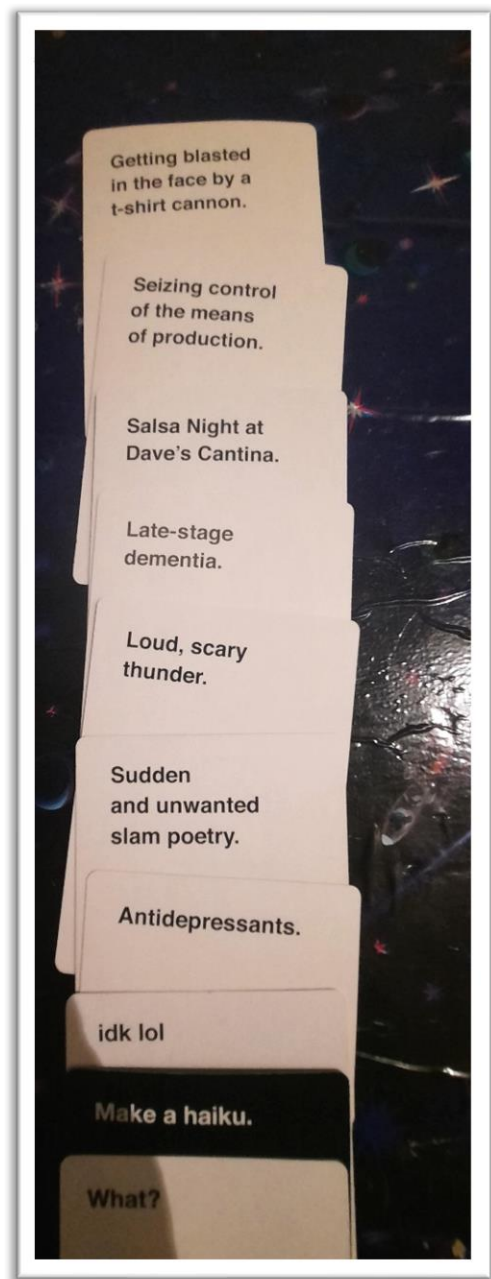












There's a thin layer of frost on the windscreen when she arrives back at the truck. Frances jams the key in the ignition, turns the engine on, cranks the heating, scrapes off a patch of ice on the driver's side with a credit card. En route to work, she eats probiotic yoghurt with mānuka honey and chia seeds she'd made yesterday, straight out of the Ezi-Yo container. It's daybreak, the announcer reminds her on Concert AM. Daybreak day, break. Break, break. There's a monarch at the traffic lights. Frances ponders the unseasonable, unreasonable amount of butterflies she's noticed lately. Wait, what? The indicators aren't working.

Now the indicators don't seem to go at all. Frances straightens her right arm out the window, into the cool air of a new day, every time she makes a right turn. The old Landrover rumbles around the coast, between the road cones. Christchurch has the most road cones of any city in the world. Each one costs around one hundred dollars. She knows this she because googled it once, on a road trip with friends. Cutting across the Canterbury Plains, heading back towards town, they spoke of the precariousness of existence in this place. How road cones punctuate the highways. New roads and detours appear daily. Google maps can't keep up.

This hand-action for indicating feels kind of antiquated and hokey, like she's in *Driving Miss Daisy*. Frances avoids left-hand turns and just continues straight ahead if possible, or speeds into each turn without indicating and then feels like a prat. This results in That Look

from a few people: the classic, palms raised, eyes rolling, what are you up to gesture.

She had three hours' sleep and hasn't yet had any proper coffee.

Frances switches to RNZ for the news. Puts her makeup on at the traffic lights. Thinks of all the people, all over the world, who put their makeup on at traffic lights. Or cry in the shower. Concealer is needed on a day like today. And mascara and a little bit of eyeliner, to make everything better. Your eyes look more alert, open. Clear-Eyes stops the redness. Hopefully, no one will be able to tell she's teary. And hungover, again. The Landrover rattles across yet another part of the road that's still being fixed from quake damage.

*The head of a task force proposing a major overhaul of the school system is aghast... they're setting up an alliance to fight the plans.*

Business News. Sports News. Competition in the fuel sector. Medicinal cannabis. Dryland carbon - growing trees to offset carbon emissions. It's a new era apparently, for tree growers. They're planting thousands of pines in Taranaki, in Tairāwhiti...

*Pines* is another of those words that give her pangs. She could write a whole glossary. Something about how they sound like what they are, or what they do. And that Nirvana tune, ... *in the pines, in the **pines**, where the sun don't ever shine – I'd shiver... the whole... niiiiiiiiight through...*

Brexit shambles. She must remember to sneak this spoon back into the cutlery drawer tonight, or Zach will be mad. He keeps a close audit on the spoons in their flat. Past Red Cliffs, she can see they're making the sea-wall higher. And building a proper cycleway. She imagines this could all be canals one day - like Venice. Or maybe they will build a big dyke to keep the ocean 'at bay'. Or this part of Christchurch will all be little atolls, connected with a monorail. Lots of dykes and bridges, linkages as the sea level rises, rises

*... tell me where did you sleep last night?*

Now she's listening to an interview with a Syrian migrant. It's been eight years. Eight years since the Syrian Army first started shooting at civilians. *Out of nowhere, your whole childhood has been set on fire. That is quite hard to process.* The Ides of March just passed. Today, lots of students are striking, taking to the streets to demand action on climate change. There may not be many who come to the gallery, for the pre-booked tour. Paula Bennett and Sue Bradford discuss violence against MPs. *It's a really unfortunate development in New Zealand politics...* Experiences of verbal attacks and threats, when the anti-smacking bill was getting passed. *I want to be able to go to the supermarket and walk to work in the morning, and I'm going to hold onto that.* It's getting harder for Wellingtonians to get house insurance. And for those who live on the coast. There's an interview with the mayor, who was a friend of Frances at uni. They used to have great dress-up parties at their flat on Hyde or was it Clyde St? These days, parties still end up in the kitchen, she muses. Down Brougham St, she's stuck behind a series of trucks in every lane. Going both ways. Imported cars. QR-coded logs. Pines, she guessed. To get shipped

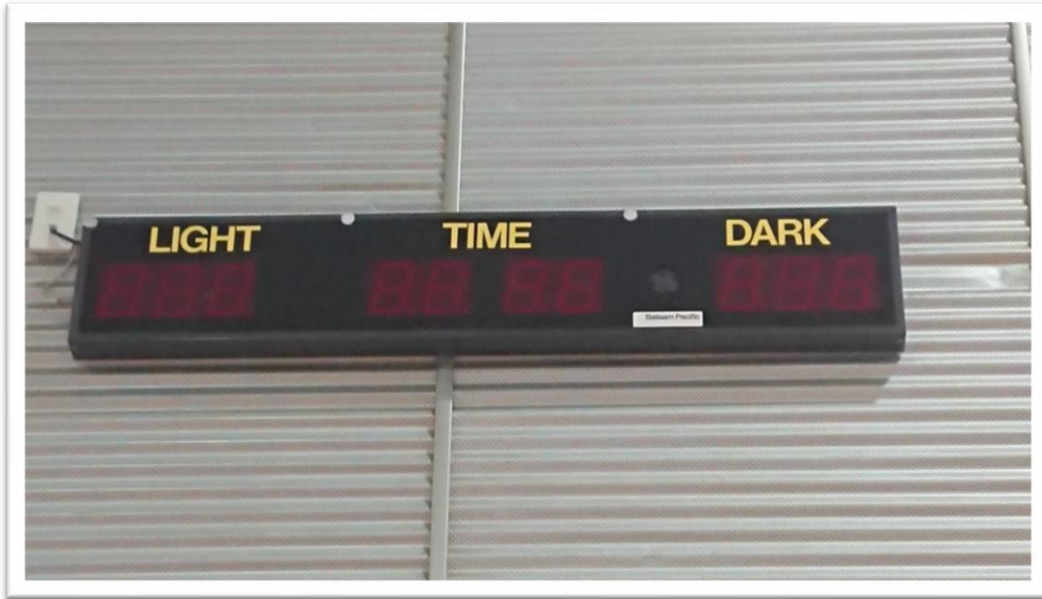
offshore and sent back to us as cheap furniture. There's more talk of schools campaigning against some upcoming educational reforms. (How about they tell corporates and politicians to go and work somewhere new every five years?, she wonders. Shifting teachers around schools according to need, to keep 'fresh blood' flowing and old wood from rotting, seems to be the plan. She thinks of her own job-hopping history, how she tends to move on from one role to the next in two-year cycles.)

Space Tourism and Elon Musk. Rocket Lab isn't backing it though. They've got better things to do in Māhia. Science-based, rather than the tourist dollar the States sounds like they're angling for. They're also predicting thousands of kids will turn up to the protest today. Good on them, Frances reckons. Her colleague's son Raf had made the best banner she's seen yet on social media: *"I was going to tidy my room but I decided to save the planet instead."*

**8.35am**

The beetle sheen of her nail gel catches the light as Frances punches the plate number into the machine. Car parking and the Nor-wester are both right up there on her list of things that can set her day off-kilter. She loathes having to pay the company that turned the rubble into overpriced car parks all over the CBD. Adding meters and little white fences to cleared bare earth, they were quick to extend their empire in the post-quake city.

She knows a back way to get into her office, discreetly. Through an old warehouse that's been transformed into a rec centre for rangitahi. Ducking under the gym's half-open roller door, she glances up at the court sign staring down at her:



★

Frances makes a capsule coffee in the kitchen, opens the gallery door on the left-hand side so it won't squeak and reveal her late entrance to staff stand up. In her mind, the words keep rolling and turning *light time dark time light....*

Grace Dalton, with a short new haircut, casts her glance around the office.

"Ata m̄rie everyone. Three school bookings and a Japanese tour group today. And we're in the last week of the Stoddard exhibition. Malcolm is still away - our thoughts are with him for a speedy recovery. Verity is also away today - we think some people may have reacted to the flu vaccination so watch this space and please look after yourselves. Vitamin C, people! We don't know how big the school groups will be, because it's the Students Climate Crisis protest today too. Frances, you're across it though, aren't you?"

Frances nods, distracted. There's a missed call from an unknown number on her phone.

★

**8.55am**

The meeting winds up and Frances wonders when she can take another Panadol. The whole argument last night was quite probably more all about her. Frances had said or done something inappropriate around a group of semi-strangers. She needed to take

responsibility. She sits down at her desk. Stares at the number of the missed call. Dials.

"Hello, it's Frances here. I see I have a missed call from this number?"

A pause.

"Hello, yes, Frances. This is Seraphine, from Book Club. You crashed out pretty wasted last night. Reko's home with Rania, did you see them this morning?"

Grace nudges her. "Device away thanks, Frances. First tour due in about five minutes."

"I saw Reko. Cool kid. Look, I'm sorry I'll have to call you back later for a catch up. My boss is here. I just wanted to check that –"

"Frances, I'm glad you called. Yes, I think we should catch up tonight." Seraphine's tone is oblique, unfathomable.

Frances gathers up her lanyard, clipboard, pile of Moemoea Moana /

Ocean Dreaming: EXPERIMENTS IN CREATIVE WRITING workbooks and a fistful of green pens.

What does the hand with the star shape mean to you? What is it reaching for? Can you see a boat? A sea creature? Pick a section to respond to, in images or words.

\*

Tuvalu, a small country in the Pacific Ocean. The people there are worried that the sea is rising because of climate change, and one day soon it might reach their homes. The figure in this work is the artist. What do you notice about how she is standing? What else can you see? Listen carefully. What sounds can you hear? What does the title remind you of?

Use your notes to write a response to this artwork.

Frances gathers yesterday's responses, attaching them with masking tape to the wall next to the photograph of a woman, standing in the ocean, arms reaching

I.

Around twenty-five thousand islands  
waters, moving. Cling  
to this coral, in prayer.

II.

I am standing,  
not swimming. Reaching  
for light, oxygen.

III.

Water bubbles like  
an archipelago of tiny islands  
rising, resisting

IV.

The ocean whirls  
in the autumn winds.  
I am scared of disappearing

Notice the use of green in this artwork. How is contrast and contour used? What time of day do you think it is in this painting and how do you know? Use your words to describe the artwork, showing rather than telling what part of day it is.

Describe a place you have been on holiday. Were there trees? Hills? A beach or river? Did you stay in a house or a tent? Include all the details that you can remember.

\*

**12.11pm**

In the gap between tours, Frances signs out and drives the Landrover to Bruce on St

Asaph St, so he can have a look at what's wrong with the indicators. He says he can fix them, and he'll give it a service. She decides to bus back to the gallery, rather than Uber because she's trying to save money. Wants to move out of the flat, get a place of her own. She has a little time until she's guiding again, and it's a mellow day in town. When she sees the City Mission store is open, she walks in.

There's a pervasive sadness here, Frances thinks. She ponders all the objects that end up in second hand stores - each containing their own story of loss and abandonment. Diet books, recipe books, pregnancy books, baby name books, Dan Brown, *Eat Pray Love*, foot baths, ab rockers, tea light candles and their holders, oil burners, incense burners. All those things that speak of former ambitions, dreams, lifestyles, desires. Now seeking new homes, new owners.

She's reminded of going to the dump as a child. It was the height of fun, going to the dump with Mum. The sweet sickly fermenting smell; like silage. Swooping seagulls keening. The beautiful horror of it all. The beginnings and endings, life and death feeling. All that once-loved, once-useful stuff piled up (such giant piles!), relegated to waste. To fester and be squashed together with other old dolls, toys, shoes, clothes, prams, appliances, mattresses, axes, sewing machines, kettles and cords - waiting to be covered over with dirt. Some of the rugby fields where her brothers played every Saturday were old landfill sites. On the way home, after she and her mother had thrown all the stuff off their trailer onto the dump pile to wait for the bulldozer to come, she'd stare at the towering stacks of flattened cars like strange layer cakes.

She forces herself to bypass the vintage orange and white covered Penguin books and the game of Twister as she is definitely moving out so doesn't need more stuff. It's just stuff. Possessions. She's in a cleansing phase – *get rid, get rid, get rid*. Marie Kondo, etc. She wants to find a place of her own.

Three finds "spark joy" so must be purchased: a vintage tea towel, never used, celebrating the marriage of Lady Di and Prince Charles in July 1981 - the year she was born. An orange dressing gown and some German sandals she thinks will be good for work. Never worn: Rieker brand, *'AntiStress' Obermaterial und Decksohle echt leder*. \$12 for everything. There's a couple in there as well, bantering over the jewellery beneath the glass counter. The older man is going to buy his partner a gold necklace. Frances has a little heart pang. They're so clearly, deeply in love and have been for decades.

When was she going to have this 'talk'? Should she call? Had she said something to or about one of the couples or partners? Hopefully not. She would never say those out loud, surely. But when she couldn't remember how the night ended, there was a chance what she did or said was something quite different to her actions and dialogue when sober.

How gnarly was that hydroponic anyway? Why did she think it was a good idea to try it? Why did any of them? Book Club had been going well until then. Jek had an interesting perspective on the book's 'grief work' anyway. *Light time dark time light....*

★

Frances loves Christchurch buses. The system has really been souped up, post-quake. She waits for three minutes in the soft rain, then the bus swoops in and soon Frances is sitting looking out the window, listening to all the different languages being spoken around her, as they zip along to the Interchange. It feels like she's in Switzerland, everything's so slick and efficient.

Frances hasn't bussed this route before, so she follows the journey on Google maps on her phone, making sure she'll be back in time. Checks TradeMe Property for apartments and townhouses. Wonders when she'll find her own place. Google maps shows a red line around Cathedral Square, so Frances walks the last stretch, baptised in a Schweppes-mist of rain, texting her friend Matti on the way. *Look forward to seeing you later – it's been too long.* Matti's having a barbecue tonight, with some of her yummy mummy friends that Frances doesn't really like, but she'll still go along and have a wine, talk about their Big Plans. Frances needs to talk to someone about what may or may not have unfolded last night.

A petrichor aroma rises from the city streets, misty with fresh Southerly rain.

Soon she's amid a throng of activists and agitators, parents and grandparents, police, teachers, MPs and councillors listening to the series of young people taking turns with the loudspeaker.

*CLIMATE CHANGE IS PACIFIC GENOCIDE.*

*We demand that the leaders of today ensure us a safe future.*

*We are not drowning, we are fighting.*

*THE OCEANS ARE RISING AND SO ARE WE.*

A girl in a blue jacket and ripped jeans, with long dark hair wet from the rain, steps up.

"My name's Telesia and I'm striking because I want our people to have homes to go back to. Our house is on fire. What I fight for is what I stand on. I'm scared my children won't be able to stand on my ancestors' land.

How can I have a family and plan for the future when climate change is already being felt and is just getting worse?

This is our call for indigenous rights for all climate policy, and an immediate end to fossil fuel exploration and extraction".

Students in lavalava, students in school uniform, students in tie-dye and Doc Martens, raising their banners, calling for action.

"We've only got one planet. Nothing else could be more important. Around the world,

millions of people are asking for their governments to take urgent action on the climate”.

Frances scans the signs. Maybe Raf is here with his mum?

CLIMATE ACTION IS LIKE MY HOMEWORK: IT'S OVERDUE.

STOP UPSETTING SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH. HE'S TOO OLD FOR THIS SHIT.

“In Aotearoa we can see already the effects of a changing climate on Papatūānuku. Our whanaunga all over the Pacific prepare for drastic and irreparable losses at the hands of corporate greed and unsustainable practice. We see youth, especially indigenous youth, leading the way towards a liveable future. We imagine what the world might look like if we come together, bound by the vast ocean, to create a world that is safe for our own mokopuna”.

LIAR, LIAR, EARTH'S ON FIRE

DON'T BE A FOSSIL FOOL

IF YOU DID YOUR JOB, I'D BE AT MINE.

“Today, across Aotearoa, youth are striking for the climate. More than keep cups and trees, we want our government to be held accountable. We want our government to take drastic action on climate change. Today the youth of School Strike 4 Climate NZ invite

adults and whānau to join. Please join us. Your voice matters. HE ORA MŌ ĀPOPO."

Frances stands on the margins. As the main part of the protest comes to an end, groups of young people take to the inner-city streets with their message. The placard with "SEE Y'ALL UNDER WATER I GUESS" bobs along above the rest. The crowd begins to disperse. Police start asking the stragglers to leave.

"What's happened?" Frances asks. "They were only protesting peacefully –"

"There's been an incident across town. We're asking people to head home, to move on."

Frances hurries across the Avon bridge on Worcester Boulevard. She hears sirens to both the east and west. A police car screams through the intersection on Cambridge Terrace as an ambulance heads in the opposite direction. Soon she's walking fast beside the girl in the blue jacket. "Great job today; powerful speech," she offers.

"Thank you. E tū! Stand proud!" She gives the peace sign, smiles.

Frances signs back in at the gallery. Wonders if they ever go back through all the data and analyse who goes out when, and how often? Who's always late, or leaving early? Do they keep the statistics? Would anyone notice her ninety-minute lunch break? She watches as the girl in the blue jacket leans her placard against the foyer wall then disappears into the bathroom. Grace is at the front desk, on the phone.

The foyer is buzzing with a busload of Japanese tourists – her two-o’clock tour. Just three more hours, then she can see if Matti can take her to pick up her car. She makes another capsule coffee, leaves her handbag at the coat check and gathers up her laptop.

Frances takes the stairs towards the first floor. She’s balancing the laptop and coffee awkwardly at the entrance to the Watercolours Collection when Grace nearly walks into her.

“That was the police. There’s an active shooter near South Hagley Park. We’re going into lockdown. You need to go to the back office now.”

Frances turns around and starts back down the stairs, her eyes on the Hotere lithograph directly across from her. Titled *Pathway to the Sea – Aramoana*, it features three wine glasses, sunset and sunrise – things Hotere and his friend Bill Culbert would have enjoyed together at that small settlement on Otago Peninsula, where they both protested against the building of an aluminium smelter in the eighties. As she crosses towards the back office, she sees the tourists being herded into the auditorium, Grace corralling them in calm tones. Frances taps Grace lightly on her arm. “There’s someone in the bathroom. A young person. I’ll bring them with me.”

Frances strides past the wide glass entrance doors which have now been disabled. It’s strange not to see them open with a welcoming *whoosh* as she passes. The girl in the blue jacket is picking up her sign at the same time as checking her phone. “Excuse me, Telesia?

We sort of met at the march. I'm Frances, Gallery Guide. We've just been alerted that we are going into lockdown so could you please come with me? Our policy is to move away from the windows and doors, and shelter in place in the nearest room. If you could follow me –"

Telesia nods. "Oh, ok. Can't I leave?"

"I'm afraid not. It's safest for us to be in the back office now. Just come with me."

In the office, Frances slides into her chair at her desk and shows Telesia to the one next to hers. "Have you heard?" Frances asks her colleagues. They tell her yes. They realise they can't hear the lockdown siren in the workroom, so they all start checking emails, the internet.

**2.11pm**

Niko, the new guy from Accounts, starts reading the updates aloud.

"Police confirm they are attending an 'evolving situation' in Christchurch after an incident near Hagley Park.

Gunshots have been heard in the area outside the mosque on Deans Ave.

A witness reports hearing at least 20 gunshots and seeing what she thought was three

people on the ground.”

**2.17pm**

A number of schools and municipal buildings have gone into lockdown in Christchurch as people have been seen leaving the mosque covered in blood. Police are setting up cordons in the centre of the city where there are reports of people in the streets who have been shot.

From: Grace Dalton

Fri 15/03, 2:21 p.m.

**All\_Staff**

Inbox

The gallery has been requested to go into lockdown because of an incident nearby. Please continue to monitor your email for regular updates. Ensure that noise and movement is kept to an absolute minimum and ensure that doors and windows are locked, and lights switched off.

Should an emergency occur in your room, please advise a member of the leadership team on their mobile immediately.

You will be advised physically of an all-clear. Do not come out of lockdown until this occurs.

**Please reply to this email**

Ngā mihi,

Grace Dalton

DIRECTOR

From: Campbell Taylor

Fri 15/03/2019 2:31 p.m.

To: **All Staff**

Inbox

Auditorium outside door is still open

From: Frith Sutton

Fri 15/03/2019 2:35 p.m.

To: **All Staff**

Inbox

Please reply that you are all fine, please remain in the middle of your room. We will advise of any updates as they come.

Frith

From: Tori Radcliffe

Fri 15/03/2019 2:38 p.m.

To:

Frith;

**All Staff**

Inbox

Me here in the Gift Shop. With guests. We're all good.

From: Ata Dunbar

Fri 15/03, 2:40 p.m.

I'm in the Eileen Mayo exhibition with two visitors. 🤖

Sent from my iPhone

From: Grace Dalton

Reply all

Fri 15/03/2019 2:51 p.m.

To:

**All\_Staff**

Inbox

All Christchurch council buildings are currently in lockdown. We need to await police direction. Please continue to keep guests calm and quiet.

Ngā mihi,

Grace Dalton

DIRECTOR

**2.54pm**

*Police Commissioner Mike Bush says the situation is "serious and evolving" and involves an active shooter.*

*Bush also urges people to stay off the streets in Christchurch and remain indoors.*

*The Canterbury District Health Board has activated its mass casualty plan.*

*All other buildings on the hospital grounds are in lockdown and the public asked not go to the hospital unless it is an emergency.*

From: Grace Dalton

Reply all

Fri 15/03/2019 2:55 p.m.

To:

**All\_Staff**

Inbox

Please do not release guests to the toilet – we need to follow the instructions and keep everyone safe.

**3.20pm**

*Christchurch Mayor says she is 'shocked beyond words' at the events.*

*'I would never have expected anything like this to happen in Christchurch, I'd never expect this to happen in New Zealand,' she says.*

**Continuing situation**

From: Soran Yves

Fri 15/03/2019 3:30 p.m.

Hi all,

There are a number of guests who have been/are currently 'live' on social media. Please discourage this from happening in your rooms.

Thanks!

**4.00pm**

*Police commissioner Mike Bush confirms one person is in custody but warns the people of Christchurch there may be others who pose a risk to their safety.*

*Bush also asks for Muslims across New Zealand to stay away from their local mosque.*

*'We understand that there will be many anxious people but I can assure New Zealanders that Police is doing all it can to resolve this incident,' he says. The Officials Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination - commonly referred to as ODESC - is meeting at Police National Headquarters in Wellington in response to the shooting.*

\*

For a while, they sit at their desks and look at their computer screens. Over by the window, Niko taps nervously on his keyboard. Beside him, Lisa scrolls on her phone. At the far end of the office, Josephine turns slowly in her chair. She always has great shoes. Today they're black and green boots - purchased in Tokyo, on annual leave. Josephine travelled over there, to see about an old flame. To figure out if there was potential to rekindle. The guy was teaching as part of the JET programme. Their love didn't translate into a new narrative ten years on, but she did get some great new footwear out of the trip.

"Are we meant to get under the desks?" Frances asks. A pause.

"Well this isn't a drill..."

"It's not an earthquake!"

"But we're meant to get into the middle of the room, away from the windows..."

"We're on the second floor, at the back of the building, I mean..."

"I suppose so."

"I'm getting under the desk now."

Once Lisa had done it, they all felt they had to. Frances pushes her laptop bag against a table leg and leans on it. Telesia lies down with her stomach on the carpet. She's been texting her friends, but her phone is almost flat.

"Are they ok?" Frances asks.

"Yes. Some of my friend group went home after the march. Others are in the library at school. Some in the school gym, where they were meant to be rehearsing for Polyfest tomorrow. They can't believe I'm trapped in the gallery. A lot of them are on Insta, but I'm not looking."

Frances reaches up and grabs the laptop off her desk and plugs her phone into its usb port. She charges Telesia's phone too. There's the *thud thud thud* of helicopters flying low, overhead.

She was going to continue curating responses to the *Green* tour, but finds she has forgotten her password to log in. She tries all the passwords she can remember using in recent times. What was it?

Check\_Check\_1212

Checkcheck1212

Checkbabycheckbaby123

Everythingisawesome2019

None of her passwords work.

\*

A flashback. Frances remembers following Jek into the kitchen to get more wine and somehow, they kissed. Seraphine's partner. A rush of blood. Saying stupid things like *You*

*remind me of someone.* Something to do with that stance, shoulders squared, arms slightly out... those eloquent wrists. Frances was not herself, or her current self anyway, more like her younger self, as she pulled Jek towards her, behind the open pantry door, as she backed into the spice rack. Earth-sweet scent of cardamom and cinnamon dust. Calculatedly going back to the party separately. Pouring wine after wine to blot out the shame and replace it with something else, something red and

MOE info about supporting young people post lock down .

Seen by everyone

Chat Conversation End

Type a message, @name...

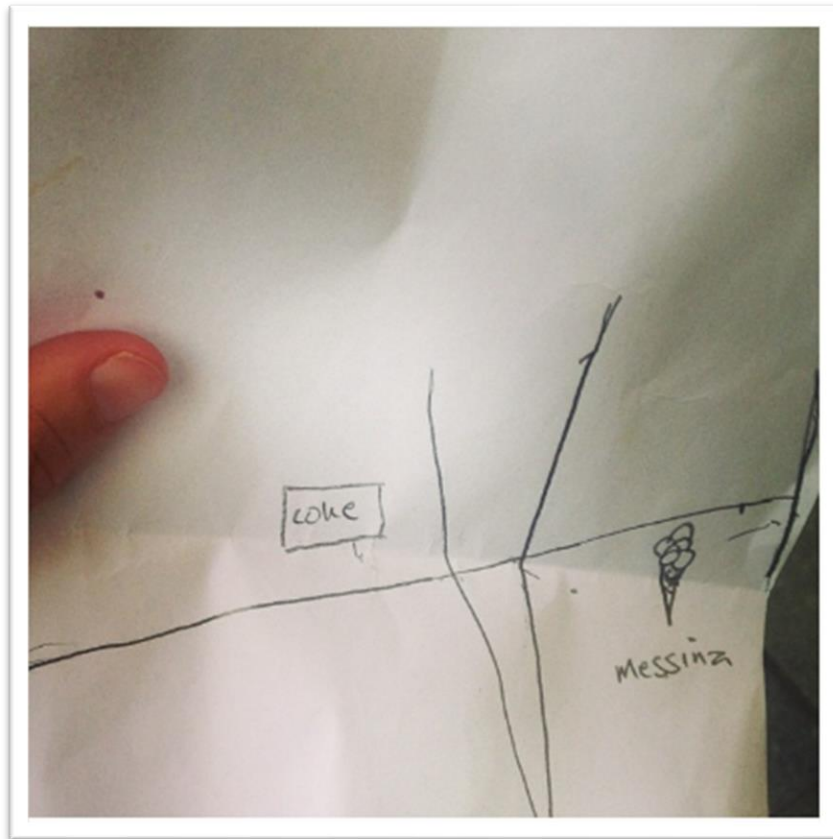
\*

Jek reminded her of Max. The street artist she befriended through organising a launch of his artworks when she was Event Coordinator at a Sydney gallery. They'd conversed over hundreds of emails. Professionally at first. He agreed to the exhibition as long as his identity wouldn't be revealed, and he could attend incognito, like Banksy. Which Frances had thought was kind of wanky. Afterwards, their communication continued. The night of the opening, a connection sparked between them. She'd felt an energy shift every time she was near him. It wasn't particularly romantic; it was something else. After the art party, she invited him for a drink at a tapas bar down a quiet side street by Hyde Park. With paint peeling off its art deco facade, the bar felt like a secret. Low lit interior, all velvet and gold and crimson, which gave Frances the feeling she was inside the human body. She said this

to him. Someone was singing an acoustic cover of *All Apologies*, drawn out and sultry.  
The night unfolded something inside her unfolded

**Sydney, years ago**







They took their drinks to the corner booth. Her cocktail, his mocktail. Nestled into velour upholstery with those Winchester buttons she liked. She was aware of a sort of shared marvel at the occasion. His exhibition had sold out, a lot of the city's art darlings had turned up, he'd touched her shoulder and said *thank you for making it all happen*.

*It's all happening* she replied, quoting Penny Lane in *Almost Famous*.

When he replied *Rock n roll*, she knew he was quoting Sean Bateman and that this was the beginning of an ongoing game in which they would speak in song lyrics and movie lines for the rest of the night, maybe longer –

Frances traced her fingers over the lines someone has carved into the wooden table: *Live East, Die Young*. Max removed the straw from her drink. *You should say no to straws. Plastic kills.*

*I know. I should have said hold the straw. This is the last straw! But really, it's the fishing industry killing our oceans, way worse than a billion straws floating around...*

Several whisky sours later, they were walking through the park towards a dress-up potluck at an apartment uptown. They stopped for a spliff under the Offerings of Peace statue; a huge bronze stallion with a rider carrying the Greek Tragedy and Comedy masks.

Opposite them stood the Offerings Of War; a similar figure on a horse carrying a bundle of swords and broken spears. Folding the dusty green leaves into the wing-thin paper, Frances read the inscription aloud: *The Real and Lasting Victories Are Those of Peace and Not of War*. Inhaled the dank, beefed up basil scent of the dak. Passed the joint to Max. Leaned back, beneath the peace warrior's bare left foot.



Max didn't have an outfit for her friends' dress-up party, so they fashioned one en route. The theme was 'disguise' so he wore a headpiece made of stolen greenery: twigs ripped from hedges; garlands of jacaranda (the dream tree) and Illawarra flame flowers they clambered over courtyard fences and ran through dark city parks to collect. They pierced the stems with a pen, then looped, knotted and stitched a veiled crown together with hair ties and tights.

At the after after party, out on the balcony, in a haze of 3am, serotonin-drenched over-sharing, Frances gushed *I'm on a two-year waiting list for a sperm donor. By the time my name gets to the top, it might be too late. The wait is longer in New Zealand. It's one of the main reasons I moved here. For my chance to be a single mum by choice. Aka a Choice Mum!* Frances was surprised when Max replied *I'd be open to that. Helping you out. Talking about it in a more sober setting, anyway. Obviously, no one could ever know.* Frances nodded. They leaned a little closer, conspiring –

But then someone else came out onto the balcony and they were swept up in another conversation, another round in the fug of the heat wave still soft on your skin at 12am... Mingled with night creatures dressed as Carmen Sandiago, Scooby Doo villains and *Eyes Wide Shut* extras. Corralled and caroused, bantered and boozed alongside face-painted pixies and minxes, divas in wigs, wrestling masks, horse head masks, president masks, plague doctor masks, Venetian masks, balaclavas, and morph suits. Discovered they both liked Pollock's art but not his arseholeness. Debated the extent to which a separation between the art and the person should be a thing. Made vague plans to go up the coast someday soon, to stop at the beach where *Home & Away* was filmed then drive to Newcastle where he was from, to the Float Centre for hypno-floating or sensory deprivation. To be suspended in silence, to just breathe and f l o a t ...

Down, down, downtown, where the bollards are thick with flyers for gigs, collapsed in the coat check of a hidden alley club (that place where you have to press the buzzer and enter a special code like this is some kind of modern-day Prohibition dive) the two of them

entwined like a glove as coats and jackets and scarves pile up: oblivious bliss and this and this and this – new skin feeling. Stamps on wrists. *Gold shadows flash*. Distant thud of drum n bass. *This could be the wardrobe to Narnia. No wait, this jacket feels like Falcor from The Neverending Story*. Or maybe they've both folded into the index of an ancient book in that Library of Babel. Later they'll wake up, walk out – take a long time to get home, stumbling and laughing as a murmur of starlings swirl around streetlights – but for now, this is perhaps perhaps *the first day of love*.

There was somehow an agreement to share a cab to her place to sleep it off. He had to go to an interview the next morning, and since they'd been talking about gelato, he left her a map of how to get to the best gelato place in town: *Messina*. On her way back to work, her t-shirt turned inside out and a new neckline cut with scissors so it didn't look totally like she was still in last night's clothes, she made some street art of her own. Turning her gelato cone upside down, she made *The Offerings of War* horse into a unicorn.

\*

*I'm the artist form*

*-erly known as MaXXX's*

*(ex) baby mama*

The haiku, she remembered now, she'd written on the blackboard in Seraphine's kitchen. Frances initially thought she'd rubbed it off straight after she drunkenly scribed it, but when she went searching for a glass of milk in the middle of the night, she saw the words were still legible through the smeary residue left by the duster.

Maxxx had changed his name now, become a piece of art: a brand. She didn't know how to contact him. She knew he had a partner. After the night of the opening, they'd messaged back and forth for a while, planning to meet up. A heat wave went on for days, then weeks that summer, which somehow became a reason for people to behave unusually. A month or so later, when they finally organized to go back to that secret club where they'd fallen asleep in a pile of coats, Frances was dating someone she'd met online. A thin blue chimera on the plastic pregnancy stick made her feel happy and sick and indecisive. She didn't go back to the club. She went to a show with her online date instead. Kept what the blue line signified to herself. Herself and herself alone, with no one influencing her decision. Yearned for space; to lie down in some long grass and stare at the sky and figure things out but –

The decision was taken out of her hands when one morning, she started bleeding. Patchy spots, mild cramps at first. She used some tissues in lieu of sanitary products (it wasn't that time of the month, there were none in her handbag), googled "spotting" and "signs of miscarriage", carried on with archiving woodcuts in the back room. The cramps got worse. Frances sought out the darkest room in the gallery. Stopped at Douglas Gordon's *Phantom 2011* installation. Sat on the floor, against the wall, knees curled to her chest,

remembering what her grandmother used to say *Scrubbing floors is the best cure for stomach cramps. If you want the pain to go away my love, get on your knees and scrub.*

With her eyeliner, she began to draw. A sketch of Gordon's video still from Rufus Wainwright's *All Days Are Nights, songs for Lulu in kohl.*

The tragedy of a Steiner piano on fire dragged hot tears unexpectedly down her cheeks as the sonata played on repeat: *You can't be the one...*

Back at her flat, she took two codeine, went to bed with a wheat bag and an audiobook; the possibly poor choice of Didion's *Play It As It Lays*. Soon the only place she felt ok was sitting down in the shower, holding the nozzle over the stabbing sensation in her abdomen. Rummaging in her flatmate's medicine cabinet she found some old tramadol which helped for a few hours. She spent the night back and forth between the shower and bed. At some stage she flushed a gush of clots down the toilet. She called A&E in the morning.

Frances waited half a day at the clinic as people came in after Saturday night accidents and farm injuries, with broken limbs or sick kids. The disinfectant scent and fluorescent light and moaning and snot and coughing and tweets and hashtags and ragged tabloids:

#bringbackourgirls / TAY TAY / #blessed / KIM K'S BUTT BREAKS THE INTERNET / #sobyronithurts / SOCHI'S OLYMPICS ARE A JOKE / #killingit / HOUSING PRICE HIKES /

BREAKTHROUGHS IN AI / #IliketheInternetversionofyoubetter / NAKED SELFIE HACKER  
SCANDAL / *Mum, mum, mummmm make it stop make it stop make it go away /*  
#wecouldbepharaohsjustforoneday / #Tansuit / #WhyIStayed / EMINEM SUES NZ  
NATIONAL PARTY / MILEY SENDS HOMELESS GUY ONSTAGE/ EVERYTHING'S A REMIX /  
DOOMSDAY PREPPERS EXTREME PREP EDITION: It's all gonna hit the fan /  
#fuckfashionletsdance

made her feel worse. A woman, face bleeding, was brought in by two cops. One male, one female. (A friend in the force had told her once they always did that. Were sure to put the women in to crisis situations, for their more calming presence). *Fucken pigs get away from me*, the woman was sobbing. Frances let the nurse know she'd be waiting outside on the grass. Lying down, breathing in the cool damp of the green lawn, looking up at the clouds rolling in from the west, helped to ease the pain. She lay like this for a long time, until it was her turn.

"It's all part of the hideousness of womanhood", the nurse said as she assessed her.

"Do you think it all came out? If there's infected matter, I may be able to pull it out", the young doctor who looked like Doogie Howser informed her. Frances stored these details away to tell Max later. Much later. Someday. He would appreciate the grotesque humour of it all, when the time was right and they were talking and laughing like normal again. He was housesitting in Newy soon, he said. We could stay there a few days, read magazines on the beach, then drive on to Byron Bay, maybe. *That's a cool place to be creative* he told

her. *We could swim in the tea tree lake. Soak all that goodness in.*

"How am I supposed to know," she groaned as the locum searched for any *retained products of conception* with surgical-gloved fingers while she lay, legs splayed on the gurney. She learnt a day later –

**A dilation and curettage** procedure, also called a D&C, is a surgical procedure in which the cervix (lower, narrow part of the uterus) is dilated (expanded) so that the uterine lining (endometrium) can be scraped with a curette (spoon-shaped instrument) to remove abnormal tissues.

\*

The day after, she lay on the sofa and then outside on the veranda all day. Heard the crows' keening and keening on the telephone wires; a noise that sounded like a cross between a cat's meow and a dying baby. Or maybe it sounds like crying baby, waking up, Frances thought. The sound of a dying baby is silent.

She watched out the window as joggers wearing Lululemon and headphones pounded the footpath under eucalyptus trees. Then commuters in power suits, designer sunglasses and sneakers they'd change out of later, at the office. Schoolkids in twos and threes, walking closely, so close, with gangly ease. Laughing and taking the mickey. So playfully –

From her prone position on the veranda swing seat, scrolling on her phone, Frances gradually planned a new school tour for the gallery. The idea was for students to respond to the use of *green* in various paintings, remembering that Neruda always wrote in green ink, because for him that was the colour of hope. Frances didn't mention the procedure to her flatmate, saying she was away at a conference for three days. Her flatmate seemed to know something had happened. But didn't ask, and Frances didn't tell.

A few weeks later, Frances returned to the hospital to collect the 'human tissue' she had elected to keep. The collection point was on the Lower Ground floor. Down a long corridor, she had to walk past doors labelled Print and Mail and Mortuary before finding the Acacia Room. Here, she was given a little envelope with a leaf pattern on it and was told she was *welcome to sit here for a while if you like*. She didn't sit. She took the little packet and buried it under the apple tree at her flat. Offered a name, in her head, which she would never say aloud: *Lou*.

★

**4.16pm**

Beside her, Telesia recites the prayer she knows by heart.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace*

*where there is hatred, let me sow love*

Frances is aware again of the hollow, sinking feeling in her stomach.

*where there is injury, pardon*

*where there is doubt, faith*

The sinking feeling spreads to her chest, then shoulders.

*where there is despair, hope;*

*where there is darkness, light;*

*where there is sadness, joy.*

Frances shuffles.

*– grant that I may not so much seek*

*to be consoled as to console,*

*to be understood as to understand,*

*to be loved as to love...*

5.55pm

Google



Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

She is searching...

\*

She remembers she hadn't eaten anything since the yoghurt this morning. There will be others who are hungry too, she thinks. And who need the bathroom. *If there's no way to go to the loo, I'm getting a bucket* she texts Grace, her boss. *There are people in my office that could use some creature comforts.*

"I'm going to the cleaning cupboard. For supplies", Frances announces to no one and everyone.

On all fours, Frances makes like she's doing mountain climbers at Cross Fit and scampers, ridiculous, to the office door.

"Are you sure? Be careful", Niko implores.

It is a relief to be out of the office, doing something hopefully useful. Or just plain stupid (again), she thinks. Still crouching, she opens the cleaning cupboard, finds a bucket, disposable gloves, paper towels, loo paper. Rather than going straight back, Frances ventures further out into the foyer. The café is dark. People had managed to leave when rumours of a possible lockdown or some sort of drill happening started to spread. Breaking out of her hunched position for just a moment, she stretches up to the top of the coffee machine and swipes the huge jar of mini chocolate fish. Scampers back like a crab to the gift shop entrance, where she passes Ata and the tourists handfuls of the fish. There's a murmur of *Daijoubu? Ok? Ok!* exchanges. The shared gesture of a resolute thumbs up.

Then she's back in the room, handing out chocolate fish to Telesia and Niko and Josephine and Lisa under the desks. Sugar seems to help. They're speaking more freely now, sharing what they know, who's at home and who's still locked down, like them. Lisa's kids are still at school and kindy. *Apparently they're having a great time, doing art and watching movies. Oblivious.* On the radio, the mayor is talking about *devastating, unexpected shock... It's just been unspeakable...* Hospitals are told, the internet says, to expect up to 50 casualties. ... *why anyone would attack our city and our people in this way...* Perpetrators in custody. Acts of bravery.

★

**6.05pm**

Flanked by two police escorts, Grace unlocks the office door.

"It's over. Is everyone ok? Thank you, thank you for following our procedures. Everyone in our building is accounted for. We can go home now. Be with your families tonight and hug them extra close".

Frances helps Telesia out from under the desk, because she has pins and needles in her leg.

"Are you going to be alright?"

"Yes. My Dad's waiting outside. Take care."

"Ok, you too. Take care."

Frances has remembered her log in, so she scrolls on her laptop, away from local news, while she waits for Grace. *CHEATING SCANDAL ROCKS KARDASHIANS / COLLEGE ADMISSIONS BRIBERY / JUSSIE SMOLLETT'S HATE CRIME HOAX / I SURVIVED R. KELLY / HARRY AND MEGHAN'S BATTLE WITH THE PRESS / PRINCE ANDREW'S ROYAL SHAME / IS BRITNEY OK?*

#### **ADVICE re Supporting young people following lockdown**

Parents and teachers can help children and young people feel safe by:

providing reassurance and keeping to routines

staying calm and promoting a calm environment

doing enjoyable things together

taking time to listen and talk .

*W.B. Yeats's vision involved the notion that at any moment forces were ravelling and unravelling, forming and disintegrating.*

– Roger Cohen<sup>72</sup>

Afterwards, Frances follows her boss to the carpark. There's an oop oop sound as Grace vaguely aims some keys at her e-vehicle, unlocking it. As they edge out of the carpark, Frances notices the sinking feeling is getting worse. Like a kete in the chest, unravelling

★

The kete in her chest keeps ravelling, fraying, unravelling. What was once held there, has leaked out to the ends of her fingers, pooling in her shoulders and neck. Frances smooths her skirt, opens the window a bit. Grace's hands grip the steering wheel as she indicates into the quiet street. There's a roadblock on Brougham St so they veer off towards Somerfield, and there's another cordon. They detour through suburbia where despite clear skies, everyone's inside. Frances stares at the houses and driveways sliding by—bikes in garages, empty mailboxes.

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<sup>72</sup> “The Arab Gyre”; *International Herald Tribune* (Paris, France); Apr 26, 2011.

They talk in sidenotes, acknowledging each different trajectory google maps sends them on, signalled from Grace's phone nestled between them in the console.

"It's taking us a different way round."

"How are we supposed to go through the city now?"

It takes a long time to get home. Frances thinks of those who would not be going home tonight.

\*

**6.55 pm**

"She's ok." The man at the mechanics hands her the keys. "Fan-belt's going to need replacing soon, but I've sorted the indicators for you. It'll be on the road for a good while yet – been well looked after."

Frances nods. "Thanks for waiting for me."

"No problem. I've got three kids who've been in lockdown all day at different schools; we're all just trying to get back when we can. You take care now, ok?"

*Take care, take care.* Everyone was saying *take care*. Be safe, be cautious, be sure. Ok? Responsible. Alert. Aware. Take care is the new form of farewell. Fare-well. Frances pumps the clutch, revs the engine, nudges into reverse, and backs out. Motor rhythmically rattling, Frances drives across the quiet city, around the edges. No humans or machines would lead her to the centre.

It's possible that she might apologise to Seraphine and Jek if she could find the guts and the right words to do so. Meanwhile, she has to get home. She drives slowly around the eastern bays and rust-coloured cliffs as night falls across the city. At the traffic lights, she looks for a while in the window of an antiques and furniture store at a naked mannequin staring back at her. She notices her hands are shaking. The radio is speaking. Witnesses' stories. Politicians' statements. Support pouring in. She's thinking about something Reko asked her this morning. *Two stories: a made-up one and a real one please*. She wonders if she should have said something more to Telesia. All plans are postponed; everything is on hold. It's getting darker. The night feels like a held breath –

In the morning she will make sandwiches for the family of the little girl who is alive but may have been blinded. She knows someone who knows someone who can deliver them directly. She will cut the crusts off carefully and label the ingredients neatly and wonder what else she could do or say. She will stand at the bench, twirling and twirling a strand of hair, rolling the ends across her fingertips again and again then catch herself doing it; this stupid, anxious habit. She'll stand and stare at the small container of sandwiches.

Combing her hands through her hair. She will text Seraphine *Ruok?* lamely, and Seraphine will respond with a purple heart emoji and *We're all ok, no drama, Jek mentioned your smooch and it's a non-issue #onlylove*. The radio will speak into the space and she will feel a heavy and empty and empty and heavy ache as she stupidly twirls her hair, feeling the coarseness of the ends. On the edge of the bench, the paper will wait. The front page with the black and red photograph of the man will tell her the count is now up to fifty. Burials have begun. People flying in to help. Teachers, engineers, accountants. Fathers, brothers,

children. Praying. They were just praying. Many died while trying to protect others, according to family members. New Zealanders who had moved here years ago, fleeing conflict, seeking a better life, or who were born here. Just doing what they did every Friday.

\*

In the days that follow, she will stand in the park across from the mosque and listen as the schoolchildren sing waiata and thread loops of coloured paper, chains of love they call them, on the low fence and oak trees on Deans Ave, as close to the cordon as they can get. At the vigil, young people will hand out candles. A boy in a striped school blazer will light one and pass it to Frances. He will quote Martin Luther King as he speaks to the hundreds who have come to pay tribute. *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.* Another boy will recall the words of the first victim, *Welcome, brother.*

The kids will break into haka as they move toward the memorial site. The leader of a large group who were meant to be performing at Polyfest that day will slap and strum his guitar to start the karakia. Stepping forward, some hesitant, others bolder, nudging each other, a few students, then more and still more will join in:

*He hōnore, he korōria*

*Maungārongo ki te whenua*

*Whakaaro pai e*

*Ki ngā tangata katoa*

As a girl in a blue jacket kneels, leading a gathering of rangatahi in the middle of the road outside Mas-jid Anur, Frances will watch from the footpath. Shoulder to shoulder, in the various school uniforms of the city, the students will sing. She'll hear their voices soar, over and over in the days that follow.

*Ake ake, ake ake*

*Āmine*

In the months and years after, she will often think about the girl amid the group of students, praying. As long as it takes, forever and ever, *ake ake, ake ake*.

**7.27 pm**

For now, she is driving. The kete in her chest unthreads and unthreads. It takes a long time to get home.

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## Te Reo Māori in the Text

In general, the form and spelling of kupu Māori – Māori words and names follows *Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography* published by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. This includes the use of macrons<sup>73</sup> to mark long vowels and placement of hyphens. Quotations retain their original spelling and punctuation, so if a macron was not used by the writer at that time, it has not been added. Māori terms that are crucial to my project's approach are glossed the first time they are mentioned, but in recognition of Aotearoa as a bicultural nation and our Tiriti obligations, commonly used kupu are not translated in the text. For readers unfamiliar with te reo Māori, *Te Aka Māori* (the online Māori dictionary) will be a useful resource<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> Aside from when quoting Parata, who explains "they are not used by Ngati Porou as they are considered western grammatical inclusions" (3).

<sup>74</sup> [maoridictionary.co.nz/](https://maoridictionary.co.nz/).

## Notes on the creative pieces

- P. 3            "Possibilities" was written for UNESCO Dunedin City of Literature's Possibilities project, and published here: [cityofliterature.co.nz/a-literary-city/the-possibilities-project/](http://cityofliterature.co.nz/a-literary-city/the-possibilities-project/).
- P. 216        "Sunlight on water" quotes Catherine A.F. MacGillivray's phrase "the first day of love" from "What is it o' clock? Or the door (we never enter)", *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, Routledge 2009 (59). [taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203023662-7/clock-door-never-enter-catherine-macgillivray?context=ubx&refId=2941bbdb-9d11-4403-9e3c-1695095516f2](http://taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203023662-7/clock-door-never-enter-catherine-macgillivray?context=ubx&refId=2941bbdb-9d11-4403-9e3c-1695095516f2). Accessed 22 April 2023.
- P. 219        "short flight-following 1pm serious" is a poem experiment whereby I loaded phrases from an *Otago Daily Times* article about my friend's accident into the app *glassleaves.herokuapp.com* after attending a writing workshop in which Helen Heath recommended the site. The settings I entered were "Greg", "Burn & turn", "M chain".
- P. 267        The rhythms and story of "The Main Divide" provided the inspiration and name for Angela Mote's instrumental piece for strings, woodwind

and piano. The prose poem will also appear in the March issue of 1964.

P. 272        "Begin Being" was published in *Catalyst 18*, The Republic of Oma  
Rāpeti Press, 2021.

P. 229        "people used to say" is a poem experiment whereby I loaded phrases  
from my own writing and Lawrence Durrell's *Islomania* into  
*glassleaves.com*. The settings I entered were "Greg", "Burn & turn", "M  
chain". This text manipulator was introduced to me by Helen Heath at a  
writers' workshop at Hagley Writers' Institute.

P. 236        A version of the "And so here we are" haiku series was published in *The  
Hellfire Anthology 2017 - 2018* as "New Skin", pp. 45 - 47. White Wolf  
Black Rabbit, 2019. The first two quotations are from Kim Hill's *Radio  
New Zealand* interview with Max Gimblett, "Max Gimblett - The  
Quatrefoil King", on the Saturday Morning programme, at 9:08 am on  
20 May 2017.  
  
[rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/201844551/max-  
gimblett-the-quatrefoil-king](http://rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/201844551/max-gimblett-the-quatrefoil-king) (Accessed 22 April 2023), the third is from  
the title and chorus of the Crowded House song, "Better Be Home  
Soon" by Neil Finn, Roundhouse Records, 1988, and the final haiku riffs  
on the line "One more time (we're gonna celebrate)" from the Daft

Punk song, "One More Time" (2000).

- P. 232 "Because / some days" was shortlisted for the NZ National Flash Fiction Day writing competition, and published in *Flash Frontier*, June 2023. [flashfrontier.com/june-2023-national-flash-fiction-day/](http://flashfrontier.com/june-2023-national-flash-fiction-day/). Accessed 12 September 2023.
- P. 283 "Estrella (Catullus 101)" was published on the *Noho Mai NZ Given Words* 2021 blog, [nzgivenwords.blogspot.com/2021/09/noho-mai-given-poems-2021-adults.html](http://nzgivenwords.blogspot.com/2021/09/noho-mai-given-poems-2021-adults.html). Accessed April 14 2023.
- P. 297 Found poem series created using Cards Against Humanity cards, inspired by Laura Williamson's poem "This is the way the world ends", which follows the same process.
- P. 336 "Collapsed in the coat check" quotes the words "gold shadows flash" from Carson's *Plainwater*, Vintage, 2000 (138 - 139) as well as Catherine A.F. MacGillivray's phrase "the first day of love" from "What is it o' clock? Or the door (we never enter)", *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, Routledge 2009(59). [taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203023662-7/clock-door-never-enter-catherine-](http://taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203023662-7/clock-door-never-enter-catherine-)

macgillivray?context=ubx&refId=2941bbdb-9d11-4403-9e3c-1695095516f2. Accessed 22 April 2023.

- P 338      A version of the Douglas Gordon (Phantom 2011) response prose poem appeared as part of poem series "Quire" in *Meniscus* journal, Vol. 4, Issue 2, AAWP. Pg. 11. c-cluster-110.uploads.documents.cimpress.io/v1/uploads/6ec4ed39-8e40-48da-9964-866eab3a3235~110/original?tenant=vbu-digital. Accessed 14 April 2023.

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## List of Illustrations

All images are the author's own, unless otherwise stated.

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## **Creative Component**

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P. 208 Rawiri Te Maire's map of Lake Wānaka and Hāwea. Reference: 2018.0465.1: Ngāi Tahu Archive. [kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182412/2/1/210?RECORD&UNION=Y](http://kareao.nz/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/365182412/2/1/210?RECORD&UNION=Y). Accessed 17 September 2023.

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P. 212 Te Huruhuru's map installation on Lake Wānaka. Photograph: Sally Norman.

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P. 250 - Plate image manipulated from [shop.colonialwilliamsburg.com/Swirling-Florals-Bowl/](http://shop.colonialwilliamsburg.com/Swirling-Florals-Bowl/). Accessed 29 August 2022.

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P. 335 - The Offerings of Peace, a statue by Gilbert Bayes, 1923, outside the Art Gallery of  
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DARK

TIME

LIGHT

LIGHT

TIME

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