

**Paea Leach**

a K Ō R E R O & a H U I :

a conversation and a meeting in three parts

woman, she, her  
Ngāti Kuri & Pākehā (Naam, Australia)

*'Singularity and distinctness exist, as do boundaries, but they constitute differentiating characteristics of beings who are defined and sustained by virtue of their inter-relationality. Without that overarching sense of the inter-relational, we take the bodily boundary to be the end rather than the threshold of the person, the site of passage and porosity, the evidence of an openness to alterity that is definitional of the body itself. The threshold of the body, the body as threshold, undermines the idea of the body as a unit'* (Butler 2020, p. 12).

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P A R T      O N E : framing worlds

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**Māori Captain:** Ah, you have been circling in your waka! That is very Māori of you.

**Māori cousin Captain:** We decided you are like the old people.

**Director-man Captain:** How are you so strong?

**Bulgarian captain:** You are always climbing into a big canoe and forging off.

**Protocol Captain:** You cannot do that cousin, it is Tapu.

**I-Captain:** I am a flawed captain but, I have been a vigilant one.

**You are entering** a non-linear forward forging /downward thinking choreography of word and body, word from body, word because of body. Enduring narrative is absent. Present is a series of Captains: guides, way seers, provocateurs. As Te kāpehu whetū (the Māori star compass) divides the 360 degrees around a canoe into whare (houses), themselves exit and re-entry points into the ocean, my Captains circle, inhabit, yell back, command, invite and divide me into whare, fragments, shards. Woman in World Waka (canoe) being conduit, being water. I navigate using constellations where North is not North, and being Māori offers a frame that, also, is importantly no frame at all. Punctuation and grammar are put-to-use not as they should be. SANS reference, but reverential, this is some kind of dance:

*falling rising*  
*(rising/falling)*  
*falling rising*  
*(rising/falling)*

### **Belief**

Modes of living and learning require borders to prevent leakage: dance practices, pedagogic practices, osteopathic practices, therapeutic practices, practices of writing, practices of being Māori, practices of being mother, human, woman, partner. Naivety in spades and a thousand books on spiritual guidance fall off shelf at once. Because, as rhizomic network, like fungi, like crystalline fascia – epistemologies connect, parle, anastomose. They bleed. A great fissure opens. There is no safety in border building.

### **Attempt**

To write from mine-own body-aquifer, penning observations of embodied abutting and complicity. The Attempting-Captain aware all the while (her) confrontations are piecemeal; pierced, interrupted, compressed, by mother-life, academic lack, poetic inference. I acknowledge that what I call 'the GOLD', felt bodily as 'ah-ha!' moments, when the inevitable bleeding seems to give rise to something that feels new, may not make sense as gold.

**Realisation**

Once bleeding, borders are mobilised and thus, dissolved. They flex, stretch into, and reach across each other. The process of separation loses grip. Alluvial rivers of the deep body, felt as sensations, kinaesthetic velocities and energies while moving the moving-through, yield brilliance. Here is the gold.

**Body Captain:** I am thwarted – scale, distance, temporality, borders!

**Captain of the Body:** yes, that is the point! Be water across rocks (etc).

F L O W!

*Fixed body with unfixed centre,*

*watery body once contained.*

*I am tripped up on things called training, called technique, called dancing. And  
other things called woman, called writing, called mother.*

*One at a time, I*

*try to off-take these skins:*

*tulle chiffon tulle chiffon taffeta.*

*Undoing.*

*Regarding. Inviting*

*bleeding.*

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P A R T      O N E [point] T W O : frames faltering

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**Māori Wing person Captain:** Ah, all you must do is lean in and your tīpuna (ancestors) will be there, *they* support your dancing. Don't you see – it is not about you!

I am laughing because none of this is serious!

**Academic Captain:** What is your optimal relational distance? (Neimanis 2022)

**She-I Captain:** Oh, I get to decide?

I am going North!  
To circle the tree and wait.  
What is it you wait for my girl?  
A space to dwell uncle, a space to do something that lets me stand in the  
zone of connectivity, Uncle.

**Academic Captain:**

I might call this 'optimal temporality' (ibid.)

What's that girl?  
It is  
what it is Uncle.

Being born into the darkness is  
what we share.

He says:  
'You have it too cousin'.  
I feel for the dead.

She climbs on, taps my head, regards  
ancient weather patterns: 'Don't  
worry girl,  
all your nannas are here'.

I fall under ancient song, feel a  
volcano suggest itself, grasp  
obsidian black.

We stand near the fridge:  
he doesn't want to listen to the dead.

Those gift horses' mouths,  
they seem suspicious (bro).

**Academic She-Captain asks:** *'What does it mean to have a relation to one's faltering text?'* (Ronell 2014).

I embody the question given ruptured and vigilant, but thwarted captaining, is my means of shotty arrival. Disjunctive body travel must yield meaning! It must contain gold if I have relation to its content [oui?! no, oui!].

*I am, I fall-over, I regard, words, genealogy, photos, movements.*

I hear you (!) irreverence, faltering texts, captains reshuffling to a disjunctive series of playlists on rusty boat decks. Dissolution as a form of cohesion is this Captain's focus as I/she/we attempt to write the doing of dancing-practising into a poetic choreographic.

Spiritual books: books on spirituality, un-wanting, emptiness as pursuit - continue falling. I am in a new nowhere. Yet, I hope.

*'Where is where and where are we?'* (Ronell 2014).

Avital Ronell's proposition of atopos as a *somewhere* becomes *raison d'être* for continuing to mine with no frames and little reassurance. Atopos as a *somewhere* folds in and out of my body as I go to ground, *rise/fall, fall/rise. dance.*

I am dancer who is writer, horse,  
citizen, woman,  
mother, observer, mover,  
world-maker.  
Woman who is she-passing,  
white-passing,  
dark feeling.  
Māori,

Pākehā,  
treacle,  
fur,  
triangle,  
fury,  
aroaha (love).

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P A R T      R U A (2) : a hui with some Body Captains & part of the Real World

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**Captain Anatomy:**

There is a space between the visceral and the serous membranes of the lungs. It is called a potential space. It is also a cavity, which might imply emptiness, or not-knowing, or the deep black: a sort of carbon dioxide dependent involuted studio. This cavity provides space for the lungs to move without friction. *Without friction! With, out, friction. With. Out. To move without.* Like a lung layer, to move without rubbing up, colliding with, being prevented from – moving. The two layers are continuous, one invigilates for the other.

**Healing Captain:**

What is your animating principle?

**She:**

*'The morphogenetic mechanism is a non-physical blueprint that guides the formation of physical form' (James Jealous).<sup>1</sup>*

**Healing Captain:**

Now there is something to drive a ship toward.

*I begin in the hilum of the lung.*

*Lateral travel is needed before anything else can happen.*

*This takes a series of Fridays.*

**Tanker Captain:**

we are unsheltered, it is dangerous.

**Seamen** (the non-captains): we do not care!

**Tanker Captain:**

that is because you are disorganised, and you insist on covering yourselves in muck and dressing up like gods of the sea! You men are imbeciles!

*A troubled murmuration begins a journey in body as through sky,*

*seeking whenua (land) and awa (river).*

*Flight can be slow, almost backward, often in the dark.*

*Birds eye view, we see*

*bits of heart and body left-over,*

*a steaming compost of entangled others, a*

*mis ordered love hierarchy triangle, and too many fake plants.*

*Dance that.*

The Captain is tensegrity animal. Like a good building, or a long bamboo pole, he bends without breaking. This he-captain does not have homemade tattoos and he is not missing teeth.

The Captain is woman-captain, she-captain. She is driving a life-ship, aware of the rabble of men floating on the equator, soaking in their own waste. This type of ship-driving is mother work, body work, food work, heart work, time work. It is insistent. She becomes body-raft, captain, weather, water itself.

The Captain is (all) histories of owning to own: body, land, sea, words. Captains of different place and time and colour and denomination, drive ship-stories of longing, songs, philosophies, through reverse flowing waters and deep-sea caves. These upstream captain- swimmers undergo shedding: scaly in-breathing metamorphosis in real-time. Unsettling truths are chucked up and thrown down (like the medicine ball I slam into the ground in weight class).

*Behind sternum  
two lines move toward each other  
slow time deep time non temporal time felt  
as intimate, liminal, ancient.  
All my nanna's here: a H pencil framing.  
Kuia captains!  
Guide me!  
'ce'st quoi ton pars cours?!'  
Show me! I  
am here, in the dark-dark of feeling.*

This is not nostalgia. It feels like something else. I am dislodged.

**Captain Anatomy:**

I pick up pieces of bodies, cadaveric fragments: a skull resected, ten different hearts, a cirrhotic liver, sheath of yellow, fatty peritoneal covering. A lung slides out of my hands, liquids leak and seep from thorax sliced in sagittal planes, a spinal cord splays itself on metal table. These bodies look like pirates exhumed from a barnacled sea bottom. Everything here is pungent and preserved – Just, so. And sort of petrified. The non-energy of the long dead.

Arteries veins blood lymph once returning, returned, circling – now flat, horrid, distended,  
blueish.

*I dream of you on a brick wall near a sea body.*

The carotid artery bifurcates in the neck, at cervical level 3 or 4. This division is mediated by chemical and barometric receptors. Any shift / slight – temperature, chemistry, volume, pressure, heart maneuver (*step, weight, the small dance*) – may signal an utterance toward death. I am learning a new body-language: precision pathways, edges bleeding and superimposing, 1mm borders as transitional spaces, entry and exit points: the body on its way to its own elsewhere. I study arteries, veins, tubules, capillaries, alveoli, nerves: pathways that need and provide oxygen, nutrients, chemicals, and water. Wired, rapid firing, molecular highways of give, take, exchange: The Stuff of Life. Proliferation and programmed cell death, cancer as cellular anomaly, various forms of necrosis and tissue death, the possibility that a brain implodes, of pharmacokinetics to redirect, govern and dominate cellular intent. Colonisation and power, even here. I read of intracellular and extracellular spaces and matrixes. I follow potassium, calcium, sodium; proteins folding in correct and incorrect quaternary choreographies, viruses that require envelopes, transportation mechanisms – coupled, G-protein, gated, channeled. The thousands of mechanisms that make flow the blood, lymph and chemical rivers of the body rely on pressure, amplification, homeostasis, gradients. Dendrites of neurons reach like tiny – fretting – mean – little – electric – fingers to everywhere. Nothing happens in a vacuum: action potential, threshold, hyperactivity, equilibrium. Rupture of an artery causes starvation of oxygen, paralysis, the incapacity to speak.

*I listen to  
grief songs and whale songs  
and fall-in  
slipstreams of  
intersectional  
thinkers moulding  
wide arcs in white plywood skies*

*BravePotentRadical*

**Humanitarian Captain:**

How do bodies stay alive in this kind of (real-life) danger?

**She-I:**

To seek refuge in one's body is the privilege of the privileged.

**World power, nuclear holder, man-Captains:**

We will never stop!

**Poetry Captain:**

What does it mean to take and to need refuge?

To falter, trip, fall-over

And (yet) to/be without refuge as possibility.

How does it feel To

be unsheltered

Beneath a wide blue-back bruising arcing sky?

Oh, World driver Captains – where are the gentle mothers?

*Everything is familiar,  
nothing is at all.*

*But of course,  
nothing*

*is*

*as it was.*

*I take the saddle off  
as the horse lays to die  
before being shot.*

*To continue  
as though unchanged*

*ratifies silent permissions and  
continues to celebrate the captains who have done Too Much Captaining.*

**P a u s e**

*Body as threshold.*

*Disintegrating, eroding, borderless.*

*Dance as écriture:*

*tracing, defining, erasing, defacing the trace.*

*I am disappearing.*

U N H O L D M E

Afterward, the questions form:

What did you lose?

Can the centre hold?

Are you still alive?

**Captain Anatomy:**

The nervous system is the potent highway between the brain, spinal cord, and body. The cord travels south releasing itself into a beautiful spread of nerves, like a hand of a hundred fingers opening laterally, or a rare flower that opens once, and magnificently, in its lifetime. No longer contained by the cord or the horns of the white and grey matter – so, hornless – the nervous system becomes something else: a neural hornless beast. All nervous sensation, it bucks and rests, seeks shelter and support as ganglia fire back forth back forth. I place my un-wanting hands at this point of caudal spread. Often, people weep.

*Body aquifer as refuge, respite, recovery well:*

*internal thresholds trap a different kind of resistance, resilience, response.*

To descend through the conus medullaris, the pointy end of the spinal cord, is to move into the cauda equina – the horse tail. Quiet whip, internal nervous river. The equine tail moves toward floor, through universe of legs and sacrum. Our soles return the haptics, the data, the vibration of earth.

Up, through fluid, bone, trabeculae, vessel:

B O O M.

P A R T            T H R E E : nowhere as somewhere or Te Kore  
(the Māori concept of Void)

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**Captain Medicine:**

When looking for the cause of a body malady, we ask, *'What feels different? Has this happened before? Is this new?'*

*Ah – an Atopos! An unrecognisable feeling or space!*

This means you could be dying or about to die: depends on the answer. When the earth caves in, all the mothers – *Akna, It Buuno, Paptūānuku, Papa, Tatei Yurianaka, Máttaráhkká, Gaia* – weep deep, slow, tears. The mother-captains feel genocide and domicide: the horrific erasure of their presence (body song dance movement prayer word) and the horrific erasure of their material culture on the earth (body song dance movement prayer word).

*What feels different?*

*Has this happened before? Is  
this new?*

**War Captain:**

This is not new at all. The earth is scorched. Violent actions replicated.

We are accused of genocide while we fight genocide.

Lies, hypocrisy, lies!

**Poetry Captain:**

Compasses are sent awry. There is no North.

Lies, poetry, hypocrisy, lies.

*Oui, no, oui?*

Afterward, questions return:

What did you lose?

Can the centre hold?

Are you still alive?

Responses resonate:

The void, Te Kore, the void.

*The body is a series of slow tides, with a pulse different to the blood. Body tide is not concerned with ejecting. Instead, with a pia mater tidal reach to return.*

*Body-tides nourish a milky sea-salty middle. This seems the safest place as binaries dissolve and world borders up shoot. The body valiantly tries for equilibration somewhere in the centre of things, despite all the*

*things launching audacious attempts to*

*obliterate and de-centre its compass. All*

*sensing is inverted & the body-captains are troubled.*

**Captain Medicine:**

We cannot stop the bleeding! The

great vessels are ruptured.

B O O M.

Equilibrium is sacrificed.

boom

Hypovolemic shock.

BOOM!

[Belief, Attempt, Realisation].

We are, finally, in a somewhere that is a nowhere that

just feels so ... dangerous.

We are bleeding out.

*boomboomboomboomboom*

**Captain of Bodies:**

We shall not survive.

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 C O D A : the dance
 

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I leap across the space: run, drag run, drag, run, leap, run, drag, drag, drag the jeté, the gazelle, the stag, the bat tripping up the training, putting it to use better than diagonal as conformity, drill, precision pelvis thrust forward, we are unstoppable in this mad-leg- dragging we had forgotten this kind of moving we are delighted I roll in continuous cycles and circles up down through-out the pigeon on the roof scratches the traffic outside is loud and pushes in

and I roll and drag and feel my spine

## C i r c u m a m b u l a t i o n

W o m a n i n W a k a

3 6 0 d e g r e e s

E x i t a n d e n t r y p o i n t s 1 m m w i d e : t i g e r t h r o u g h a p i n h o l e

the houses orient the body i reach to you my Nanna's i am all ABUZZ! it is nuclear in here! fucking nuclear, captain are you here my kuia? can you feel this? kahutia te rangi is here mother whale plummets maybe this is all your doing, eh? i am renovating language because new words have a new physics they emblazon bone collisions of heritage, selves, blood, ghosts, beasts, animals, sounds it is riotous, gory, delicious, quiet it is a song, a lament, a grave dance be a pavement melting in the sun, be a virgin Mary statue, be a forest, be a neon sign, be a porn star, a hippie in the sun on drugs, a bear, a tourist in a bad photo be yourself before you were you: pre-acceleration, pre-burst, pre-symbolism: trembling zygote rupture helps assemble new maps: N E O P L A S T I C B A B Y you are lucky, you have always been lucky! far stranger things can happen than the end of the world! de-face the trace, feel yourself become abstract thought and know that reduction is never reduction! the

centre of the varjāy is infinite energy! out here no love-death out here desert sky, sky  
whale, whale time, time ripped, tahoro ruku tahoro ruku!

out here, no / more / Captains!

*Oh, dead captains*

*Dying, infarcting, palisading necrotic captains! I did*

*believe*

*I did attempt I*

*did realise*

*I do grieve and I do Jéte because they seem like the same thing. ka mua ka*

*muri ka mua ka muri ka mua ka muri*

*(walk backwards into the future).*

END

## Notes

1. James Jealous is the founder of Biodynamic Craniosacral Osteopathy. The phases/principles of his work are taught by a group of Osteopaths in Australia. Quote from personal notes while attending the introductory course (2021). <https://www.biobasicsaustralia.com.au/>

2. A note on SANS Reference: This writing is filled with inferences; references, voices & people made present in immanent, distant, and non-referential ways. As an ethos for being, and dancing-working, I embrace Hannah Arendt's proposition of 'thought fragments' as necessary to the task or creative process. Thus, I intentionally place "voices that can encounter one another in continually new ways in the here and now of the writing" (Arendt in Knott 2011, 301-302). This is not an academic paper; indeed, its coming into being bucks against the nature of academic writing – its rules and requirements. I do acknowledge a history of engaging with academic writing and methodologies allows such an intentional side-step. The contents inside the frame are inhabited by academic thinking, philosophic wanderings, poetic text, embodied writing, subjective and felt histories, politic. This interweaving is not intended to cause confusion for the reader, instead is a gesture undertaken to reveal the non-linearity of embodied bodily practices of living and moving and writing and imagining via words sent down pages.

I do not discuss why there are few references noted as references, and hope the reader accepts the contract I establish at the outset and can thus arrive at appreciating (minor) divergences from established methodologies as something that offers joy or delight. However, given this body of writing sits half-in half-out of academia, finding itself in situ within the borders of an academic journal, it is important to reference where (some of) one's imaginings have taken certain departure points. Thus, I acknowledge four thinkers directly (below) as their work has contributed in direct ways to the *here and now writing* of this body of work.

**Selected Works Cited**

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*PAEA LEACH is a Ngāti Kuri (Northland Aotearoa) & Australian dance artist based in Naam (Melbourne). Her creative and choreographic work, thinking, practise and sharing of dance is a weft of languages that deliberately entangle contemporary dance, feminist politics, bodily poetics, somatic practices and western medicine/science(s). Trained at WAAPA @ ECU (Perth), she worked for renowned companies Chunky Move, Eastman (Belgium), Australian Dance Theatre (2002 – 2016). She has been commissioned to work and create work within and beside cultures (Asialink artist in residence 2011, A.R.T resident Townsville 2021), communities (Back to Back theatre), festivals (Faux MO 2020) and to contribute as a performer to an array of independent dance and theatre projects. Her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) by Research, undertaken at VCA/Uni Melbourne (2020), argued for a re-approach to the (overuse of) embodiment; instead building an argument for the potency of 'something else', naming it as kinaesthetic attention. To complexify the language and cast off into worlds of scientific enquiry, to weave the thinking back through the body conduit by looking from a different POV entirely, she is currently also a student of Osteopathy at RMIT (completion 2025), where neuroscience has been the most captivating journey thus far.*

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