Relationscapes of Extinction, and More Life: Zincland to Zealandia

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May it rebel, that nerve of life, may it twist and throb.
—Clarice Lispector, *The Stream of Life*

3:20 a.m. Friday, 14 August 2020: Wildes Meadow, the Illawarra highlands, Wodi Wodi First Peoples and Yuin nation Countries, south-eastern Australia

A Boobook is calling. She has awoken me from sleep. This sonorous guide in refrain, before and after the *Ngā Tūtaki – Encounter/s: Agency, Embodiment, Exchange, Ecologies* conference in Tāmaki Makaurau, now eight months later.

Two days ago, the SARS-CoV-2 lockdown lifted in New South Wales. Only now can you light a match without visceral trepidation. Without a gut return to the climate crisis inferno of the 2019–2020 summer: Weeks of preternatural heat and three adrenalin-fast evacuations capped by slow, cold fear. The unquenchable incineration of rich forests, a reckoning death toll of 3 billion endemic animals with the suffering of incommensurate more, and a swift new endangerment of already precarious mammal and bird species (Wintle et al; van Eeden et al.). Throughout, the regular ping of WhatsApp messages delivering smoky updates from the vast Currowan and Morton firegrounds south, and close up. Curt communiques more reliable than official 'fires-near-me' app maps favoured by watchers from afar, and softened only by reports from human friends of narrow escapes and random reprieves from the flames.

All began, here, at the fence line, on December 21 and ended only with the pummelling deluges of early February 2020 (Boscacci "After Rain"). The big picture 'fire and flood' data of these compound climate extremes in south-eastern Australia—those 'hard' data that are quantifiable at any rate—have been soberly reported (Hughes et al.). Tonight, the wetland is noisy with untouched frogs. The Boobook's night belling chimes up from there, a tiny fenced-off oasis of peat circled by denatured settler coloniser paddocks. All is sodden after the weekend's east coast low, another churn of gales in from the Tasman Sea. Anthropocene-in-the-making? Yes. No. These are Viral Bushranger Times. Anything can happen now.

Auckland, you are one of my shadow places, I intimated earlier; the Port of Auckland being one in the roll call of 120 shadow port places traced and mapped as a shadow country, the particular-planetary tracery of *Zincland*. I had travelled to Tāmaki Makaurau and Aotearoa to find out why. To ask: What is your pull? Where will you take me; fling me; hold me? An affective bodily encounter is always an encounter-exchange. Shadow places are also kin teacher places in more than human, multinatural worlds. I was there, I said at the end of the conference presentation of *Wit(h)nessing Zincland*, "to listen carefully, to look, walk, and attune, if only briefly."

A short walk downtown from the conference gathering, Waitematā Harbour was a milky celadon, a hue of green and a colour of ocean I had never seen before. At Kohimarama/Bastion Point, east around the harbour from the CBD, I met a hopping Eurasian blackbird who led the way up a set of stone steps and out of an English colonial style rose garden.[1] From there, I followed the voice of a singing man to the place on the headland where he tended and serenaded a food garden on recovered, ancestral Ngāti Whātua-o-Ōrākei land. Later, I wrote in my journal from the top deck of the 'Auckland Explorer' bus boarded on an impulse that afternoon to escape the city for an hour or two: *This is a relationscape of extinct volcanoes and extinct birds.*

The shadows trace of the *Zincland* project is one mode of the aesthetic critical practice of more-than-human wit(h)nessing that I have introduced elsewhere ("Wit(h)nessing"; "Ecologising"). This has unfolded from an ecology and ethos of open field practice where contemporary art and writing converges with the feminist, decolonising environmental humanities and sciences. You make a way that fits the particular planetary times. That finds a voice to answer the night calls. But it begins in the affective encounter, and in honouring and tracing its spark and movement. Following the conference, I had a plan to travel south, to Pōneke/Wellington and Ōtepoti/Dunedin, to continue a linked project of engaging with naturecultures of extinction, to wit(h)ness two sites of multispecies recovery and ecological restoration. If *Zincland* took me to Aotearoa, I had no inkling of what I might encounter in this onward momentum of and from the shadows trace. So, let me take you there. Let me pick up this passage of wit(h)nessing and translation one day after leaving Tāmaki Makaurau.

Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne: Relationscapes of the extinct, reverberations of more life

> The future can no longer be 'What is going to happen?' It is 'What are we going to do?'
>
> —*attrib.* Henri Bergson

8 December 2019. The rain was belting down early Sunday morning in Pōneke, Te Whanganui-a-Tara. A day of rolling squalls and revelations. There were three of us interlopers in the Zealandia ecosanctuary minibus that had just wound uphill to the edge of suburban Kelburn, overlooking the city.[2] I boarded it downtown, already wet from a short walk in the driving wind and rain to the pickup spot on Wakefield Street, a breath away from the harbourfront.

Waiting for the bus beside a strip of street park, I met a Tui (Tūī) for the first time.[3] First, as a melodious song, an assortment of clicks, a soft chuckle. Not a house sparrow, blackbird, starling or gull! A forest songbird of Aotearoa? There: rainforest umber coloured, red wattlebird sized, long beaked with a pair of white pom-pom earrings, each seemingly suspended under a dark chin. In the muted light of the grey morning, these white balls were the most visible feature of the Tui as it bounced in and out of the thick canopy of red flowers of a Pohutukawa, the New Zealand Christmas Tree.[4] The drop earrings are actually tufts of white feathers (poi) that form a double bib under the chin of these large endemic honeyeaters, I read later. Soon, two, three, four Tui were cavorting in this flowering tree bedecked with a skirt of adventitious roots reminiscent of a capacious banyan fig in a North Queensland town park. The tree's tent of aerial roots had been used as a human shelter in the recent past; abandoned cardboard sheets, sodden now, gave away the hidden crib. This city, this tree place, was strangely familiar, and utterly unknown. And here, for a flash, waiting for the bus to Zealandia, I first sensed an older, shared Gondwana.

At the entrance to Zealandia, a quotation attributed to the philosopher of duration, Henri Bergson, spans a wall featuring silhouettes of a Cabbage Tree/Tī kōuka, a Tuatara, a Maud Island Frog, a New Zealand Kākā, and a Cook Strait Giant Wētā (Figure 1).[5] All, variously precarious endemic species of Aotearoa—a tree member of the asparagus family of flowering plants, an ancient reptile, a rare island-surviving amphibian, a large parrot of remnant forests, and a mouse-sized terrestrial cricket—are protected denizens within this fenced peri-urban refuge.

Fig. 1 Entrance wall with Bergson and friends, Zealandia ecosanctuary, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Zealandia Te Mara a Tane is a 225-hectare urban ecosanctuary that aims to restore "as closely as possible to their pre-human colonised state" the forest and freshwater ecosystems of the valley and ridges of the Kaiwharawhara Stream which flows out to Whanganui-ā-Tara/Wellington Harbour (Zealandia "Sanctuary"; Lynch 9). It is a 500-year vision. The valley area, previously dammed to supply drinking water to the growing colonial city of Wellington (the Karori dams and reservoir from 1878 until the 1990s), has a longer history as a special bird hunting, crop growing, forest harvesting, and medicine gathering area for Taranaki Whānui, the custodial iwi of the Kaiwharawhara region. This older emplaced sovereignty is alluded to in "Te Mara a Tane/The Garden of Tane," now part of the sanctuary name (Zealandia "Karori"). The contemporary intercultural conservation project was initiated in 1995 as the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary (a public trust), with the fence installed in 1999, aspiring to "Bring the birds back to Wellington" (Lynch 1-2).[6]

Since then, twenty species of endemic wildlife, mainly birds, including island survivors absent from mainland Aotearoa for more than 100 years, have been reintroduced. The exclosure's bespoke 8.6 km steel "predator fence" is designed to keep out introduced "mammalian predators," now actively targeted in Aotearoa as the principal threat to most of the extant birds (many of which are susceptible ground-dwellers, and others essential to forest regeneration), the ancient Tuatara, rare invertebrates, and frogs (Zealandia "Sanctuary").[7] See Figure 2 in Album of Figures.

The project is unabashed in stating:

> Since human arrival, at least 51 bird species, three frog species, three lizard species, one freshwater fish species, one bat species, four plant species, and a number of invertebrate species have become extinct.
>
> Prior to the arrival of humans, Aotearoa (New Zealand) was isolated and unique. Without any mammalian predators an ecosystem of remarkable flora and fauna had evolved… Sadly, *over the last 700 years, that paradise was almost destroyed by humans and the mammals they introduced with them*. (emphasis added, "Sanctuary")

For some time and across disciplines, I have been investigating, writing and making with the unfinished extinction history of thirty-four mammal species in Australia since British imperial colonisation, a mere 250 years ago. Many of the extirpated are inimitable marsupials, so the broad sweep allusion in language to problematic 'mammal predators' in Aotearoa, and in the Zealandia project, was surprisingly provocative, if understandable. My visit as a bodily encounter was a way to attend to this unfamiliar worlding and wording, to wit(h)ness the exclosure experiment in order to better understand the impulses and philosophical drive behind it, and to, at least, meet and listen to the voices of endemic birds whose absence and silence had truly begun to haunt me in Auckland.

Hanging out with Orbell, the Takahē, another swamphen

Inside, Orbell was out grazing in the rain. Orbell is one of two resident South Island Takahē, the flightless rail *Porphyrio hochstetteri*, or notornis ('southern bird'), the rarest bird species in the valley restoration project (Figure 3).

I sat with Orbell for an hour and more. He allowed me to photograph and video him silently grazing, scissoring off grass blades and selected tips, pulling the occasional root out of the wet ground, testing and rejecting most. All around, he, with Nio, a

female takahē in the refuge, had clipped the grass into a low lawn (Figure 4). Orbell carried on, fully aware of my presence. I was in his world. It was a quiet interspecies companionship evocative of one I have known and shared with Oscar, an aged steer friend and community member across the Tasman Sea in the Illawarra highlands, to which I would return. This was an easy generosity: I sensed that Orbell, well accustomed to curious human visitors to his gated contact zone, trusted me. I let him trust me; I could never betray that trust.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the South Island Takahē, originally a high mountain forest dweller and tussock grass eater, was believed to have been extirpated by two transformative waves of human colonisation accompanied by companion and coloniser animals and plants: early Polynesian settlement (1200–1400) and the British Empire's subsequent wholesale colonial annexation (1840) (*Blood Earth Fire*). Notornis was, however, encountered alive in 1948 in a remote Fiordland valley in the Murchison Mountains/e Puhi-a-noa of the South Island by Invercargill physician Geoffrey Orbell and three friends (New Zealand Department of Conservation [DOC] "The rediscovery").

Orbell, the namesake dweller at Zealandia, is a testimony to the larger Takahē recovery project stemming from that time. Along with the contemporary Fiordland National Park considered to be the bird's remnant free range, other communities are now protected in discreet mountain locations and translocations on the South Island mainland, along with offshore "insurance" island reserves as part of the Takahē Recovery Project (DOC "Takahē"). Takahē are a taonga (treasure) species of Ngāi Tahu, the South Island iwi who maintain strong cultural and traditional associations with the birds through kaitiakitanga (guardianship) practices and decision-making; collectively Ngāi Tahu act as the primary partner in the species' recovery programme (DOC "Meet the People"; Figures 5 and 6).

In December 2019, the living count of Takahē in Aotearoa was 418 birds, I was informed by a friendly ranger who stopped to sit in the steady rain for a time to whisper-chat with me about this remarkable ancient cospecies. She reminded again me that Orbell, Nio and kin are the only flightless, terrestrial herbivores to survive human colonisation in Aotearoa, and that this singular species, a deeper time, two-million-year old evolutionary relative of the better known, much smaller Pūkeko/Pukeko, the Purple Swamphen, remained vulnerable at both a national and planetary scale.[8]

All these birds!

There were many other resonant multispecific encounters that day in the lush refugium of Zealandia. My journal records an excited roll call of wit(h)nessing—meetings, soundings, fleeting glimpses, aromas, immersive pauses—in names and particular associations; a way to begin to attune to the movement of this new, unfamiliar and intoxicating bios:

> **Kererū** (New Zealand Pigeon): in flight; the forest maker; the forest regenerator; a pair at a nest with a big chick an arm's reach away (Figure 7); **Hihi**—the switch bird—in pairs; **Tui**—cavorting; common, active, vocal (Figure 8). **White-headed Shelduck**—with chicks; **Kaka**—feeding and performing with abandon at a feed station; **Tieke/tīeke—North Island Saddleback**—a brilliant wattlebird; reintroduced from "lifeboat" island populations; Red-crowned Parakeet, **Kākāriki, Kakariki**, *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*, another 'endemic relict' of Aotearoa; **Bellbird/ New Zealand Bellbird**, **Korimako**, **Makomako**—in song; in surround sound; **North Island Robin**; **Fantail**, **Pīwakawaka** (all dark); **Pied Shag**; **Black Shag**; the ubiquitous **Blackbird** (**Common Blackbird**) —on lawn and in forest; a **Tuatara**, the ancient reptilian descendent of survivors of the fifth mass extinction, yet now susceptible to planetary heating, poised at the mouth of its burrow on a cool 16°C day; an unidentified **gecko** on an inner fence; the **Black Tree Fern**, **Mamaku**, *Cyathea medullaris*, a majestic presence (Figure 9); the **Northern Rātā** (*Metrosideros robusta*), in new flower; **Rimu**, *Dacrydium cupressinum*—a small 30 year-old conifer being grown for future **Kākāpō**, the critically endangered ground parrot; **Silver Fern**, **Ponga**, **Kaponga**, *Cyathea dealbata*; **Rangiora**, *Brachyglottis repanda*, with other common names in te reo Māori for a bushy plant of traditional medicinal use for wounds, ulcers, breath freshening, and later known as Bushman's friend and put to other use by Pākehā settlers as note paper and toilet paper…

I scribbled another list of words that bubbled up in this company over the day:

> animated
> energetic
> beauteous
> vivid
> capacious (no corporate 'capacity-building' in sight)
> verdant
> regenerating is regenerative

biogenic to ontogenetic
reclaims
recovers
seeds
prevents
enables
actively refuses
materially repairs
is reparative
makes reparations

reverberates—with *more life*

Later, out of the weather in the café, a shrill twitter of resident house sparrows pervaded the enclosed verandah. Even in the driving rain, you get a vista across the open water reservoir to the misted regeneration of the forest slope on the far side of the valley. Temperate rainforest with tall dark Mamaku emerged from the steep bank cutting the water's edge. Higher up, Kererū wheeled in and out of the thickening canopy all day. Inside the plastic café blinds, sparrows bounced confidently from table to table to floor scavenging crumbs and leftovers. Wooden serving flags bore endemic bird and plant names. I was given a 'huia', the extinct, exceedingly beautiful, wattlebird.[9] I thought of the iridescent Tui, abundant and vocal outside. I wanted to stay.

At the same time, I thought of northern Queensland places of intimacy and pull. I wanted to go back: to walk outside in the rain and lift off over the steel fence, over 'the ridge of snares' of Kariori, northwest over Northland, across the Tasman Sea, and up the smoking coast to the cool tropical high country, the notophyllous archives of other Gondwanan rainforests with ecotones of rosegums unfenced, vibrant, and equally climate precarious on the mountain ranges of the Wet Tropics. Embodied relationscapes, I carry everywhere, unwittingly.[10]

This is what Zealandia, a determined restoration of other-than-human naturecultures that now gathers and combusts its own orb of life force, can do. That did do, in bodily encounter—despite a strained language of 'mammalian predators' and 'human destroyers of paradise'. It restores and recovers, and intravenously rehomes: an activated to an activating aesthetics of a colonising Anthropocene-in-the-*un*making. What lingers is a particular-planetary intricacy of the vital affects. Amidst a preternatural relationscape of extinction and precarity, this haven project is equally a rare human affair of *more* life. In the onflow here, I want to touch on ideas and insights of 'more life', 'relationscapes', and 'planetarity' amplified or elaborated by the generous defiance of Zealandia.

More Life

In "Queer/Love/Bird Extinction," feminist political thinker Lida Maxwell asks this question: "[W]hen human life persists after certain species of birds go extinct, might human affects nonetheless be lost? Or, put another way: [I]f certain species of birds go extinct, might we also lose certain species of human love?" (684).

In the face of a climate crisis and accelerating species extinction, Maxwell argues for an alternative politics of survival:

> [O]ne that foregrounds the connections between *inter-human affects and a vibrant multispecies world*, between intimate and public feelings, and calls for preservation of a multispecies world through and on behalf of human pleasure. (emphasis added, 685)

This is not a softer form of human exceptionalism or anthrocentrism.[11] Maxwell arrives at this position in large part through a reading of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in conjunction with the extant love letters of Carson and Dorothy Freeman (exchanged across the final decade of Carson's life) "where they depict their love as a wondrous multispecies achievement constituted through encounters with birds" (682). In such a reframing, urgent calls for biodiversity conservation, species recovery projects or political action on climate need to be more than about 'mere life' but also articulate and advocate for the human necessity of 'more life': the *intrinsic* human need and daily reach for pleasurable lives of wonder and love. Such love, as Maxwell intersectionally frees it, "need be neither worldless nor heteronormative, but may be a world-disclosing practice that leads individuals to live, and desire to live, differently" (682).

The concepts of 'mere life' and 'more life' derive, in turn, from the political cultural theorist, Bonnie Honig (Maxwell 684). 'Mere life' focuses exclusively on the specifics, immediacies, the quotidian needs of survival: the 'bread' of sustenance. 'More life' matters the often-obscured surplus affects, vital experiences, and unpredictable relationships that make 'mere life' possible—or even desirable. 'More life' includes the affective pleasures of love and wonder experienced through other-than-human relations; that these dimensions of human life are not the preserve of a privileged few able to escape from 'the daily grind' in a white, bourgeoise, normative body (increasingly in the ubiquitous weekend SUV), but are the very dimensions that make 'mere life' possible. As Maxwell argues, and as Zealandia richly provokes: a "vibrant multispecies world where pleasurable, meaningful human lives might thrive" is a *political* matter (693). This matters: "*not only a future of biological life but also a future where affective unsettlement, pleasure, surprise, love, and wonder are possible*" (693). Species of life. Species of love. Species of more life.

Relationscapes

> It takes me not somewhere else but right where I can become, to a force-field that is an eventness in the making, an exfoliation of experience (Manning 154).

Stay out with Orbell and me in the steady rain. Did you see the kererū? *Embodied relationscapes you carry everywhere*. Recently, as sparked by practice, I have begun to use the term *relationscapes* alongside that of ecosystems, and *bioalterity* alongside biodiversity. The latter—ecosystems and biodiversity—are undeniably the effective language of conservation biology and threatened species protection that underpins not just the Zealandia project but the politics of extinction and species recovery projects in Australia. But, they are no longer sufficient in this stage of the anthropocenic Great Acceleration, the Viral Bushranger Times of 2019–2020. I want to open up the experience and language of the extinction exclosure.

The word *relationscape* was coined by the artist and philosopher Erin Manning and her oeuvre of research-creation associated with the SenseLab, an international network of artists and thinkers, writers and makers working together at the crossroads of philosophy, relational art, and activism (Manning). Some way from my focus on affective encounters with naturecultures on the brink, she developed it in thinking with/through the agency or force of particular works of art to create transformative movement, or transformative space-times in encounter. "Relationscapes abound," she wrote, in the forms of "painting, song, dance, sacred object, and power word" (183). They create movement, incite [human] bodies to move, and in doing so "they create a movement of thought" which has the (political) potential to be transformative (183).

I am, however, using 'relationscape' at a slant to Manning's: to embrace a relational mesh of life that bounds on from 'ecosystems' and 'biodiversity' (or indeed, landscape, place, world/s) to encompass a lived, interbeing milieu that impels translation in art, writing and speculation, rather than the translated object of art itself. A relationscape foregrounds a mesh of relations and processes, and brings into conversation the interlinked dimensions of affectivity, movement in thought, and ethical response-making via the very practice of open field wit(h)nessing I am grounding here in practice. It conjures an amplified translation of natureculture relations and embodied encounters in colonised Country, one belonged-by, or another, where one is a wit(h)nessing guest, an attuning visitor, as I was in Zealandia and elsewhere in Aotearoa. Art as *aesthetics*, as attunement, as wit(h)nessing practice and its becomings, is—and can be much more—a vital waymaker in perceiving, listening to, and refiguring relationscapes of extinction.

Planetarity is *pan alterity*

Now, at the exit gate of the refugial buzz, let me cast a particular connection with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's word *planetarity*. This "untranslatable" term, as Spivak herself wrote, is alluded to and stretched as a mode of investigation in the *planetary aesthetics* framework of the artist collective World of Matter (Spivak "Planetarity"; Lynes; Arns). Indeed, it is impossible to refer to 'planetary aesthetics' in any sense without first connecting this to the work of both Spivak and the World of Matter artists.[12]

But it is here that I want to align both the word and concept of *planetarity* with *pan alterity*. Indeed, rearrange the letters: each term is a literal anagram of the other. As Spivak has made explicit, planetarity was an English word first used by her in 1997 in a lecture that forms the chapter, "Imperative to Re-imagine the Planet" in her influential work, *An Aesthetic Education in an Era of Globalisation* (335).[13] Later, she wrote that planetarity "was figured as *a word set apart from notions of the planetary, the planet, the earth, the world, the globe, globalization, and the like in their common usage*" (emphasis added, "Planetarity" 1223). Spivak wrote:

> *The planet is in the species of alterity*, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan. It is not really amenable to a neat contrast with the globe. I cannot say "the planet, on the other hand." When I invoke the planet, I *think of the effort required to figure the (im) possibility of this underived intuition*.
>
> The globe is on our computers. No one lives there.
>
> If we imagine ourselves as *planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities*, alterity remains underived from us… (emphasis added, 1223)

Gayatri Spivak makes it clear that her planetarity is different from a sense of "being the [environmental] custodians of our very own planet," although she has "no objection to such a sense of accountability." And yet, it is not that simple, she counters, because this "sense of custodianship" of the planet has ultimately provided "the alibi for *good* global [colonising] capitalism" (1223).

Planetarity, then, as *pan alterity*. The prefix pan denotes all; every; whole; all-inclusive. I read it, from Spivak's own cues and clues, even as she intends the word to be untranslatable or not fixed into a singular taxonomy of meaning as a "a nickname, a

putative synonym" for an impossible-to-imagine alterity, human and other-than-human, continuous and discontinuous with the animating gift of life (1223). So, back to *bioalterity*. Bioalterity, much more than biodiversity, is a keener translation of what I wit(h)nessed bodily at Zealandia: a vital, rain-soaked reminder of a species of alterity, as Spivak aptly expresses; a vivid more-than-human planetarity that never fails to animate, as much as it humbles and mobilises in the bigger, madder, harder relationscape of the unfolding sixth mass extinction of ancient life and lifeways in the Anthropocene biosphere (Ceballos et al. 2017; 2020).

*

I caught the cable car back down to the city centre. The skies cleared abruptly as the weather front moved through and out into Cook Strait. By 7:35 p.m. the sun was out. Walked towards the harbour into the sea air, past the Wellington Central Library closed for earthquake strengthening work, and along its street colonnade of towering nikau palms rendered in dark galvanised steel, lead and copper. Past a strip garden of young Lancewood/Horoeka (once the extinct Moa's favourite forage), and another with stromatolite-like mounds of neon green moss and dark aloes. Back to the morning's flowering tree ablaze in the golden twilight of Sunday. The wind that howls at windows returned at dusk.

9 December 2019: Pōneke/Te Whanganui-a-Tara to Ōtepoti (Wellington to Dunedin)

Across the Cook Strait and down the east coast of the South Island (Figure 10). A procession of silver braided rivers in flood were discharging cloudy plumes of ochrous silt into the South Pacific Ocean (Figure 11). Ōtepoti, the city of Dunedin, remained inaccessible by road from the north.

At Dunedin airport, a display case notice from the Otago Museum read:

> Gabby, born 1963, died 1998, 36 years old, died of heat distress.

Gabby was a Northern Royal Albatross born at the Royal Albatross Centre at Pukekura/Taiaroa Head on the eastern tip of the long finger of the Otago Peninsula. Her taxidermied body, usually there behind the glass, was back at the museum being cleaned.

9–13 December 2019: the Otago Peninsula and Pukekura/Taiaroa Head

The Green Cottage (Portobello): soft soundings of *now-time*

Open-field Notes:

> Bellbird and tui choruses suffuse the morning and evening long twilights. I try to record these, but mostly sit and listen unplugged. By day, bellbirds and an occasional tui syncopate with the throats of ewes and long-tailed lambs on the open hill paddocks. Complex refrains of metallic bells, squeaks, low honks jam with soft streams of distant *baaying*.
>
> The sounding is redolent with other intersections across space and time, a spiral turn of *now-time*, the term used by novelist Patricia Grace to describe the dynamic commingling of present, future and past (*Potiki* 34). Here, an older forested Aotearoa-Zealandia, the submerged landmass of Gondwana, coexists with the project of the deforested Farm of colonial providence envisaged by the British Empire for its northern home isles—the away-from-home farm of a *new* Zealand, across the equator in the far Southern Hemisphere (*Blood Earth Fire*). The watery domain of Terra Australis Incognita, the Unknown Land in the South never found by James Cook's Endeavour commission was remapped, nonetheless, into the imperial supply chain of capital colonisation and extractive terraforming.
>
> It is a queer link from twilight bellbirds and carefree lambs on the Otago Peninsula back to the unfolding shadow country of *Zincland*, the McArthur River Mine and the 'man-made volcano' of a toxic waste dump, as Borroloola Elder Jack Green vividly refers to it (Boscacci "Greetings"). The shadow trace of zinc and ports, and this cross-Tasman interlude of bodily wit(h)nessing, is disclosing and grounding a shared history of colonisation in Moana Oceania and the islands of Australia and Aotearoa in unimaginable synchronies. "To connect is a decolonising act," the sentinel wisdom of Tāmaki Makaurau art curator and place-maker Ema Tavola, asks to be heard again, and again, in the preternatural relationscapes of an Anthropocene-in-the-making.[14]

Fig. 12 Pukekura/Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula, Aotearoa, December 2019.
Photo © Louise Boscacci

With toroa at Pukekura: A panorama of intimacy

The wind again. At the eastern tip of the long finger of the Otago Peninsula on the edge of the South Pacific Ocean sits Pukekura/Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve. Fenced within this headland patch lives the only mainland breeding colony of Toroa, Northern Royal Albatross (*Diomedea sanfordi*) in the Southern Hemisphere. Toroa are endemic to Aotearoa, and bear a conservation status of *At Risk–Naturally Uncommon*. They too are a taonga species for Ngāi Tahu (New Zealand Department of Conservation "Northern").

For three days I wit(h)nessed albatross soar, circle and land at Pukekura. One afternoon, standing in a near gale on a boardwalk straddling the ocean cliffs, a burst of activity erupted above me. Mine was the only human body out in the wild weather. A procession of one, two, three, four Toroa alighting from the protected refuge of the upper headland buzzed low directly overhead, much lower in flight than usual, before soaring up into the fierce southerly wind and arcing back from

the west to drop again paddle-feet first into the colony's nesting grounds. I, too, was being watched. I, too, was being wit(h)nessed (Figure 13). Albatross are aerial hypnotists. They stilled me in my tracks. I had no need to move. There was nowhere else to be.

The Northern Royal Albatross with a wingspan of three metres is, along with the wandering albatross, one of the largest living seabirds. After fledging, adolescents go to sea for five years, flying as far as Chile and back, flying without touching land; alighting, resting and sleeping only on the open ocean. The birds I passed hours with that afternoon at Pukekura included adolescents returning for the first time since birth, a wildlife ranger told me later. Others were pair-bonded adults who had returned to their natal zone to nest, laying one egg, and tending and fledging one chick, if lucky. Each albatross will then go back to sea, solo, for the following year.

"Plastic smells like squid," states an educational display inside the Royal Albatross Centre at the entrance to the protected colony. Heading up to the Lance (and Agnes) Richdale Observatory to spy on Toroa sitting on nests at a closer range, our guide observed that rangers "are picking up some plastic in chick regurgitations now." This is barely on the scale of the horror images of dead plastic-filled Laysan Albatrosses from islands in the North Pacific Gyre and the multiple patches of plastic discard known colloquially as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.[15] Yet here also, on the edge of the remote South Pacific Ocean, albatrosses are returning to feed chicks from fishing trips offshore with crops of squid, crustaceans, small fish, salps, and particles of plastic waste.

On a cold blustery December day inside the glass walls of the observatory, we talked about critical climate change too. Planetary heating is increasingly a life and death issue for these cool climate birds adapted to subantarctic temperatures and naturally susceptible to heat distress. When too hot, albatrosses pant, and stand up to cool their legs which exposes eggs to flystrike or young chicks to heat exhaustion; now sprinklers have been installed in the managed nesting area to help cool both adults and chicks in summer extremes.

The Pukekura albatrosses led me to many other birds and beings. A colony of the rare Otago Shag (a blue-eyed cormorant) perched on the slope just below the Toroa nesting grounds; the birds facing into the sheltered harbour for which they are named. A busy, vocal, odorous colony of Red-Billed Gulls with peppery chicks sitting between the Centre's carpark and cliff edge. Spotted Shags strung out along lava black rock ledges. Below them, beds of giant kelp. Sleek New Zealand Fur Seals (Kekeno) slicing through the kelp and wave surge to join a colony of young and old

snoozing on a rock platform in the wild littoral zone. A pair of New Zealand Sea Lions (Rāpoka) hauled out on rocks inside the sheltered harbour. Black-backed Gulls; a Swamp Harrier; one Royal Spoonbill flying silently south across the peninsula. South Island Pied Oystercatchers (torea); Variable Oystercatchers; White-faced Herons on calm mudflats. European Goldfinches, flashes of red and gold, in seeding thistle bushes let grow wild on road verges tight up against bare hill paddocks. Black Swans cruising low along inky bays. Black Swans, adults with creches of cygnets in flocks of fifty and more, preening on the bay waters near Portobello, where I returned each evening.

Rapture and graciousness. Rapture and gratitude. *Rapture* and *grace*. These words bubbled up in the days I spent in the presence of the majestic Toroa. Words for entwined vital affects, barely effable. Not 'joy' or 'hope'. Too easy, this vocabulary now, the Toroa intimated. As is 'grief'' (even eco-grief), arguably a complex process over a duration of living onwards, in spite of, in the bruised clouds of, rather than a generalised emotive affect.[16] I am not writing of wonder either. Not here. The rapture accorded by the albatrosses is theirs to make and give, in embodied action. In unaffected soaring at speed over vast distances attuned to winds that buffet humans near off the ground, do they experience sheer physical euphoria? Is this what was transmitted in the bodily encounter? That aesthetic exchange of grace?

The rapture accorded also cannot be divorced from what is an abiding collaboration with the human kinds that make up the intensively managed facility that now sits at Taiaroa Head, once the site of a significant Māori pā: the NZ Department of Conservation/Te Papa Atawhai rangers, the Otago Peninsula Trust, a charitable conservation trust and Te Poāri a Pukekura (Pukekura Co-management Trust).[17] It is not a 'natural world' in the ever-strange taxonomic divide of nonhuman nature and human culture in anthropocenic times. The outer headland, the gazetted nature reserve, open and free to the Toroa ("they chose it," a ranger repeats), is nonetheless a fully fenced exclosure similar to Zealandia, ringed with 'predator traps' for cats, mustelids (stoats, ferrets), ship rats, and the occasional Brushtail Possum. All pose threats to albatross adults, chicks and eggs as do planetary heating and critical oceanic change. The high fence also excludes human interlopers, except on timed and regulated walks from the visitor centre along a defined path up into the sealed observatory zone; this is a privilege for those who can afford the entrance fee, but elsewhere the headland is an unencumbered and accessible commons. A dedicated community of people live and breathe Toroa at Pukekura: an albatross 'staff', in service to individual birds and their long lives. More than 'kin', they have cause to use the te reo Maori word "kaitiaki"—meaning guardian or caregiver of land, sea and sky—having invested in active reciprocity and futurity (DOC "Help protect"). The word love fits here: the reach and stretch of 'more life' to which Lida Maxwell alludes (Figure 14).

Each year, the "Royal Cam name the chick competition" invites virtual witnesses of the nesting community to choose a name for that year's featured chick. The one chick that has been watched from hatching to successful fledging via a 24-hour camera and popular video stream (the Royal cam). On September 1, the name for the 2020 chick, an egg from a nesting bird in December, was decided by Te Poāri a Pukekura and public vote. It was *Atawhai*—Māori for kindness. The word, with subtle valences carried in translation, means "to show kindness" and to be "serenely beautiful" (DOC "Royal cam").

There is sheer power in an albatross able to be an albatross on an unequally human-trammelled planet. Southern Ocean wanderers, up close these birds of grace offer a reprieve, a defiant exemption from the relentless depauperation of the planetary bios, however temporary that may yet turn out to be. In the panorama of intimacy encountered at Pukekua, the Toroa embodied uplift. They linger still, as uplift.

13 December 2019: Ōtepoti to Tāmaki Makaurau and back to Kamay/Botany Bay, Sydney

It took seven minutes by jet to cross the Cook Strait from the tip of the South Island to the touch of the coast of the North Island. Just one hour and 45 minutes from Ōtepoti back to Tāmaki. East, visible through the cabin window, the glistening snow-topped Mount Ruapehu was a parting reminder that not all volcanoes in Aotearoa are extinct.

8 August 2020: Meeting *Zincland* again

If you pause at Pukekura and look southwest up into Otago Harbour, the small but busy shipping hub of Port Chalmers is clearly visible day and night. By direct albatross flight, it is a mere 8.8 kilometres away (Figure 15). In between passages of Toroa wit(h)nessing, I drove the winding peninsula road around to Port Chalmers. I was following a hunch; that same species of affective niggle that sparked the *Zincland* project and propelled me to Aotearoa to begin with. A cruise ship, the *Golden Princess*, was docked and disembarking passengers. The town was already busy. I was heading for the Maritime Museum close to the harbourfront, but decided to avoid the gathering crowd and to wend up into the hills above the port to visit Orokonui Ecosanctuary/Te Korowai o Mihiwaka. This, another ecological and intercultural island recovery project encircled by a predator exclusion fence, close to Ōtepoti/Dunedin.[18] If I had travelled on for another two kilometres around the harbour shoreline north of the Port, I would have arrived at Deborah Bay. Eight months later, back across the Tasman in the Illawarra, I found that foreshadowed connection

with Port Chalmers and Deborah Bay in my continuing trace and wit(h)nessing of *Zincland's* shadow places. That particular telling must wait for another occasion.

In late 2020, as a second coronavirus lockdown lifted locally, I wrote to Gayatri Spivak via email with my anagrammatic revelation of planetarity as pan alterity. I was excited. What did she think? She replied that same day from where she was teaching at a remote village school in rural West Bengal, India.

"We keep trying," she said.

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I acknowledge the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation, the Yuin nation, and the Gundungurra nation of the high Illawarra and Wingecarribee region of New South Wales in whose Countries I live, work and learn. (These are known as the NSW Southern Highlands in settler-coloniser terms). I teach too on the lands of the Gadigal of the Eora nation, Gadi/ Sydney. I acknowledge the abiding Gurambilbarra Wulgurukaba people and the Bindal people of the Birrigubba nation, their respective Elders and custodial communities of Townsville, North Queensland, Traditional Owners of the land, seas and skies of first breath and where my long bones were fully grown up. In Aotearoa, I especially thank Dr Bridie Lonie, Dunedin School of Art (Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Dunedin Ōtepoti), for her generous hospitality. I thank Elizabeth Grosz, Leonard Lawler and Eve Lynch who entertained my questions and offered suggestions about the Bergson quote at Zealandia.

Greenhouse shadows—paying the carbon debt: This conference and passage of encountering was a rare opportunity as a self-funded researcher in the academic precariat; an acknowledged privilege to be able to undertake and experience. It involved one international flight, 1.5 domestic return flights, Aotearoa, and small car travel: an estimated 7.7 tonnes of CO2-e (6.7 tonnes from air flights alone). As part of a yearly or project-based accounting of art related scholarship and practice, I participate in Greenfleet, a non-profit organisation that seeds and maintains biodiverse revegetation projects on settler degraded patches land in Australia and Aotearoa to materially sequester carbon in living havens. A particular monetary contribution for the project which produced my *Swamphen* papers was calculated and paid (https://www.greenfleet.com.au/offset).

Album of Figures

Fig. 1 Entrance wall with Bergson and friends, Zealandia ecosanctuary, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 2 Zealandia steel perimeter 'predator exclusion' fence (top) and the fence being met either side by rainforest regrowth (below). The fence is 2.2 metres high. December 8, 2019. Photos © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 3 Orbell, the resident South Island male takahē at Zealandia, Aotearoa, December 8, 2019.
Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 4 With Orbell grazing, Zealandia, Aotearoa, December 8, 2019. Photos © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 5 Two South Island takahē, Orbell and Nio, live beyond this gate in the Zealandia haven, Aotearoa. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 6 Zealandia 'Fence Facts': steel mesh 'predator-exclusion' fence with introduced mammal species as cut-outs (rabbit, cat, weasel, Australian Brushtail Possum). Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 7 (Overleaf) Kererū, New Zealand pigeon, watching the watcher, Zealandia, Aotearoa, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 8 Tūī, Zealandia, Aotearoa, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 9 Regenerating bank of mamaku, black tree fern, Zealandia, Aotearoa, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

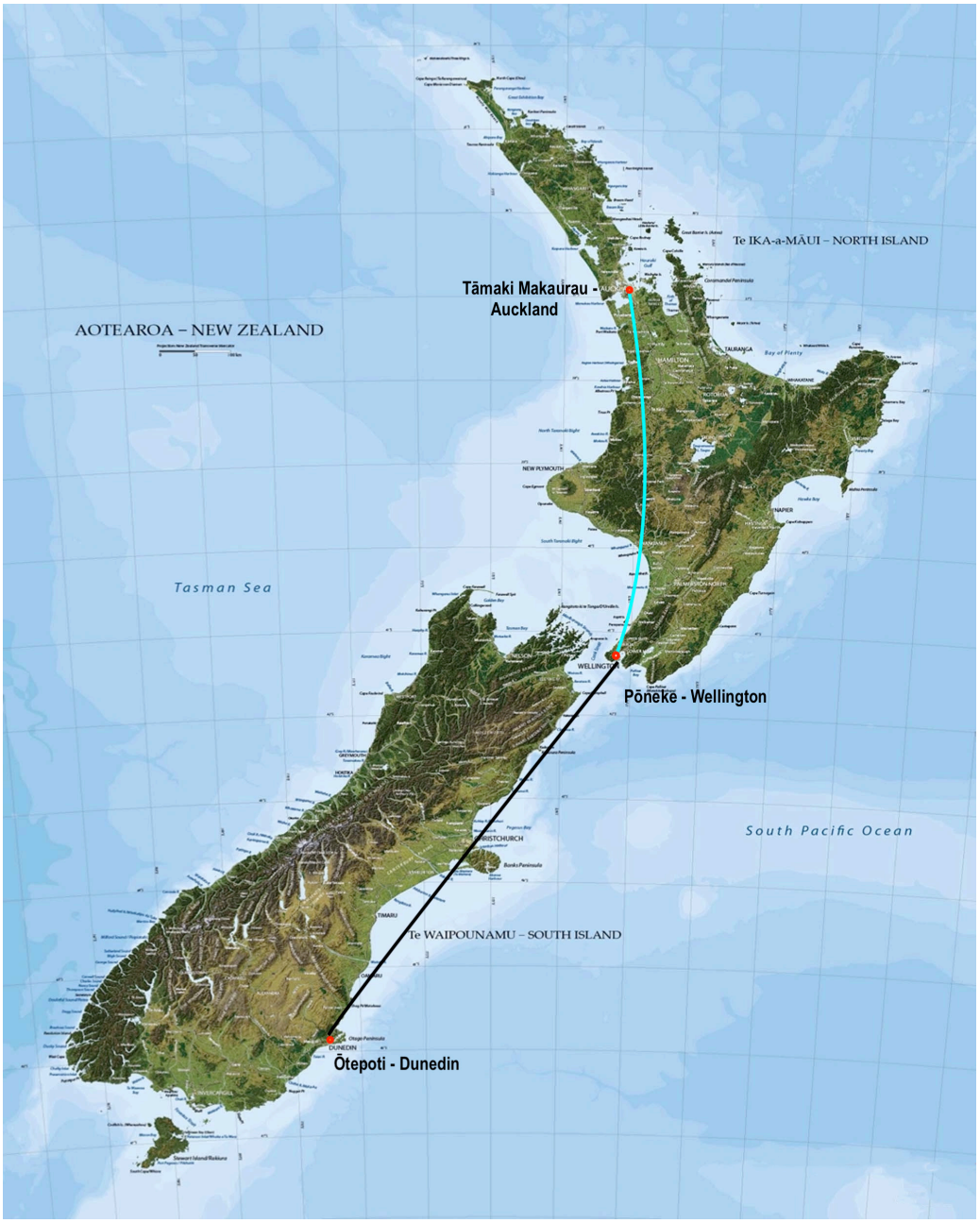

Fig. 10 Movement south: Lines of travel from Tāmaki Makaurau to Pōneke/Wellington (Zealandia), to Ōtepoti/Dunedin (Otago Peninsula and Pukekura). Aotearoa New Zealand base map by Geographx, with permission. Image © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 11 Flying south from Pōneke/Wellington to Otepoti/Dunedin across Cook Strait and down the east coast. Top: Te Karaka/Cape Campbell and Clifford Bay, tip of the South Island. Middle: The braided Rakaia River in flood. Bottom: The Rangitata and Orari Rivers in flood, meeting the South Pacific Ocean. December 9, 2019. Photos © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 12 Pukekura/Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula, Aotearoa, December 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 13 Adolescent toroa, Northern Royal Albatross, wit(h)nessing from above. 11 December, 2019. Photo © Louise Boscacci

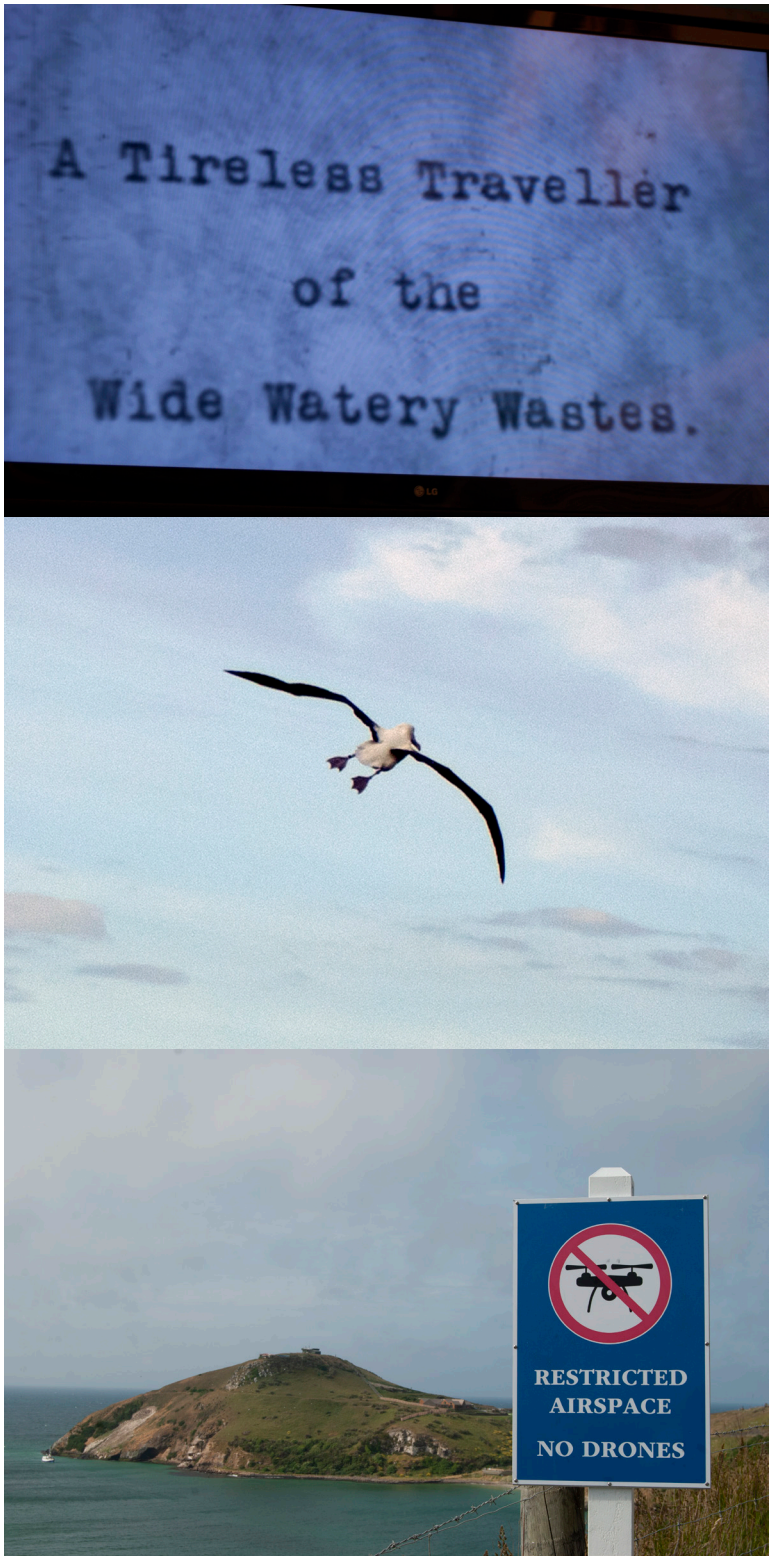

Fig. 14 Pukekura/Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula, Aotearoa, 9–13 December 2019. Top: Word frame from Lance Richdale's 1939 film, "Royal Albatross and chick at Taiaroa Head" (Royal Albatross Centre). Middle: A rare drone free airspace in collaborative, intimate guardianship of bioalterity in the Anthropocene-in-the-making. Bottom: a young toroa in descent mode. Photos © Louise Boscacci

Fig. 15 Meeting *Zincland* again. En route to Pukekura, the busy international shipping hub of Port Chalmers beckons from across Otago Harbour. December 2019.
Photo © Louise Boscacci

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NOTES

1 The Eurasian Blackbird, *Turdus merula*, a British Pākehā introduced species of origin, ubiquitous in the inner city's parks and gardens along with the abundant house sparrow/tiu/English Sparrow, *Passer domesticus* (see Armitage). I listened to an avian dawn chorus of (only) sparrows and blackbirds each morning of my stay in Tāmaki.

2 Also known as ZEALANDIA, in all capital letters. I refer to Zealandia throughout, after Lynch (6). The name, in turn, is based on that given to Zealandia, a large submerged landmass of which only the present-day islands of New Zealand and New Caledonia exist above sea level. Zealandia is recognised as part of the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana, connected with what was to become eastern Australia and west Antarctica, and is thought to have completely separated from Australia approximately seventy million years ago. In 2017, geologists Nick Mortimer and colleagues made the case that Zealandia should be recognised as the eighth continent on Earth (Mortimer et al. 28).

3 The tui: Māori: tūī. Also known as the koko, *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*, an endemic passerine, referred to as the parson bird (or mockingbird) by early British colonisers. The sole species in the genus Prosthemadera; one of the diverse Australasian honeyeater family Meliphagidae, and one of two living species of that bird family found in Aotearoa, the other being the New Zealand bellbird, *Anthornis melanura* (Robertson).

4 Māori: pōhutukawa (Moorfield, *pohutukawa*).

5 This quote may be a paraphrasing of Bergson's influential ideas on time as duration, with the future open to the active role of free will rather than a predetermined (inevitable) becoming of the present-past; its verbatim origin in Bergson's writings remains elusive to the Bergson scholars consulted in this research; I welcome any reader input to place it more precisely. Elizabeth Grosz on Bergson's philosophy of duration as the dynamic commingling of past, present, future finds: "The present is that which acts and lives, which functions to anticipate an immediate future in action. The present is a form of impending action" (102).

6 This plan to bring the birds back to Wellington was seeded by *Natural Wellington*, a project and plan by the organisation Forest and Bird, published in 1991, in order to begin to restore the city's endemic forests and other plant communities. Jim Lynch of Zealandia described Wellington City at that time as being a "biological cot case" (Lynch 35-51).

7 The Predator Free NZ movement has a controversial vision to exterminate all "introduced predators" in Aoteraoa New Zealand by 2050. The list includes: three species of rat (the kiore, the Norway and the ship rat), the stoat, weasel, ferret, and cat, and the Brushtail Possum (Predator Free NZ Trust).

8 The extinct larger North Island takahē (mōho), *Porphyrio mantelli*, possibly persisted in relictual numbers until 1894; nine species of the much larger and unrelated, flightless moa, the megafaunal ratite group *Dinornithiformes*, were extirpated prior to European colonisation, in the wake of Polynesian settlement in the late 13th century. Scientists have argued, if still somewhat contentiously, that the catastrophic moa extinctions (at least that of four *Diornis* species, including the two-metre tall giant moa) were ultimately the result of hunting and harvesting of the birds for meat, feathers and eggs, in concert with early transformations to homeland vegetation on both islands (see Gemmel et al.). The more secure pukeko, *Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus* of Aotearoa, is a subspecies of the Australasian Purple Swamphen, *Porphyrio porphyrio*, this journal's namesake.

9 Huia, *Heteralocha acutirostris*, once endemic to the North Island with a last confirmed sighting in 1907 (the Tararua Range); other credible sightings until 1922. In the small museum at Zealandia, a recording of the huia call whistled from memory by Henere Haumana in 1909 remains a plangent translation of an extinct bird song of Aotearoa.

10 Gondwana, which began to break up some 180 mya, included what was to become present-day Antarctica, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, South America, Africa, Madagascar, as well as the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula.

11 See Plumwood (119): anthrocentrism alludes to thinking at the intersection of anthropocentrism (human centrism) and androcentrism (human male centrism).

12 While the bigger project of *particular-planetary aesthetics* being opened out here in this issue of *Swamphen* via our conference panels acknowledges both, this is equally an independently developed conversation written about elsewhere; where there is resonant intersection in practice—the material shadows trace, for instance—this was a happy overlap, realised in hindsight (see, for instance, Boscacci "Ecologising").

13 The 1997 Mary Levin Goldschmidt-Bollag Memorial Lecture for Stiftung Dialogik/the Dialogik Foundation. See also Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, p. 72.

14 The words of Ema Tavola, place maker and art curator of Aotearoa, and Fiji, during her keynote lecture, "Vunilagi Vou—A New Horizon: Curating as Social Inclusion in Moana Oceania", at Aesthetics, Politics and Histories: The Social Context of Art, Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) conference, RMIT University, Melbourne, 5–8 December 2018. See: Boscacci "Greetings."

15 For instance, see: https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/podcast/mar18/nop14-ocean-garbage-patches.html.

16 On ecological grief, see Cunsolo et al. (275).

17 A pā is a fortified village or a defensive hill fort (Moorfield).

18 Being developed by the Otago Natural History Trust in the Orokonui Valley, just 20 km northeast of urban Ōtepoti.