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Hīkoi

By Chris Cormack

The pōhutukawa hasn’t bloomed yet
but already the streets pulse red
with flags that speak of sovereignty,
of promises made beneath different stars.

Fifty thousand, they said,
then seventy, then a hundred—
counting became pointless
when the hills themselves seemed to move
with the weight of the people.

Down Lambton, past the cafes
where tourists usually sit,
past the heritage buildings
that have seen other marches,
other moments when the land
remembered itself.

The Beehive hums its concrete song
while tino rangatiratanga flags
snap like thunder in the northerly,
their red and white and black
making semaphore signals to tīpuna
who walked here first.

The air thick with karanga,
with waiata, with chants in two tongues
that become one voice:
Not one step back,
Not one comma changed,
Not one letter erased
from what our ancestors signed.

The harbour watches, as it always has,
The children of Tangaroa dancing
on the edge of the city that grew up around a document

defended generation after generation.

This is how sovereignty looks:
Like grandmothers in comfortable shoes
Like students with protest signs
Like businessmen still wearing suits
Like families pushing strollers
Like kaumātua leading karakia
Like a hundred thousand stories
converging on a single street
on a summer day
when the nation
remembered
its name.

Te Hokinga mai

By Chris Cormack

Beneath the skin of Papatūānuku, karanga echo
Through whenua that remembers
Before survey pegs and paper deeds,
When Te Tiriti was more than words,
When partnership meant standing together
Like kauri and kahikatea.

In council chambers and courtrooms
Waitangi's promises whisper still,
While on marae, kaumātua speak
Of maunga sold for copper pennies,
Of whanga choked with reclamation,
Of awa diverted from ancient paths.

But listen - through concrete and colonial law,
Mauri flows strong as ever,
Pōhutukawa roots crack colonial foundations,
Pushing through like revolution,
Red flowers bleeding history into harbour.

On seized land, now returned,
Kaitiaki plant tomorrow's rongoā,
Their hands remember what textbooks forgot:
The way to read the moods of Tāwhirimātea,
How to honour rāhui and seasons,
The rhythm of karakia at dawn.

In treaty settlements and land occupations,
In kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa,
In every "kia ora" spoken proud in parliament,
Power shifts like tide returning to shore.
Place names shed their colonial clothes:
Aoraki stands tall again,
Not the shadow of some English captain.

This is not about erasing tauiwi,
But weaving new patterns in old whāriki,
Finding space in the wharenui
For all who honour te ao Māori,
Who understand that ownership
Means less than belonging.

In this time of awakening,
We are all called to be kaingaki māra,
To unpick the tangled roots of crown law

And plant seeds of tino rangatiratanga
In soil that remembers its first karakia,
Its first and truest names.

Ka hoki mai te mana,
Ki te whenua,
Ki te marae,
Ki te iwi.
Tihei mauri ora!

Return to Te Aro

By Chris Cormack

Between Te Ahumairangi's clouded height
And harbour waters churning winter-grey,
We thread through Willis, where the wind holds sway
Past ghosts of Te Aro pā's ancient site.

Three weeks of rest dissolve in morning's light—
Forgot passwords, meetings gone astray,
While southerlies mock summer's delayed stay,
And email inboxes loom infinite.

Yet in this space where once the flat stretched free,
Before reclamation changed the shore,
The spirits of Te Āti Awa see

Us hurry through these glass-wrapped corridors.
Below sealed streets, old streams still seek the sea,
While stories from Tāngata whenua claim these floors.

He Ako, He Ora

by Chris Cormack

In the space between screens and stars
We learn as our tūpuna did—
By doing, by being, by sharing breath and thought,
No walls between teacher and learner,
No artificial hierarchies of knowing.

The kuia watches the fingers of mokopuna
Dance across holographic keys,
Coding ancient karakia into quantum space,
While she whispers the true names of winds
That her grandmother's grandmother knew.
Together they weave new patterns
From old knowledge and fresh discovery.

In the innovation hub
(Built on land returned, restored, remembered)
Rangatahi teach professors
How quantum superposition echoes
The way our tūpuna understood
A thing could be both here and there,
Now and then, one and many.
While learning why the tōtara
Grows just so on this hillside.
Knowledge flows like wai,
Finding its own levels,
Nourishing as it passes.

Some days the ākonga leads,
Their fresh eyes seeing new paths
Through ancient mazes.
Some days the tuakana guides,
Their wisdom illuminating
Shadows cast by progress.

In virtual wānanga,
Distance dissolves like morning mist—
A kaumātua in Hokianga
Shares rongoā wisdom
With students in Rakiura,
While they show him how their drones
Track whale migrations,
Each learning from each,
All growing together.

This is how we always meant to learn:

Like harakeke clusters,
The old and new shoots
Supporting each other,
Every frond both giving
And receiving strength,
No separation between
Teacher and taught,
Just wisdom finding
Its natural flow
Through generations
Like tides through mangroves—
Constant, circular,
Eternal.

Quantum superpositions

by Chris Cormack

In quantum realms, particles dance
Like the stories of Tāne:
Present in all places at once,
Until observed, until named,
Until karakia calls them into being.

Our tūpuna always knew
About entanglement—
How a kupu spoken on Aoraki
Ripples through Te Waipounamu,
How a change in one part
Changes the whole.
No separation possible
In te ao Māori,
Just as quantum pairs remain connected
Across any distance.

Schrödinger never knew
His cat walked paths
Our tohunga understood:
The space between states,
Where something is both
And neither,
Like the moment between
Te Kore and Te Pō,
Where infinite potential
Dwells in darkness,
Waiting to manifest,
Each possibility a seed
In the void's fertile soil.
Where all possibilities exist
In sacred suspension.

In the quantum labs
Built on returned whenua,
Rangatahi write equations
That describe particle spin
In the language of poi,
Finding in quaternions
The mathematics of wero,
While their instruments detect
What tohunga always saw:
The underlying unity
Of all things.

Wave functions collapse
Like fishing nets drawn tight,
But memory remains
In superposition—
Past and future tangled
Like roots of kahikatea,
Supporting each other
Through shared quantum fields
And shared whakapapa.

Probabilities spread
Like ripples on water,
Each possibility a pathway
Through space-time
Like the many routes
Māui took to catch the sun,
All existing simultaneously
Until story fixes them in place.

This is how our ancestors
Read the stars, the seeds,
The flight of birds—
Understanding that truth,
Like light,
Can be both wave and particle,
Both here and there,
Both story and fact,
Both ancient and yet to come.

The RFP Dance

by Chris Cormack

Box-ticking ballet in bureaucrat's prose,
A thousand pages of "please propose"
Solutions to problems not quite defined,
With budgets and timelines left unrefined.

Must have experience in everything new,
While proving you've done it for decades too,
Please demonstrate infinite scaling with ease,
While running on hardware from the nineties.

Your Agile must waterfall into their forms,
Your innovation must conform to their norms,
"Define all requirements right from the start!"
(While we change our minds and move all the parts)

"Show us your processes!" they demand with glee,
"But fit it in exactly these three sheets, you see,
And don't forget to include with your bid
The names of the juniors you haven't yet hired!"

PRINCE2 certified, ISO compliant,
DevOps and waterfall both in alliance,
Must integrate smoothly with legacy code
(That we can't tell you about till you've been showed)

"We want cutting edge!" the document claims,
While procurement processes from Georgian days
Ensure that by time the contract is signed
The technology's several years behind.

"Must be innovative, creative, and new!"
(But exactly like something we already do)
"Cloud-native, containerised, readily scaled!"
(But match our old system down to detail)

The winners announced after months of delay:
The same vendor chosen who wins every day,
While somewhere a developer reads with despair
The requirements doc that gave Product nightmares.

The Last Stand of Yesterday's Guard

by Chris Cormack

Watch them squirm in leather chairs,
Clutching pearls and splitting hairs,
“But what of merit?” comes their shriek,
As privilege makes their voices weak.

They craft their memos, draft their screed,
“Diversity’s gone mad!” they plead,
While hiding quotas of their own:
“He looks just like me” set in stone.

Their arguments, a house of cards,
Built in country club backyards,
Where nephews land the centre stage,
Through networks built in gilded cage.

See Silicon Valley’s finest hour:
Tech lords drunk on newfound power,
Axing truth and DEI,
To let their bias amplify.

Like billionaires who buy their toys,
Then break them with their tantrum noise,
(See X, where trolls now freely soar,
While progress shows them to the door).

In Meta’s halls and Facebook’s feeds,
They plant their algorithmic seeds,
Where facts become optional things,
And bias spreads on viral wings.

They claim a meritocracy,
While batting down each scrutiny,
Of how they reached their lofty height:
Inheritance and birthright’s might.

In boardrooms, blogs, and echo halls,
They rally ‘round their crumbling walls,
Like dinosaurs who’d curse the comet,
With lawyers’ letters vomit-prompt.

Each measure meant to level plains,
Brings forth their performative pains,
“Reverse discrimination!” howl
The ones who’ve rigged the game so foul.

Their children write diversity
In applications, presently,

While Daddy's cheque ensures their spot—
“Legacy entry” masks the plot.

But time moves like a wrecking ball,
No tech-bro empire stops its fall,
Their resistance, rank and bitter,
Makes their irrelevance yet fitter.

Let history record their stance:
Last soldiers in a dead romance,
Who'd rather burn the house to ground,
Than share the space they never found.

For all their tantrums, fits and fights,
Can't stop tomorrow's dawning lights,
Their power, built on shifting sand,
Slips through their grasping, grasping hand.

The Innovation Vampires

by Chris Cormack

They call themselves visionaries, founders, pioneers—
These buyers of others' blood, sweat, and years,
With daddy's emerald mines and family ties,
They purchase the truth, then promote their lies.

"I built this empire!" the parasites crow,
While actual builders toil down below,
The coders, designers, the ones who create,
Get edited out at a corporate rate.

See them strutting on stages so wide,
Original founders pushed off to the side,
"I dreamed up this platform!" they brazenly claim,
While purchasing patents and others' good name.

Remember the faces you'll never see praised:
The women, the immigrants, voices erased,
Who sparked the ideas, wrote elegant code,
Before golden parachutes helped them unload.

Their "genius" is simply a chequebook unfurled,
"Disruption" means breaking what works in the world,
They'll purchase your platform, then make it much worse,
While media claims them a blessing, not curse.

The Silicon Emperor's clothes are so fine!
(Just don't check the labels, or read the design)
They're wearing the garments of thousands unknown,
While claiming they stitched every button alone.

Their "morning routines" in magazines shine:
"Up at 4 AM, that's how I align!"
But truth would show meetings where others present
The work that they'll claim in the next media event.

They'll cosplay as engineers, nerds who made good,
In hoodies and sneakers, as if they once stood
In graduate housing or garage workspace,
Instead of the boardrooms that birthed their embrace.

Some bought in so early, they almost forget
The actual founders they rushed to reset,
"It's practically same as inventing!" they'll say,
While history's editors help their display.

Each earnings call builds up their elegant fraud:
"My genius" gets all of the media applaud,

While teams of true builders get stock options cheap,
And NDAs ensure their silence runs deep.

But time has a way of revealing the truth,
These emperors' nakedness shows in their youth:
No coding at midnight, no engineering degree,
Just privilege and purchase, then marketing spree.

So let's praise the builders whose names we don't know,
The ones who created, but had to let go,
Their innovations, bought out and rebadged,
By billionaire egos so fragile and staged.

For true innovation grows wild and free,
Not captured in stock splits and CEO fees,
These vampires of venture can purchase their fame,
But history knows better than corporate acclaim.

When Swallowing Became Poetry

*by Chris Cormack

There is a peculiar clarity that arrives when the simple act of eating becomes impossible. Achalasia—the word itself a poetry of medical precision—closed the pathway between desire and nourishment, between hunger and satisfaction. My esophagus, once an unnoticed tunnel of unconscious function, transformed into contested territory where food became foreigner, unwelcome and unable to complete its journey. In this strange new landscape of denial, wairua found its opening. Hunger creates its own altered state—a thinning of barriers between worlds. As my body grew lighter, something else grew heavier within me, more substantial. Words began to arrive unbidden, no longer merely shaped by thought but appearing fully formed, as if transmitted rather than created. The ancestral voice that had always been background static suddenly tuned to perfect clarity in the quiet spaces between heartbeats. I learned to listen not with ears but with something older, something that recognised these messages without translation. Poetry slipped through the same closed passage that rejected food—the body’s resistance no barrier to what insisted on being received. Each syllable became sustenance of another kind. What strange wisdom in this failing body that closed one channel only to open another! My tupuna knew what I needed more than bread, more than comfort—this ancient conversation disguised as verses. The irony was not lost on me: unable to swallow food, I was finally swallowing truth. Each poem became both symptom and cure, diagnosis and treatment. Even now, as medical intervention has created new pathways for nourishment, the channel to wairua remains stubbornly, gloriously open—poetry continuing to arrive with the persistence of hunger, demanding to be consumed, absorbed, and transformed into something that feeds more than just the body.

Both/And

by Chris Cormack

Your pronouns matter
 (don't let them tell you otherwise)
Your right to exist in your own skin matters
 Your bathroom rights matter
 Your sport matters
 Your dignity matters

AND

They know this
They know how deep these waters run
How essential these battles are
So they steal our righteous anger
 package it
 sell it back to us
 twisted

They take real pain
 real struggle
 real lives
And turn them into clickbait
 engagement metrics
 shareholder value

They platform bigots who claim to care
about women's sports
 (never watched a match)
about children's safety
 (while cutting school lunches)
about tradition
 (which tradition?)
about merit
 (inherited wealth speaks)

Your gender matters
AND they use it to distract from their theft
Your ethnicity matters
AND they use it to hide their plunder
Your sexuality matters
AND they rainbow-wash their exploitation

They understand

the power of identity
the strength of community
the force of belonging
So they fragment it
monetise it
squeeze it through their algorithms

Watch them fake-champion
real causes
Watch them diamond-hands
your pain
Watch them profit from
necessary battles

Trans rights matter
AND workers' rights matter
Racial justice matters
AND housing justice matters
Gender equity matters
AND wealth inequality matters

They want us to choose
either/or
When the truth is
both/and

They understand intersectionality
better than they admit
That's why they work so hard
to break its power

Your pronouns matter
Your wages matter
Your healthcare matters
Your housing matters
Your future matters

Everything they mock
matters
Everything they trivialise
matters
Everything they weaponise
matters

AND

Their profit margins
shouldn't

Tūturu

by Chris Cormack

In the space between yes and no
there is a moment
when you can choose
to be what others want
or who you are

Some call it gentle
to smile and nod
to let the tide of wrong
wash over stone
wearing it smooth
until nothing remains

But I have seen
the strength in standing
the aroha in saying
“kāore”
when kāore is needed

There is more mana
in one true word
than a thousand
comfortable lies

This is how we honour
the ones who came before
and the ones yet to come
by being tūturu
even when it stings

Tūturu take 2

by Chris Cormack

They want me to smile and nod
To let the wrong words flow past
Like water over stone
“Don’t make waves,” they say
“Be professional”
As if professionalism means
Swallowing truth whole

But my tīpuna didn’t cross oceans
So I could choke on silence
They didn’t fight for their reo
So I could whisper “yes”
When my heart screams “kāore”

You call it kindness
This soft agreement
This gentle lie
This smooth corporate face

But I call it violence
Against truth
Against self
Against everything we stand for

Real aroha has teeth
Real manaaki has backbone
Sometimes the kindest thing
Is to plant your feet like kauri roots
Look them in the eye
And say
“Not like this”
“Not here”
“Not on my watch”

Because being tūturu
Isn’t just about being true to yourself
It’s about being true to everyone
Who comes after
Everyone who needs to know
That sometimes
The kindest voice
Is the one that says
“No”

commit 8c7e252: Bug 98765: Implement authentic communication protocol

```
#!/usr/bin/perl

use strict;
use warnings;
use Modern::Perl '2025';
use Mana::Tūturu;      # For authentic interactions
use Tikanga::Constants qw/:all/;

=head1 NAME

Authentic.pm - Being real is better than being nice

=head1 SYNOPSIS

    use Authentic;
    my $truth = Authentic->new({
        aroha      => 1,
        polite     => 0,
        authentic  => 1,
    });

    $truth->speak() if $truth->needs_saying();

=head1 DESCRIPTION

Sometimes the kindest thing we can do is speak truth
even when society wants quiet agreement.

=cut

# Constants for truth-telling protocols
use constant FAKE_SMILE => 0;
use constant REAL_TALK  => 1;

sub new {
    my ($class, $params) = @_;

    die "Cannot initialise without aroha"
        unless $params->{aroha};

    my $self = {
        mana_intact => 1,
```

```

        truth_level => 100,
        smile_factor => 0, # We don't fake smiles here
    };

    return bless $self, $class;
}

sub speak_truth {
    my ($self, $context) = @_;

    # Check if we're being asked to be "professional"
    if ($context->wants_superficial) {
        return $self->_handle_pressure_to_conform();
    }

    # Our tīpuna didn't cross oceans for us to return
    # empty strings when asked for truth
    return $self->_deliver_authentic_message();
}

sub _handle_pressure_to_conform {
    my $self = shift;

    # Legacy approach - marked for deletion
    # return "Yes, absolutely" if $thing_is_wrong;

    # New approach - stand like kauri
    return $self->speak_truth({
        gentle    => 0,
        honest    => 1,
        respectful => 1,
    });
}

sub _deliver_authentic_message {
    my ($self, $message) = @_;

    # Authenticity requires proper error handling
    eval {
        $self->validate_truth($message);
        $self->check_courage_levels();
        $self->ensure_aroha_present();
    };
    if ($?) {
        warn "Failed to deliver truth: $@";
        return;
    }
}

```

```

    }

    return $message;
}

=head2 validate_truth

Ensures message maintains mana of all parties while
still delivering necessary truth.

=cut

sub validate_truth {
    my ($self, $message) = @_;

    return 0 if $message->is_just_being_nice();
    return 1 if $message->will_help_longterm();
}

1; # Because truth matters

__END__

=head1 AUTHOR

Inspired by every time we chose
truth over comfortable silence

=head1 BUGS

Feature, not bug: May cause temporary discomfort
Known issue: Not compatible with superficial politeness

=cut

```

Test Plan:

1. Verify authentic messages are delivered even when uncomfortable
2. Ensure mana is maintained through truth-telling process
3. Confirm aroha remains present in direct communication

Signed-off-by: Chris

Tested-by: Generations of truth-tellers

A Catalogue Record for Twenty-Five Years

TITLE: Koha: An Open Source Journey
AUTHOR: Community of Contributors
PUBLISHED: Aotearoa New Zealand
DATE: 1999-2025
EDITION: 25th Anniversary
DESCRIPTION: 1 integrated library system :
digital, open source ;
reaching globally

SUBJECT: Dreams coded in Perl
Born in Horowhenua
Now serve the world wide

NOTES: From five to eighteen
Thousand libraries strong now
Knowledge flows freely

HOLDINGS: Found in sacred space
Vatican archives deep
Arctic libraries
Tropical islands
Desert oases cool
Mountains touching sky

FORMAT: More than just software
A gift given freely
True to its naming

SUMMARY: Twenty-five years passed
Each commit a story told
Each bugfix healing
Each feature growing
Community sharing code
Building futures bright

LOCAL NOTES: Born where Tararua
Mountains watch over plains
Where Katipo
First dreamed in source code
Now global minds tend
This flourishing tree

ADDED ENTRY: Librarians all

Speaking countless languages
One common purpose

CALL NUMBER: Z678.93.K64
Where wisdom gathers
All are welcome here

STATUS: Always checking in
Never checking out, because
Freedom has no bounds

ACCESS: Open as the sky
Free as karakia dawn
Forever sharing

[END OF RECORD]

MARC Record: Koha at 25

=LDR 02429nam a2200457 i 4500
=001 1999.2024/KOHA25
=003 NZ-WlKoha
=005 20240115031415.0
=008 990101s1999~~~~nz~~~~o~~~~000~0~eng~d
=040 \\\$aHLT\$beng\$cHLT\$dGLOBAL
=042 \\\$aanuc
=050 14\$aZ678.93.K64\$bK64 2024
=082 04\$a025.04\$223
=245 00\$aKoha :\$ban open source story spanning twenty-five years
=246 3\\\$aGift that keeps on giving
=250 \\\$a25th anniversary reflection
=264 \\1\$aHorowhenua, Aotearoa :\$bGlobal Community,\$c1999-2024
=300 \\\$a25 years\$binnnumberable commits\$c18000+ installations\$eunlimited potential
=336 \\\$acode\$bcode\$2rdacontent
=337 \\\$acomputer\$bc\$2rdamedia
=338 \\\$aonline resource\$bcr\$2rdacarrier
=500 \\\$aBegun with aroha, sustained by community
=506 0\\\$aOpen access\$fUnrestricted
=516 \\\$aIntegrated Library System; written first in Perl
=520 \\\$aFirst dreamed beneath Tararua peaks\$bFrom humble beginnings serving five
=520 \\\$aTo global reach across eighteen thousand sites\$bSharing knowledge free
=521 \\\$aFor all libraries, everywhere
=533 \\\$aGlobal mirrors\$bContributed by community\$c1999-
=538 \\\$aSystem requirements: Commitment to sharing
=546 \\\$aMultilingual interface\$bSupports all scripts
=586 \\\$aRecipient of numerous open source awards
=600 10\$aTe Horowhenua\$xOrigins\$yNew Zealand
=610 20\$aKoha Community\$xHistory\$y1999-2024
=650 \\0\$aIntegrated library systems (Computer systems)
=650 \\0\$aOpen source software
=651 \\0\$aAotearoa\$xIndigenous software\$y1999-
=653 \\\$aKoha\$aOpen source\$aLibraries\$aGift
=700 1\\\$aGlobal community\$econtributors
=710 2\\\$aKoha Community\$esteward
=730 0\\\$aKoha (Software)
=752 \\\$aNew Zealand\$bHorowhenua
=856 40\$uhttp://koha-community.org\$zCommunity website

=910 \\\$aFirst amongst FOSS library systems
=920 \\\$aEmpowering libraries worldwide
=930 \\\$aFrom Aotearoa to the world
=940 \\\$aBuilt with aroha, run with pride
=950 \\\$aEvery contribution matters

=960 \\\$aKnowledge flows like rivers to sea
=970 \\\$aIn code we share our dreams
=980 \\\$aLibraries strong, communities free
=990 \\\$aTwenty-five years and counting

Te Kaiwhakamarumarū

by Chris Cormack

At sacred Waitangi, where treaties sleep
In day's light, where ancestors weep,
A man stood proud with poisoned tongue
While nearby, our tamariki young

Aperahama, up he rose
To shield young ears from hatred's prose
For as our tūpuna always say:
“Guard well the words our children weigh”

You speak of freedom, white-collar clean
While spreading lies like a machine
Pretending wisdom, claiming right
To wound our people in broad daylight

You say we “suppress” - but understand
We've heard such rhetoric on our land
Since ships first touched these sacred shores
With “civilising” in their cores

Our kaumātua taught us well
Some words are poison, some words spell
The death of dreams in children's hearts
When hatred's arrow finds its marks

So stand there with your false acclaim
Of “freedom” - we know your game
For generations we have seen
The wolf who claims his teeth are clean

Kaua e wareware
The wisdom of our people here:
It's not suppression when we shield
The future from your bitter yield

Tūturu whakamaui kia tina
Tina!
Haumi e, hui e
Tāiki e!

A Sound in the Sand

by Chris Cormack

Where the beach meets the harbour's hand,
There's more than just grains of sand—
A name sits strange upon the tongue,
Empty letters where meaning once hung.

Pito one, they wished to say again,
Where sand meets shore, where stories begin,
A name that speaks of place and time,
Not colonial letters, stripped of rhyme.

The people gathered, voices clear,
“Let's bring the true name near.”
From council chambers to street-side talks,
The old name in new voices walks.

But one man's pen drew a line in sand,
Against the wishes of the land.
While Petone stays, hollow and bare,
Pito one whispers still in the air.

For names are more than letters strung,
They're stories waiting to be sung,
They're bridges to what came before,
Footprints on memory's shore.

Though signs may read what they've always read,
The true name lives in hearts instead,
For those who know, who understand:
Pito one the end of the sand.

Untitled

by Chris Cormack

breath by breath
the days slip past
like sand between fingers
while tyrants count coins
and children ask why

we're all just dust
walking home to stars
but even dust
can rise up
in storms

so what of comfort?
what of safety?
what of quiet lives
lived small?

when truth calls
from the streets
when justice whispers
“now, now, now”
when hearts know
the cost of silence

better to burn bright
than fade quiet
better to stand tall
than kneel long
better to speak fire
than swallow ashes

because death comes anyway
but dignity?
that's a choice we make
with every rising sun

and if tomorrow
or next year
or in some distant dawn
our time runs out
let them say:
“here stood someone
who chose to live
completely”

Building on the Whenua

by Chris Cormack

In the hum of servers
our data flows like streams
but where does it rest?
Not overseas, not in distant clouds—
here, on our whenua
where our stories belong

We speak of co-design
but whose voice carries?
whose wisdom shapes?
In a society built on stolen land
participation without equity
is just another colonial game

Every line of code bears witness
to the hands that wrote it
to the minds that shaped it
to the system that birthed it

When you type ‘Te’
does your database understand
that this is not just a prefix
but part of a name that flows
like water through generations?

Your dropdown menus cannot contain
the multitude of iwi connections
your binary systems cannot grasp
the complexity of being

Remember:
neutral technology
is a myth we tell ourselves
to sleep better at night

Before you build
before you type
before you deploy
ask yourself:

whose land hosts your servers?
whose stories are you coding?
whose future are you compiling?

Sometimes the bravest code
is the code unwritten

Sometimes the strongest design
is saying 'no'

Let your software speak
of sovereignty
of mana
of tikanga

But first
listen
to the land
to the people
to the silence between your keystrokes

Submissions

by Chris Cormack

in the grey-walled room
 where words shape futures
they say: don't call us racist
 (it's unhelpful)
 (it's unproductive)
 (it assumes bad faith)

mate,
let's talk about bad faith-

remember how they took the tamariki
scraped the reo from their tongues
called it civilisation?
 that was white supremacy

remember how they said
be more like us
 speak like us
 think like us
 exist
 like
 us?

and now
in your gleaming offices
with your crisp papers
and measured words
you're saying:

these principles need "clarifying"
 need "modernising"
 need whitening
 (though you won't say that part)

you bristle at "racist"
while pushing bills
that would dissolve difference
into your idealised sameness

colonisation doesn't always wear
a red coat and a musket-
sometimes it comes in A4 pages

bound with good intentions

don't tell us we're being unfair
when we name the whakapapa
of your "reasonable suggestions"

your offence at being called racist
while cloaking assimilation
in parliamentary language
is just

white

supremacy

in a tie

The Weight of Tomorrow's Promise

by Chris Cormack

The fire that once burned bright within
Now flickers, wavering in winds of resistance.
I carry the dreams of my tipuna on weary shoulders,
Their whispers grow faint beneath the noise of systems unchanged.

Each morning I wake to rebuild what was taken,
To explain, defend, translate between worlds.
The words “partnership” and “rangatiratanga”
Hollow echoes in meeting rooms where decisions are made.

They say, “You speak so well,” as if surprise
Is the appropriate response to generations of wisdom.
I become the face, the voice, the token
In spaces not built with us in mind.

My wairua stretches thin across too many battles,
Like water spreading across parched earth,
Not enough to quench the thirst of all
Who look to me for sustenance.

At night, the weight of unfinished work
Sits heavy on my chest, stealing sleep.
The emails, the calls, the constant proving
That our ways have value, our knowledge matters.

This burnout is not simply exhaustion—
It is the accumulated grief of watching
The slow violence of colonisation continue
While we fight with diminishing strength.

But still, like the ahi kā, something remains.
A stubborn ember refusing to die out.
For what is this weariness compared to what was endured
By those who cleared the path I now walk?

I will rest, but not retreat.
Gather strength from the whenua beneath my feet.
Tomorrow I'll return to the work undone,
For my mokopuna, not yet born, are waiting.

Shared Horizons: Māori and Palestine

by Chris Cormack

From Aotearoa's shores to Gaza's ancient sands,
Indigenous voices rise across divided lands.
Two stories distant yet bound by common thread:
The right to walk ancestral soil without dread.

The Māori call of "Tino Rangatiratanga"
Echoes in Arabic across Mediterranean waters—
Self-determination, the birthright of all peoples,
A flame that burns in marae and in mosque steeples.

When British ships claimed what was never theirs to own,
They planted flags in soil where generations had grown.
The same colonial logic, different century, different name,
The displacement of the tangata whenua—the pattern remains the same.

In Palestine, the olive groves tell stories just as old
As the kauri trees that watched Māori history unfold.
Land is never just land but identity, memory, and right—
What was taken by power can be reclaimed by light.

"Until we are all free, we are none of us free,"
Emma Lazarus, Jewish poet, wrote prophetically.
Her words a bridge between struggles, a testament
That justice cannot be sectioned or fragment.

The haka and the dabke, dances of resistance,
Cultural preservation as form of persistence.
Language revived despite attempts to silence tongue—
Te reo Māori and Arabic, from ancient wisdom sprung.

Treaty of Waitangi, promises made and broken;
UN resolutions, words repeatedly unspoken.
Ink on paper means nothing without justice in deed,
Both peoples know the gap between promise and need.

From the Kia Ora to As-salamu alaykum,
Greetings that carry hopes for peace to come.
When Māori stand for Palestine, when struggles intertwine,
The world glimpses truth in Lazarus's line.

For liberty is not a privilege reserved for some,
But a universal right from which justice must come.
And until every Indigenous child is free to roam
The land of their ancestors they rightfully call home,

The struggle continues, the solidarity grows,
Māori and Palestinian, facing common foes.

Not just against oppressors but systems that divide,
The colonial mindset that power seeks to hide.

“Until we are all free, we are none of us free.”
Not just poetic words but a shared destiny.
When dawn breaks over Aotearoa and Palestine too,
May it illuminate a world made whole and new.

Mediterranean Railway

by Chris Cormack

I will arrive in Barcelona, city of impossible curves,
where Gaudí's visions stretch like strange trees toward heaven.
One week to wander La Rambla, to trace my fingers
along stone walls older than my country.
No work phone will buzz in my pocket,
no laptop will weigh down my shoulders—
just eyes wide open to Gothic quarters and seaside air.

Then the train will pull away, rhythmic and sure,
carrying me across borders to Nîmes for a single day,
where Roman ghosts still pace their arena,
and I will pace with them, unencumbered by deadlines,
my time finally my own to spend like ancient coins.

The rails will guide me onward to Marseille,
where friends and Koha wait—not as work
but as shared passion, our fingers building bridges
of knowledge instead of answering emails.
For one whole week, collaboration without obligation,
our minds meeting in person instead of across screens.

Another train journey to Perpignan,
the brief sweetness of a single day
where France and Spain have whispered secrets to each other
across centuries. I will listen to their conversation,
storing memories no cloud could hold.

The final train will return me to Barcelona,
the circle nearly complete.
These tracks will carry me between cities and carry me back to myself,
this holiday without digital tethers the truest journey of all.

In the train window, my reflection will smile
over landscapes of vine and stone and sea.
Then I'll fly home, but something essential will remain
in these Mediterranean cities,
and something essential will return with me.

The Weight of Silence

In that moment of acquiescence,
When my pen struck through truth,
I did not hear the sound of my own voice fading.

One small erasure—
What harm could come
From a single absence on a single page?

But silence compounds silence,
And the weight of what remains unsaid
Grows heavier with each passing day.

I carry it now, this ghost of words,
This emptiness where conviction once stood,
A hollow space that echoes with distant screams.

What is the cost of comfort?
I have measured it in children's names,
In rubble that was once a home.

The ink I used to cross out suffering
Has stained my hands regardless,
A mark no scrubbing will remove.

History watches, and remembers
Not just what was done,
But what was allowed by looking away.

If I could return to that moment—
The paper before me, the pressure around me,
Would I find the courage that failed me then?

To speak is to risk,
But to remain silent is to consent.
This is the lesson I learn anew each morning.

So let this lament be the beginning,
Not of absolution, but of resolve.
The next time truth needs a voice,
May mine be steady enough to offer it.

“Double Speak”

by Chris Cormack

“I’m not for colonisation,” comes their plea
While nodding as homes crumble by the sea,
“It’s complicated,” they declare with care
As children’s shelters vanish in thin air.

“Both sides, both sides,” they thoughtfully opine
While one side’s water’s cut, one drinks fine wine,
“Who really is to blame?” they ask, wide-eyed
As olive groves are bulldozed far and wide.

“Historical context,” they love to say
While present crimes unfold day after day,
“Peace must come first,” they righteously decree
While backing force against the ones not free.

Their rhetoric spins like desert sand
While settlements expand across the land,
Such brazen doublethink upon display -
These peace-lovers who love war’s way.

Monuments to colonisation

by Chris Cormack

They ask us to pour millions into glass walls, into artificial heat that cradles flowers stolen from other soils. Each begonia drinks borrowed warmth while our own plants press against the edges of managed gardens, seeking space in their ancestral home. Twenty million dollars to preserve this crystal monument to collection, to keeping, to the magpie habits of empire. The botanists came with their specimen jars, their careful labels, their Latin names that wrote over indigenous knowledge. Now we maintain their legacy in climate-controlled rooms, proud of our ability to make foreign things bloom in constructed seasons. Meanwhile, harakeke whispers its own names to the wind, kōwhai drops its gold on unmowed grass, and pūriri dreams of forests that once stretched unbroken to the sea. What could we grow, if we redirected these rivers of money to indigenous wisdom? What gardens might flourish if we invested in knowledge that grew from this soil, in plants that remember the taste of this rain? Instead, we polish the windows of our inherited greenhouse, watching condensation bead like tears on panes that separate us from our own earth. The cost of maintaining distance grows higher each year, while the price of reconnection remains uncounted.