

‘People leave I know’

A perspective on *Tuwhare*, the album
for Hone Tuwhare (1922-2008) and Mahinaarangi Tocker (1955-2008)

Hinemoana Baker

It is so difficult, now, to think about the *Tuwhare* album and shows without becoming inconsolably sad. Perhaps this is why I’ve been avoiding writing this piece. The sadness is, of course, Hone’s loss, but also now the passing of Mahinaarangi Tocker, who was such a vibrant contributor to the project, an idol of mine and a very close friend of Charlotte Yates who produced *Tuwhare*.

As Māori, we summon the dead often, and whenever this is done we just as conscientiously release them, send them on their way. I’m not an expert in these matters of tikanga. I don’t claim to have been brought up around it – not the way Hone was, or Mahina. But instinctively I know this kawa is there to protect us emotionally – and for me, the emotional and the spiritual are so intertwined. It comes down to tapu and noa. To me, tapu is all about things which are capable of producing strong emotion. This is why I reckon death is so tapu, and other things like menstruation, art, whaikōrero, whakapapa, sex. Neutralising that tapu is important; it brings us back to the world of the living, the noa world, the safer world.

When we remember the dead, we must mourn them. And when we mourn them, we must farewell them. Otherwise, they stay, they stick around. They’ve been called, they come and they cannot leave until we say. So we have to utter it: ‘Go, go, go now. Return to the true homeland of humankind, go there and rest.’ So I begin this piece with a farewell, he mihi ki ngā mate. *People leave I know*. Haere, haere, haere atu rā. Haere korua, haere koutou, haere ki te kāinga tūturu o te tangata, ki reira okioki ai.

Te hunga mate ki te hunga mate, te hunga ora ki te hunga ora. The dead to the dead, the living to the living. Tihei mauri ora!

Song lyrics are rarely, in my opinion, poetry. All those trappings – the melody, the instruments and voice, the arrangement – are an essential part of the final product. Separating the lyrics and considering them on their own is often, for me, about as satisfying as separating out the bass-line and listening to that. Even Patti Smith – whose lyrics I adore and who also happens to write books of poetry – couldn't count me as a customer if she published a book of her lyrics. Not even Joni Mitchell, or my idol, Kate Bush (shhhh...I won't hear a word against her).

Some poets I know can't stand poems set to music or any kind of sound. They say doing anything with a poem – even, sometimes, just reading it aloud – is enough to kill it off or (worse) shut down a whole range of meanings and interpretations in the minds of those receiving it. I must say I have a certain amount of sympathy with them. I have heard a number of recorded poems where the text is interpreted literally, or less than subtly, in the music or sound accompaniment. Poems about nature, for example, where real life nature sounds form the sonic backdrop, poems about war which feature crashing cymbals and a military snare drum, poems about the cosmos with solo for hanging chimes.

Of course, sometimes being literal does work well. Poet James Brown recently gave me a (limited edition) copy of a recording he made called *The Bike Poems: Field Recordings!* (2006).¹ The album is an audio version of some of his poems, published and unpublished. My favourite track features James reading his poem 'One Crow Left of the Murder' while standing (possibly with his bike) at Wellington's Basin Reserve. Cars chortle and growl past him. The wind, though it is not strong enough to create the familiar staccato roar that microphones often make of it, still dances off with some of the subtleties of James' voice and enunciation which might have remained if he were to have recorded the poems in a studio. But in their place, there is something else, something I find supremely satisfying in any kind of art: a sense of place.

I used to live in Newtown in Wellington, so I am familiar with that Basin Reserve roundabout: the low key, brown fence that separates the road from the worshipped cricket ground; the recently erected traffic lights half-way around, complete with a chest-high cage for pedestrians waiting to cross; the fear of

¹By 'limited edition' I mean, of course, that James burned a few CDs and gave them to his mates. But nonetheless, it remains on high rotate at our place. The artwork for this CD deserves special mention. All circular letters are made to look like the wheels of a bike, with the addition of carefully drawn spokes. Even the dot on top of the letter 'i' and the one at the bottom of the exclamation mark are given this delightful treatment. Disappointingly, though, the two dots of the colon remain, simply, as dots – as does the full stop after James' name. I can only surmise that the artists (named only as 'Anna' and 'Tessa') were aiming for subtlety, but I fear their public will feel, like me, simply bereft.

wayward cricket balls through the windscreen; the way the lanes can seem to weave in and out, so you're never quite sure if you'll end up at the Adelaide Hotel or the airport. This place has, for me, an air of danger, even though I've only experienced it as a motorist. I can only imagine what it may be like to be a cyclist or pedestrian negotiating that territory.

James is clear in the liner notes to this CD:

I like poetry recordings with backgrounds that give a sense of place. The aim of this CD was to see if recording some bike poems in particular locations would make for more interesting listening than recording them in a studio. (Brown 2006)

The title *Field Recordings* is accurate, then, and this is one of the things that sets James' CD apart from so many of the others. The poem itself is strong – and would be strong on the page – though it doesn't necessarily follow that the recording will be. It is eminently possible to ruin great art by doing extra stuff to it (witness Bernie Taupin's re-writing of the 'Candle in the Wind' lyrics on the death of the Princess of Wales in 1997).

What makes James' recording work for me is that there is a reason for the sounds behind the poems. They locate the listener, they evoke an actual place on the earth. Like the works of sound ecologist Hildegard Westerkamp, this recording becomes a 'soundwalk' through an area the artist wants us to hear, experience and remember.

A soundwalk is any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are. We may be at home, we may be walking across a downtown street, through a park, along the beach; we may be sitting in a doctor's office, in a hotel lobby, in a bank; we may be shopping in a supermarket, a department store, or a Chinese grocery store; we may be standing at the airport, the train station, the bus-stop. Wherever we go we will give our ears priority. They have been neglected by us for a long time. (Westerkamp)

In James' case, it is not so much that he wants to preserve the area for posterity, but to enhance the listener's experience of the poem, and the narrative behind it. The poem takes the voice, and side, of the cyclist against inconsiderate motorists. The text is enhanced by the gear-changing of the buses, the soft but slightly alarming metallic crash at the end of the fourth line, the squeak of brakes. It sets you on edge;

you feel, for a moment, like one of those cyclists, balancing improbably on two thin, spinning circles, with ‘the wind barking round your helmet’, unable to move fast enough to get away from the ‘car up your arse’. (Brown, Track 3: ‘One Crow Left of the Murder’)

The reason this recording escapes my ‘too literal’ criticism is that the poet hasn’t simply lifted traffic and/or cycling sounds from a sound effects CD and added them to his reading of the poem in the studio; or even recorded the traffic sounds at the Basin Reserve, then added them digitally to a recording of himself reading the words. He has recorded both himself and the sounds on location. For me, this makes all the difference.

So setting a poem in an atmosphere other than a book can work. But I think it is a rare thing to be able to get it right, especially, perhaps, when it comes to adding music. The propensity for over-doing something, for forcing it into a pre-conceived set of parameters (melody, instrumentation, arrangement, verse, chorus etc) becomes higher. This was our brief, however, when recording artist and producer Charlotte Yates approached me and 11 other New Zealand musicians in 2004, inviting us to choose a poem written by Hone Tuwhare and compose a musical setting for it.

I can still remember how excited I was to be asked to be a part of the project. Hone Tuwhare! His poem ‘No Ordinary Sun’ (Tuwhare 1964, 23) had gobsmacked me when I first read it as a teenager. I remember it alongside Keith Sinclair’s ‘The Bomb is Made’ (Sinclair 1993, 47), both poems sparking an almost unbearable combination of outrage and grief in my adolescent heart. The politics of each of them had a huge impact on me. On top of that, there was the honour of the company I was going to be keeping. Me? Alongside Mahinaarangi Tocker? Don McGlashan? I was going to be on the same record as Goldenhorse! Whirimako Black! Indeed, as Charlotte herself. Perhaps she had accidentally phoned the wrong person.

My excitement built as I learned what the project would involve, and all the others who would be part of it. *Tuwhare* the album, Charlotte told me, was to be released by Universal Music in 2005. The project would be a partnership between herself and the Māori arts charitable trust Toi Māori. Once each of us had chosen a poem we would – ta-daah! – turn it into a song. We would then get to record our song at the Helen Young Studios in Auckland. The Helen Young Studios in Auckland!

The project followed on from a prior compilation of James K Baxter’s poems set to music, also produced by Charlotte. *Baxter* (2000) had received what could be called widespread critical acclaim. However, one of my most respected mentors had said she thought Dave Dobbyn was the only one who really nailed it.

For myself, I really loved his track, Emma Paki's and David Eggleton's, and was lukewarm about the rest.

All this meant I was, as well as excited, just a little petrified to be asked to be one of the musicians involved in *Tuwhare*. This was going to be hard. Far greater musicians than I had tried and, it seemed, only partly succeeded. My mentor's words began to echo in my head. Panic rose. At the very least, I had to make sure of one thing. "Can I bags 'Rain'?" I said. Charlotte hesitated a little. This was our first phone call about the project, the one where she calls to ask if I'd like to be involved and I say 'Yeh I'd love to' and she says 'I'll send you a contract in the mail; you might like to start thinking about which poem you'd like to choose etc.' But I knew straight away and I had a feeling I'd need to get in quick. "Yeh. I guess you can," she said. "I did say it was first in first served. But there's quite a few people interested in that one." "Tell them it's taken." Silence. "Please?" "Ok. Ok it's yours." I was heady with triumph.

But when I sat down to make a song out of those words: pear-shaped. Nothing worked. I couldn't get the lines to scan, I didn't know where to start. No chords were coming. The guitar felt useless, my hands fat and clumsy; a leg of ham, a tennis racquet would have helped me more. How could this be? I loved those words, those lines:

...If I were deaf
the pores of my skin
would open to you
and shut...(Tuwhare 1987, 167)

No matter how I tried to work it, I couldn't make the words of 'Rain' into a song that I could sing. Somewhere, probably in the same place as the envelope containing my 2007-08 tax receipts, I still have my notebooks from that time. Inside them is evidence of my struggle: a very few pages of scrawled 'Rain' song attempts before they are replaced by drafts of the poem – and song – I eventually opted for instead².

² Don McGlashan ended up composing 'Rain' once I'd relinquished it. It took me a few listens, but I now love his track. I think it's one of the most beautiful on the whole album. The euphonium and the piano, Don's understated, perfectly plain vocal. Thank God I let it go.

It would be safe to say that the poem I finally chose isn't one of Hone Tuwhare's Top Ten, unlike 'Rain' or 'Hotere'. I found it in his famous first collection, *No Ordinary Sun*, first published in 1964 and reprinted eleven times since³. I didn't know at the time, but four of us (Charlotte Yates, Goldenhorse, Dallas Tamaira and Graham Brazier) chose poems from this same book.

Sitting sturdily on page 35, this poem had all the ingredients I didn't yet realise I needed to make a song out of someone else's words. Yes indeed, 'Where shall I Wander' was the poem for me. For a start, it had lots of words – lots and lots of them, at least by comparison with 'Rain'. It was becoming obvious (although this is still something that makes me squirm a little) that I needed a lot of words in order to make a song. Whether I like it or not, one of the many lessons I learned through this process is that I am a fairly verbose songwriter. Like Joni and Kate, and even Patti, I tend to write songs that have lots of lyrics. All comparisons, of course, must end there.

In addition to the abundance of actual words in 'Where shall I Wander', there was that one line, 'Some leave anyway to war'. It appealed to the politics in me, and my still hopelessly adolescent heart swelled again with that mix of sorrow and passion. It was also the line I ended up taking greatest liberties with, creating a chorus with it by repeating it in conjunction with the line 'for no reason'. In so doing, I feel like I really did create entirely new meanings from the poem for my own grubby purposes. Hone himself never paired the lines 'Some leave anyway to war / For no reason'. That was entirely me. I have managed to justify this flagrant impropriety in my own head. Hone, of course, was a very political man. Communist, Māori arts and language activist, land-marcher. I feel I acted according to the spirit of the poet, if not the poem.

Hone Tuwhare could also, I reckon, be described as a sex-activist. I remember seeing him once, on TV or somewhere talking about how sex was really important to him, it was a natural, healthy thing. In the jargon of today, he was a 'sex-positive' writer and human being. And bloody good on him. This came to the fore in his book *Oooooo.....!!!* (2005) – the last collection before he passed away. I did look through this book when making my choice (somehow I have ended up with two copies) but no luck. Not because I'm prudish – at least, I don't think I am – just because it's not my favourite among Hone's books. Too many exclamation marks, perhaps. I have, I notice, included quite a few of my own in this piece, possibly by way of subconscious homage. But I digress.

³ It is interesting to note that no-one chose the title poem, perhaps his biggest hit single, to set to music. Sacrosanct?

WHERE SHALL I WANDER

People leave I know
for therapeutic purposes
and sometimes for no reason
some leave anyway to war
for another job to go somewhere
anywhere...(Tuwhare 1964, 35)

The adaptations that were made to the poem in the making of the song were engineered according to a strict set of guidelines from Charlotte. Her rules were that we had to include all the words of the poem in the song in the order in which they appeared in the poem – nothing omitted or completely re-arranged – but we were allowed to repeat certain phrases or words if necessary, to make a chorus, for example. She allowed me the repetition and re-arrangement of the war lines only if they were sung prior to the chorus in their full and original form. I made sure they were.

Don McGlashan later told the television programme *Frontseat* that the more he worked on ‘Rain’, the more he found himself not wanting to do any violence to it – the words were all so finely balanced, he said, and he didn’t want to tip them one way or the other (‘Frontseat: Tuwhare’). On the same programme Charlotte talked about how she and Mahina had to learn to work as lyricists and singers with words that they wouldn’t necessarily put in a song themselves: infarction, for example, from Tuwhare’s poem ‘Mad’, which was Charlotte’s choice, and in Mahina’s case, ‘incarnadine’ from ‘A northland heart-scape’.

I struggled with both of these issues while trying to turn ‘Where shall I Wander’ into a workable, singable song. There were many poignant questions to worry about. Am I destroying the spirit, sophistication and magic of these words by singing them in a major key? By repeating them as a chorus? By manufacturing the chorus the way I have? Am I pushing the ending over into melodrama by having the instruments break out into a kind of organised chaos at that point, or is it a songwriter’s prerogative to create a climax this way? And last but not least: how does one sing the words ‘stewed tea and buns’?

Three years later, when Hone died, the media reports began. They were calling him New Zealand’s best-loved poet. I went upstairs and wrote this:

All of us and the radio focus. Gaylene says A warrior is lying down. Richard says Hone once called him a fucking cunt in a letter he will now donate to the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Here I am I've knocked up a kind of voice in me. The first time I read No Ordinary Sun at thirteen I was the tree, arms out to the balance in there somewhere, beseeching. Now it's all just cutting and pasting. Clacking like wheels. What would he say about this making-into-the-void feeling? *Best not to leave a mark behind for good or ill?*

People leave I know. The papers remind us how he 'didn't care for Māori protocol'. Too many flavours in the audience, observing, all limbs and frost. I google him. I find Sammi from Poughkeepsie

who likes open-mouthed kissing with little or no tongue in the rain. Sub-editors and academics at their craft: 'No ordinary sun & rain'; 'No Ordinary Icon'. I think of the sparks, the waste-words he wrote about, like chips from the carver's chisel. Him asking

Do they limp to heaven

or go down easy to Rarohenga? He says 'I'm tired. I'm going to go to sleep now'. I hope there are Nuns in attendance, earnest nuns with gold-blond fringes and slightly buck teeth and their habits hitched up to their hips, mounting him with impunity. A friend calls asking for directions. She wants to make radio about the women in his life. A man has made a movie set in Antarctica.

Ah yes, a few 'waste-words' of my own in there: it hasn't made it to final draft stage yet. Incidentally. When Edmund Hillary died, did anyone comment on, discuss, make a news item out of whether or not he wanted a church funeral, a state funeral, or whether he eschewed matters of Western protocol?

Hone once said: 'The old man used to make me read some biblical texts, like, from John I think they were. New Testament stuff. And it was quite beautiful, I suppose...I was never a practising religionist. Although I was pretty hot stuff on the Trade Union work and left-wing movements'. ('Hone Tuwhare')

He once said: 'You know the sexual aspect...is very important. I mean you must admit that'. (ibid.)

Dr Rangimarie Rose Turuki Pere explains the meaning of the hongī. She says: 'My eyebrows remind you of the wingspan of the birds, my eyebrows remind you of the tail of the whale, my nose is the body; my

forehead is a crown and it reminds you of the crown of the great trees, my nose is the trunk'. ('What a Hongi Means')

I was visiting my friend Robbie Duncan one day shortly after Charlotte had contacted me. Robbie is a musician and studio engineer whose partner Chris Price is a well-known, award-winning poet. Robbie has also had a lot to do with poetry, having recorded some of the best over the years, including Hone Tuwhare. Robbie and Chris are part of an ensemble called Waiting for Donald – a group of acoustic instrumentalists who perform 'conversational compositions', often improvised, on guitar, mandolin and percussion. ('Waiting for Donald') I had long admired their work – the respect they have for each other on stage, the way they listen so carefully to each other, the subtle patterning and arrangements of the pieces, the way they manage to capture the spirit of improvisation even in their composed pieces and recordings. I told him about the *Tuwhare* project and how thrilled and terrified I was about it. "Why not ask Donald to be your backing band?" he said. I was shocked. I couldn't imagine that such accomplished musicians would ever want to work with me. "You can only ask," said Robbie.

So I did. And they did. We are talking, people, about Mark Laurent, guitarist to the gods and his partner Brenda Liddiard, mandolin maestro, both of whom also sing with heart and heat; Robbie Duncan, whose exquisite tastes in music never fail to translate into his own playing; and Chris Price, whose enviable percussion skills and sensibilities led her to the gorgeous tongue-drum intro that gives the song its place to stand.

The 'Hinemoana Baker with Waiting for Donald' arrangement of 'Where shall I Wander' was thrashed out (although 'thrash' sounds far more violent than it actually was) during a few days' retreat at Mark and Brenda's beautiful Coromandel home. From there we headed north to record the track. I remember Mark and Robbie wandering around the Helen Young studio, arms swinging and looking up, kind of giggling with excitement at being in such a hallowed space. I remember standing in front of the photo-board, staring at Bic Runga's beautiful black and white, wearing a pair of headphones that looked huge on her. Bic was sitting in front of the same microphone I'd just been singing into. Those headphones were on Chris Price's head.

When the album was released, Charlotte's attention turned to the idea of re-creating it as a stage-show, the same way she had done with *Baxter*. I have many fond memories of the performances we did at the Wellington International Festival of the Arts in 2006 and the following year at the Auckland Festival AK07.

Mina from WAI 100% has the most extraordinary costumes. I'm remembering them as red and white PVC, with capes and flares, but I may be embellishing here. I remember seeing her and her fellow band-member Gaynor Rikihana walking past with the shining treasures over their shoulders on hangers. Later they would appear with dazzling, intricate, white moko on their faces, the chip-chip of their poi would finesse what Charlotte referred to as the very 'butch' bass of Maaka McGregor's beats.

At the Wellington Town Hall, I and Waiting for Donald were standing beside the stage, waiting to go on in a matter of minutes. As Rawiri Paratene read the introduction to the show, Robbie Duncan looked around our group and said 'Can I just say that I really love you guys?' This is so Robbie. He is such a deeply warm and lovely person. Whirimako Black was standing close by, and she smiled at us warmly: "This is not normally how it is back-stage!"

I remember hearing Don McGlashan and his euphonium sound-checking before the show one night. I somehow find the sounds the euphonium accidentally makes – and this is in the recording as well – just as entrancing as the intentional ones. The clicking and nudging of the padded keys and the hissing of air from the valves, those noises that aren't part of the note or tone the instrument is being asked to make. They have such charm.

One night as we were standing on stage about to begin our song, I leaned over to plug my guitar into my beloved Fishman pre-amp, as usual. But I must have nudged the volume slide on the Fishman and consequently when we started the guitar was way too loud. I sensed this was happening but like all good musicians I'm trained to trust the front of house sound engineers. Just because it sounds like that on stage, we are constantly told, doesn't mean it sounds like that out front. As it happened, it did sound like that, at least it did for the first (hopefully very short) part of the song, and it was entirely my fault. No-one, I was later told, could hear the lyrics during this time. Which was the whole point, of course.

I remember the bass player from Goldenhorse telling us about a quad-bike accident he was still recovering from. The bike had flipped right over and nearly landed on top of him; he broke his leg. Later I talked with them about a bad review some guy had given them in the *Dominion Post* the night before. "They're like eunuchs at an orgy", I said, "reviewers". I stole these words from someone I can no longer name. The band had been gutted about the review, and my stolen words seemed to help. Later their lead singer Kirsten Morell came to our dressing room and asked us all to sign her *Tuwhare* programme. I

could hardly believe that Kirsten Morell was asking me to sign her programme. Had I died and limped up to heaven?

Unbelievably, Kirsten was not the only idol of mine to visit our dressing room. Don McGlashan came too. He came especially, he said so himself, to our dressing room. He came to say how much he enjoyed our track, 'Where shall I Wander', and how much he had enjoyed, just now, our performance of it. Robbie and I were so flabbergasted that we didn't, couldn't say anything back. We simply stood there trying to believe our eyes, and our ears. So Don kind of just smiled and – so suave – backed out of the room.

I remember the night in Auckland, at the Civic Theatre, when Charlotte came down to the dressing rooms to tell us all that Hone Tuwhare himself was going to be in the audience that night. I believe that was what Oprah Winfrey might refer to as a 'full circle moment'. I didn't meet Hone that night, but those who sat close to him told me amusing stories after the show, how he chatted on and off through the songs, kind of holding court in the sixth row or wherever he was. I think he might have been embarrassed. It must have felt very 'This is Your Life'. For us it was, of course, scary and wonderful to know he was there in the audience. "At least", I said to myself, to calm myself down at the side of the stage, "at least there'll be someone in the audience who knows all the words".

I remember Mahinaarangi. She had been asked to perform the Strawpeople track 'Covetous' as well as her own 'A northland heart-scape'. She had brought a fabulous corset for the occasion. I am remembering it as being made of red leather, and that is how I will continue to remember it, because that is how she wore it. I believe there may even have been a feather boa involved. I am always open-mouthed when I hear her voice, and that night was no different. Added to that was the way that she was singing, without a hint of awkwardness or difficulty:

...Tell yr woman I

love her. And tell
her I can give her
a kid anytime she's

short...(Tuwhare 1997, 35)

Mahinaarangi was a huge presence onstage, backstage, at the side of the stage – wherever she went. She was the one who was always elbowing someone in the ribs and throwing her head back, laughing and making us laugh. I see her on those nights, being followed around by, or tripping along behind, the delightful members of the New Zealand Trio. I hear her drawing such extraordinary sounds out of herself and the Trio that it was impossible not to grieve and gasp alongside her. Robbie was fortunate enough to record her final album, *The Mongrel in Me* (2005). He said many times during that process, and many times since, that Mahinaarangi was the closest thing to a genius he has ever met.

Haere atu rā, Mahina. I will never meet anyone more warm, more effusive, more at home with her musical self, or more joyful about it.

I still have no idea whether I did any justice to Hone Tuwhare's words with my song. Audiences seem to enjoy it. I certainly did make a decision to try and write something that would be catchy and upbeat.

My favourite track on the *Tuwhare* album seems to change with every listen. At first it was 'Mad', Charlotte's song, because I envied the effortless hook she had made out of what seemed to be an even wordier and less singable poem than mine. Her secret seems to be that she uses the same chorus melody and just substitutes the text: in other words, she just sings through the poem, and when the song structure demands a chorus, she sings whatever words occur at that point of the poem to the chorus tune. First time round the chorus is:

your hand
held out to me – your hand (Tuwhare 1987, 136)

Second time round it is:

I close the distance between us (ibid.)

And then finally the chorus becomes:

shaken and lost and
without say (ibid.)

Same tune, different lyrics every time. And the tune is so irresistible. I am absolutely certain it was nowhere near that simple, but this is my neanderthal, jealous analysis.

On other occasions I think Te Kupu's track is the most successful, because his voice (literal and otherwise) seems to me to be the closest to Hone's out of everyone on the album. 'Rain', of course, is splendidly delicate, and 'Friend' must take the prize for the most singalongable, with Graham Brazier's voice (Hone said he sounded just like Louis Armstrong) carrying all the feeling of Hone's own reading of the poem. 'O, Africa' is a dance delight, and any fan of Kate Bush will be unable to turn away from the way Kirsten Morell delivers 'the moon's black evil'. (Tuwhare 1964, 25)

I have to say that since my involvement with *Tuwhare* I have also re-visited *Baxter*, and have unequivocally fallen for all the tracks. I don't think this is just because I know more intimately how hard it is to make a successful song out of someone else's poem. I genuinely feel as if I had barely listened to the *Baxter* tracks first time round, as if I was hearing them with commercial radio ears or something. Unlike most song lyrics, these are poems. Some of them, as songs, are absolute masterpieces (Dave Dobbyn's still stands out for me). As one of my favourite poets, Michael Palmer, said recently, most people read poems far too quickly. I would add that most people, myself included, also listen to them far too quickly.

I thank Charlotte Yates for the opportunity. I send respect and thanks to all those I shared the stage with during the shows, especially Waiting For Donald, and to all those involved in the wider project – Andre Upston, the brilliant engineer at Helen Young, the crew who staged the festival shows, friends, whānau. I honour and farewell Hone Tuwhare, whose ethic and skill as a poet and artist I can only hope to emulate.

Whakatairanga i te kupu, e.

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