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Four castings [artist's pages]

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four castings

JULIEANNA PRESTON

she reads the fence a wire text wrought metal punctuated by knots
welds bindings lashings cursive notes equally spaced left to
right top to bottom vocal cues refrains enframing three hundred
inhalations a mouth a throat a scarf a belly three hundred and one
exhalations circumscribing a quarrantine interning poxed migrants
exotic livestock exorcising island harbour fault line a far side
and a sigh .

she summons Kupe's daughter siren in distress watching
waiting wanting warning of rocks reefs raids currents
squalls invasions by sea bombardment by air her lamps blazing colza
parafin gas electricity while degaussing wrens wrap copper
cable around the hull .

she wails against the wrath wealth rash northwest winds waging
war wrestling wielding power on weak atolls at risk from rising waters
wai wai hūkerikeri a whine a waul a wraith haunting
luring a stern warning whati .

she woos a horizon obscured low lying condensation hovering porous
sky wee clenching weeping artic shards whelping tomorrow
lungs heaving breathless tā .



four castings recalls *windwoundweatherwoven-wirewoman*, a 2017 performance I delivered as part of 'Performing, Writing: A symposium in four turns' on Matiu/Somes Island, a place significant for its cultural and environmental history, a mountain peak submerged in the middle of Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington Harbour, Aotearoa/New Zealand. At Matiu/Somes Island, I became an embodied sounding instrument charged by the wind to read a fence that surrounds a former animal quarantine station, the site of a Maori pa/village, and the grounds of an immigrant detention centre used to isolate smallpox cases (Department of Conservation/Te Papa Atawhai 2009).

The performance took note of multiple spatial and temporal interiors shaping the event – the ferry ploughing through the nearly flat-watered harbour, the island's biosecurity hut, the mihi whakatau/Maori welcome, the feasting table in the cottage, the wind turbine's irregular whine, echoes emanating from within the station, the low moist clouds, the salt-laden southerly breeze and a haunting preoccupation with local and global news. Pitched as an aural weather forecast, a broadcast, this creative work was about place and weather. It evoked the same kind of environmental warning and critique found in John Ruskin's *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (2006 [1884]). One-syllable 'w' words lost their semiotic identity in relentless repetition and elocution as a reference to Gertrude Stein's epic poem *Patriarchal Poetry* (1998 [1927]) that 'creates the impression of language in a melted state, free to combine and coalesce in ways unexpected, unacceptable, or even repressed by discursive practices' (Ziarek n.d.). I tried to exist intensely, as her poem promotes, to resist patriarchal structures as she did, and yet, the emotional affect was highly charged.

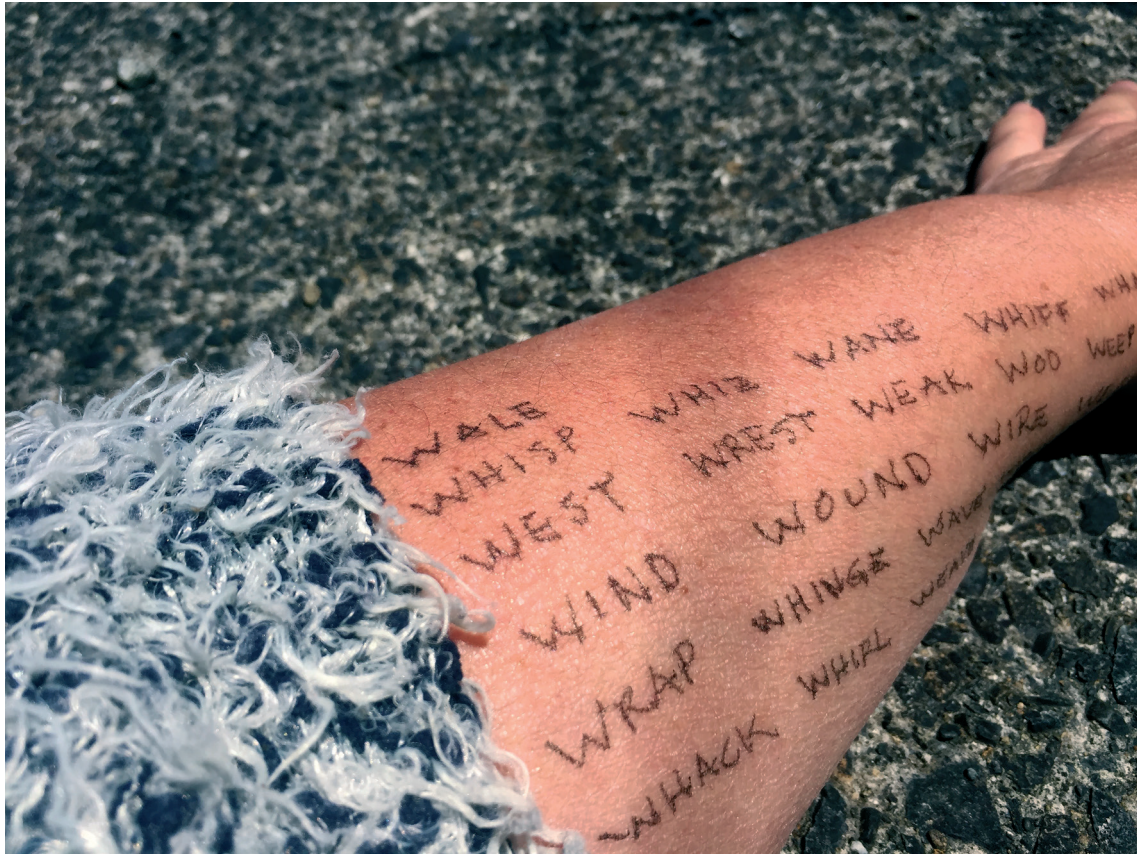
The object of my attention was the wire metal fence, a symbol of domestication and physical evidence of colonial efforts to manage what is in and what is out, one of those patriarchal structures. My survey of climate data gathered

from New Zealand's Taihoro Nukurangi/National Institute of Water and Air told of dominant weather patterns nourishing as well as plaguing the island. The fence's life as an industrial material object was tempered by decades of exposure to storms and make-shift repairs. Every rusty weld, knot and twisted junction of wire spurred a vocal tone and gesture that mourned, warned and welcomed the site's past and future. The performance endured for as long as it took to circumnavigate all four sides of the fence. The 2017 film I made with Josh Lewis, *www*, represents the performance.

four castings extends the performance in the mode of a textual and visual score written to be read aloud, to be heard, it is hoped, to incite another performance. The prose is structured by four bars, one for each side of the fenced enclosure. Each word cluster is a measure, a breath, threaded by ten character spaces according to the fence's 10 x 10 cm wire fabric. The image takes liberties with the fabric of the fence as a musical composition noted by barbs, figure-eights, crimps and bull-wire loops, all knots notorious for withstanding cyclone winds. Together, the text and the image shadow visual artist Yve Lomax's writing on an event's emergence as twittering noise listened to through imaginative interlocutors: me, the fence, the weather, the place and so on, in conversation. In its simultaneous authority to imprison and promise to protect, that fragile fence was a mur, a wall, that was, in Lomax's terms, already generating

[T]he faintest noise ... [m]urmur; yes, it is a little movement that goes up to and fro, up and down. Mur-mur, mur-mur, yes, it is an echo, a periodic repetition, a little rthym. Mur-mur, mur-mur, mur-mur; yes, it is a little refrain that gets the tempo going, a little flicker of time (Lomax 2005: 17).

The socio-political turbulence the fence gives and causes as a boundary enforcer is the same turbulence that gives rise to an audible whistle, the raw voice of the performance and these four castings.



■ A body-scribed score of single syllable "w" words. Preston, 2016

Watch the video of [www](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZlaOZb1kTU) on the *Performance Research* YouTube video channel youtu.be/eZlaOZb1kTU



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