

waka kuaka

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in a room, in a house, on an island, in an ocean



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Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland, New Zealand

a poem for Itu'ti'u aunty

She asks, what use it is to be fluent
when the land can't

hear her?

Itu'ti'u rock faces droop in her absence
and there is

nothing left
but guilt and swollen

accents gasping for air.

There is

origin story for everything, her mama says

even diasporic daughters;
the first to dance at fara and

the last to press palms in prayer.

Daughters who hold tēfui to warm clavicle

and trace

the curve of a lost lineage against their body

the weight of

a wave so

the ocean
doesn't seem so big

when traversed with diaspora daughters in mind,

but you

cannot write rhymes about disembarking boats you never knew the name of.

Daughters who don't know the hanuju of their mothers
so we

write each other in false familiarity

return with iri from a Henderson dollar store
wave them fast enough
no one can tell

the difference
but darling
a metaphor cannot make Itu'ti'u remember you

the way your skin can
so let me write you home

so even the turtles of Sol Onau may
hold you
and land

never forget
your diasporic joy

your shape
in the sand

—Ruby Macomber, Rotuma (Itu'ti'u, Oinafa), Fiji (Taveuni), Ngā Puhi, Pākehā,
Waipapa Taumata Rau The University of Auckland

GLOSSARY

The terms included in this glossary are Rotuman.

fara	a Rotuman celebration where communities travel from village to village as part of av mane'a (the Christmas season)
hanuju	story
iri	fan
Itu'ti'u	a district of Rotuma
Sol Onau	a small island near the southern coast of Rotuma
tēfui	garland