

# TAROT

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# TAROT





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## *Introduction to this edition*

It has been a pleasure to collate and craft this reading experience for you and work with such a diverse and talented group of poets.

In this issue, I hope you find yourself stirred by the scenes with which you are presented, transported to places foreign and familiar, and calmed by the cadences carefully crafted by these artists.

Welcome to *Tarot* #2.



Here, you'll find lips that reach  
for home, for family. You'll find  
ears pressed against the walls  
of their bubbles.

You'll find yourself there—  
in café, library, hospital,  
and barber—and you'll brace  
yourself against that Christchurch  
city chill. You'll travel to the beach,  
and stay awhile, and gaze lazily  
as seasons change before you.

There, you'll find your own lips.  
You'll hear your steady breath.  
You'll feel a loved one's touch.  
And, when you're alone there,  
you'll walk through the treasures  
of your mind, past arcade windows  
under high, vaulted ceilings. And there,  
you might even find yourself.

*Kit Willett, June 2021*



# This Is a COVID-19 Announcement

*Yvonne Wang*

the days bleed together  
into muddled grey skies  
and zoom classes you pay  
just half your attention  
to. you miss your friends and  
cherish the loneliness  
in equal measure. your  
teachers assign work it  
takes you hours to do,  
not because you can't do  
it, but because you can't  
find the energy to.

at one o'clock you tune  
into the one news live  
press conference with the  
prime minister and the  
director-general  
who has risen to new  
heights of nationwide fame.  
they announce the cases  
and deaths. your town has a  
cluster; your friend's mother  
gets a test. you are scared.

the cluster grows. your dad  
leaves the house for the store  
and you pray to a god  
you don't even believe  
in. he is older than  
you; he could die from this.  
your sister coughs and you  
freeze; she could die from this.  
it is in your nature



to worry about things  
that you can't control. the  
cases rise, and you pray.

the days pass, even though  
you don't feel them. you walk  
into your garden and  
pace circles around the  
clothing line, breathing in  
fresh air and thinking of  
viruses and hospitals  
and ventilators. you  
are grateful for the air.

you sit and watch tv.  
when the familiar  
advertisement comes on,  
the cursed jingle and lady's  
light, calm tone, you close your  
eyes and think about the  
beauty and ugliness  
of being trapped at home  
in a world made anew.



# enmeshment

*Hebe Kearney*

the bed is hungry  
it swallows my numb face  
my face is hungry  
passing it on

the pillars of my eyes  
ration sleep  
a fluorescent line behind the cornea  
a small irreverent darkness  
remember

it inched away long ago  
down in the dirty weeds  
hang on just a sec  
it takes a while to be brought back

the bed is ravenous  
now its cavernous  
form engulfs me wholly the bed  
has digested me i am

bones in the mattress springs  
sinew in the wooden frame  
dust in the fabric

almost ghostly the bed  
whispers to me while i sleep

*once you were a child  
once you were a child  
once you were a child  
but not for long enough*



# Seasonal

*Vaughan Rapatahana*

the sun has rung in sick  
this morning;  
won't be around today.

its nemesis has blown in  
instead,  
refuting the rules and roles  
of canicule.

shitty sheets of rain  
rebuke travelling outside,  
ignore the fact  
warmth & welcome  
were supposed to  
report for work.

it is climate change  
in reverse,  
summer running awol  
& winter  
out of season.

two upturned umbrellas  
dying on the driveway  
the symbol of  
this existential antipode.



# Fleeting moment

*Srishti Moudgil*

This fleeting moment  
Is innocently vast  
Inside the depths of universe  
Or multi-verse  
Into the mind of someone  
Waiting for an opportunity  
Or someone longing for a lover

This fleeting moment  
Is just a breath  
Or a big sigh  
Of thoughts  
That can build castles  
Or belittle my existence

This fleeting moment  
Questions my self  
In front of this  
Higher self  
That continues  
To nurture selflessly

This fleeting moment  
Is present right here  
Right now  
Seeking its acceptance  
And appreciation



# Ashtray

Ria Masae

*At least it keeps me slim, aye hun.  
Don't feel like eating much when  
everything tastes like boiled potato.*

She watches Mama through the window.  
She knows from their visits to the hospital that the death smog  
Mama sucks in has already scythed the taste buds on her tongue.  
The glass blocks the vapour coiling out of Mama's nostrils from stinging her eyes  
but it doesn't barrier the sound of Mama's coughing fits  
that rattle as dry as shed snakeskin.

She wonders if the inside of Mama's nasal canals is as bald as her head.  
She drags her eyes from the cobra dance of wispy smoke  
to the blue and green magnet on the fridge door.  
Tomorrow, Mama will ring the number stamped on it.  
Again.

She will observe Mama's shoulders sag as murmurs  
of regret and frustration are cried into the phone.  
Then will come the ten slow breaths,  
prayers to cast out Pestilence and her pale horse.

Mama will strain a crooked smile under the  
dried streaks of tears on skin like sallow wallpaper  
then crush a dry kiss on her cheek  
and announce in forced optimism,

*This time, I promise, aye hun.  
I won't stop trying to quit.  
After all, no one likes a quitter.*



# depression tangles

*Hebe Kearney*

sometimes, mum,  
you would still bring the jewellery box out:

light wooden and two-tiered.  
inside it, a tangled nest of necklaces,  
like silver snakes twirled and coiled,  
or tree roots grown together.

spread on the bed  
where you had stayed for weeks,  
its contents would writhe and glint in the low sun;  
metal knots tight like your white knuckles,  
waiting to be eased apart  
with patient, small hands.

i loved to do this for you,  
loving best the few gold chains  
and pendants with dark, dragon-eye stones.  
i wanted to know  
where they all came from.

tugging, easing, coaxing,  
working and reworking the cold brambles,  
you and i,  
in the weak winter sunlight;  
the rings on your pale hands  
slipping and shaking.

with time, the  
metallic birds' nests  
began to resolve into smooth strands,  
like our frizzy hair when wettened;  
and we laid each to rest,  
back on the bright-green felt lining the drawers.



then they would slide closed,  
and the box go back out of reach.  
you would be tired.

in a month or so we would do it again,  
when the knots had regrown like weeds;  
you had wilted further.  
and i often wondered, mum,  
how come it all  
always ended up  
in such a terrible tangle?



## Moturoa haircut

*Tony Beyer*

Tim always has  
the latest sports news  
and speculation  
at his fingertips  
along with my hair

who's about to  
switch to League  
though that happens  
less often now  
Union pays so well

he worries like me  
about the boys  
who don't make it  
unless they're big enough  
and tough enough to box

in the brief interval  
of trimming back and sides  
(nothing on or off the crown)  
he's covered wealthy pastimes too  
golf and yachting

he'll never be reconciled  
to the America's Cup  
which he says is a jack-up  
from start to finish  
brushing the back of my neck



## Glazed Donuts

Michael Gould

In the café from hell  
where one endures strangers' stares  
under a fluorescent glare  
things have finally started to gel  
as I nibble round the hole  
of a lump of sugary deep-fried dough.  
I'm thinking, *I can see now*  
*I can see the light*, and I'm knowing  
really knowing  
that everything will be alright  
in my sad madness  
as the last sane person  
on the planet.



# Painting with Sable and Fury

*Trish Veltman*

Because you cannot stay,  
I paint your memory in burnt sienna,  
umber, Mediterranean ochre.  
Shades of autumn suit you:  
I give you gold.

You return with champagne,  
hothouse roses. We drink  
from one glass, toast each other  
in sunlight and moonshine.

You cannot stay.  
I drink the last bubbles  
from your side of the glass  
and paint roses in full bloom,  
cardinal and scarlet and flame.  
I light a fire, and candles,  
place roses in crystal,  
polished silver on damask.

You return with chocolate,  
perfume. The scent of summer  
on your pale winter skin.

I thought I could warm you.  
I paint you hot white, sear blue.  
My brush strokes are coarse,  
palette knife too sharp—  
you do not know yourself.

This morning, you are gone.



# Invisible Knife

*Edna Heled*

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the high heels of this ridiculous woman  
Dancing wasted in front of my eyes on the jazz bar's floor

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the flamboyant tie of this spiritual leader  
Smiling into my ears from the screen by the door

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the sharpness of my husband's words  
Sinking into my heart while I sip the wine

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the worries from my daughter's chest  
Talking to my tears, saying it's all just fine

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the essence  
Of unstoppable me while I feel so alone

I need an invisible knife  
To cut off the distance  
Between the place where I live and the place I call home



# Reading John Allison in the Manners Street Pop-Up Library

John Ewen

Outside, commuters in their scarves and gloves  
stare into the distance, slowly turning grey.  
Under these bright lights all is quiet  
until the steady snoring starts behind me.  
Across from me a man, fine Māori features  
tieless in a suit, completes the Guardian Sudoku  
returns with another, bends over it, his skull  
gleaming through his thinning hair.  
*...I try to look out through that window.*  
*In the frame myself the polished sheen*  
*of a black mirror always looking back at me.*  
The snores have stopped; I will them to resume  
—I want no Cheyne-Stokes breathing here  
to complicate my day. I linger over each poem  
seeking to arrive on John's wavelength.  
He holds me as the realisation looms  
of his impending loss until I pull away  
from a distressing page. His wife is dying.  
In the window corner a young man  
handsome as any Grecian god, sleeping bag  
across his knees, talks to himself incessantly  
laughs at some interior joke.  
*Suppose we live just a part of our lives, fulfilling*  
*only some of its possibilities, what happens to the unlived*  
*substance of those lives?...*  
Everywhere I look all heads are bent in supplication  
to laptops and to cellphones, some to both.

Reading's a key to unlock the future  
this is a library where nobody  
reads a book.

Nobody will realise their potential.

*Quoted lines are from poems in John Allison's collection 'A Place to Return to' (Cold Hub Press).*



# Playing False and Fast

*Jack Page*

I hid from him; over weeks, months or years I hid  
with an untold irreverence. Through hurried nights  
and averted glances. Through a nervous rain and  
many storms beneath the noise of scattered  
conversation. Under the gauze of self-reflection, or  
some decided plan, I hid. Among the cracks between,  
with room to nestle down and rest. A chance not  
to give pause, but take it. Longing for  
some unperturbed resolution.



## Saving String

*John Ewen*

Our son's a busker, he treads on air  
above people's heads in shopping malls  
and county fairs in Canada and the USA  
and sometimes in the world elsewhere.  
Crowds love his deadpan whiteface miming.  
teetering on his stilts, his timing like he's  
about to fall. A free spirit who's seen more world  
than any ten others you'd care to mention.  
Used to hard beds or no bed, knows where to sleep  
in railway yards and Greyhound stations. Well-spoken  
articulate, gains a stay with the well-bred  
or those who'd debate capitalism or the world's state  
for he's well-read and no-one's fool, just didn't  
didn't see himself cut out for school  
or working for a boss somewhere. For months  
on end he'd disappear - once not a word  
for over a year. He could have been dead  
we didn't know - or still alive, but anywhere.

The world moved on and so did he. Cards came  
and birthdays calls. Perhaps there was a woman  
in his life. In his own time he made it known  
he'd gained a wife. A teacher in Connecticut  
tall, three sons. Husband number one she said  
was a high price, high rise New York lawyer  
with only money in his sights. We flew to meet her.  
She was nice. As if to show some common bond she dwelt  
upon her Scots forebears: 'We're known for saving string, she said.  
Their lives dovetailed. Weekdays she commuted  
to a school to teach, studied for her M.A. while he learnt  
the role of house father, stretched his reach  
to cope with three male teens. Weekends he strode his stilts  
earnt what he could in distant towns. Years went by.



One day she said it's time to quit. It was money once again  
this time his lack of it.

Our son's a busker. He's busking still. Crowds love  
his deadpan white-face mime, that wistfulness  
his empty look. We wish she'd kept a husband  
and discarded string.



# Wearing White

*Trish Veltman*

I wear these clothes for my husband.  
White, like clouds in a blue sky, and snow  
on distant mountains. Like lilies,  
and gentle doves flying. The colour of peace.  
White, the opposite of black.

We wear white for husbands, for fathers, brothers.  
White for the paper they wrote on in black ink.  
On my shirt, I wear a badge  
printed with my husband's face  
and a black 28.  
Twenty-eight years in jail because he wrote  
eight hundred anti-Castro words.  
Criticism in black and white.

On the day of Black Spring, librarians, journalists,  
our husbands were arrested, beaten,  
jailed for speaking their thoughts.

We wear white together—wives, daughters, sisters.  
White is our voice for freedom.  
We gather in silent protest,  
white roses blooming on green grass.

When the military beat us, our skin flowers  
with colours of bruise—a vivid bouquet  
of purple, red, green, yellow.  
Of black and blue.

Bruises fade. Protest blooms again.  
We are the Ladies in White.  
We will never wear  
the white of surrender.



# The Town the Grey

*Sevgi Ikinici*

Was it our unhappiness,  
spilling from the house  
that darkened the whole town?

Our heads were seemingly disowned,  
fallen down off our bodies  
as much as they can,  
eyes staring at the ground.

The town was not pliant,  
and we were not a fit:  
feeling that we were shoved there  
recklessly, wreckingly.  
Most broken were our hearts.

Long time later,  
out of the town,  
where the birds sang  
and the people danced,  
our picture of that town  
remained grey.

Despite now the coloured walls.  
Despite the shining sun.



erasure

*Hebe Kearney*

socrates never touched young boys

he never

took his grubby fingers and pressed them  
into soft taut flesh

socrates was never touched by anyone

never engaged in the carnal, he  
was all white and pure like a lily  
or the beard of a ruddy santa clause-like god

socrates never took it up the ass

he in fact did not have an ass  
just a smooth crack  
with no weather wind or rain no  
erosion or defecation just  
abstract ideas like clouds  
like the rope he was suspended from.

socrates never gave anyone a gobby

out the back of the agora  
he wanted the theory of beauty without  
having to take his himation down to the river  
and wash the semen out

socrates was elevated above all matters of sex

you wouldn't find him  
up the front of a rainbow march in leathers  
socrates was no one's daddy

all the boys he loved  
were loved in mind alone  
and the greek makes this clear



by using kalos for both  
sexy and gifted so no

socrates never took it gave it  
or shared it around  
as was culturally expected  
because apparently

an absence of evidence  
is evidence of abstinence



When It's Cloudy Everything Is Dead; When It's Raining  
Everything Is Alive; And When It's Sunny Everything Is  
Bright, So It Doesn't Matter

*Erin Ramsay*

as the grey came to brood in a soggy sky, Charon mated with Karen—  
the Epsom houses have been hollowed out

in the remnant of pith there lies a spider's egg of wealth—  
white sneakers, light fixtures, pressurised air

and seeing castles in the ozone, a throbbing palimpsest

Google Search: synaesthesia memory depersonalisation  
mood swings changes in light, weather

*no one can give me a fucking answer*

and the cloud, it's trickling into my skin, it's melting me  
into the footpath with the sweat I carry

*you're incredible, you know*

*still pounding the pavement, even with all that in your head*

Google Search: is it normal to feel like

\_\_\_\_\_ to feel

\_\_\_\_\_ like

the mind-vomit

*what did you tell her? that it feels like living in a horror film*

*yeah, you're fucking amazing*

;

chattering ghost faces run the gamut  
see the small world



rotting leaf is beautiful—drip drip  
straw grasses, feeding warrums near the plastic flakes  
tinctures: concrete sizzle, line vertical, bird-tail-flick, happy house-dirt  
door open merging boundary;  
wishes laughing in the humid air

;

the tips of the lemon leaves are winking with water  
I'm catching the sunset on the swing of my hand

there is no substitute for the growth of a year  
the hard-edged confidence that hands me an afternoon  
with new and good people

and returning home to the cat  
bathed in some combination of  
viridescence and old furniture  
and hope in the yellow



# Anniversary of an Earthquake

Joel LeBlanc

The way the building shook itself  
free of our shapes  
  
until my workplace was gone  
and your friends were gone,  
  
until the new city was swaddled in smoke,  
taught me to fear the ground.

To fear the eyes and bones  
of a brooding father,  
  
with me the child (again), waiting  
and wondering if today  
  
is the day when he huffs, and puffs,  
and blows our house down?

But a long walk in the park,  
surrounded by summer oaks,  
  
reminded me that it was us  
who built churches on top of fault lines,  
  
and when the earth rolled over  
in its deep dreaming,

we asked, *what did I do to deserve this?*

We ate poisonous hearts and vomited  
ghosts onto our bedsheets

and cried, *what did I do to deserve this?*

We dripped nightmares into rivers  
and longing for whitebait, for water,

we moaned, *what did I do to deserve this?*



We started wars and buried bullets in neighbours  
and when they fired back,

we demanded, *what did I do to deserve this?*

We chased the shamans and witches  
who spoke with moss, with mountains,

to the edges of the woods,  
and burned them,

and when the ground heaved with  
unknown languages, and all the chimneys fell,

we whispered, *what did I do to deserve this?*

Meanwhile,

the elder trees are pregnant with  
late summer berries,

the streams chuckle through Hagley Park,  
full of eels and spells,

and the mayflies flit about, light with games,  
never wondering why, sometimes,

the earth moves.



# Time

*Emma Carter*

You could fall off the edge of the earth in this town  
Just slip, one toe too deep in the soup of familiarity

And that's it, stuck.

Your reflection elongated and distorted  
Slowly rotating clockwise in a bowl of broth

A moment in time, frozen & reheated  
Dripping like a Dali clock  
You wish you could rewind.



## Midsummer in Paerātā

*Rosina Baxter*

Midsummer in Paerātā  
Starlings on powerlines  
Smoke rising incessantly  
From the steel mill into  
The wide grey sky  
Opening in a soft wound  
Bringing rain on the Manukau  
Warm wind that carries rain  
The children play  
In lukewarm waves  
Muddied harbour water rising  
Surrounding lovers kissing  
Chest deep knees sinking  
Into the mudflats and  
The tide is  
Coming  
In



Sunday Soul'd  
*Michael Hall*

We ride, double  
down the street,  
lean back, lift—  
almost pull a wheelie.

Only the dairy open.  
A logging truck blasts through,  
rattling the windows  
of Harry's Homekill:

too fast.  
Misty rain, the old railway  
bridge—  
the sound of

piss  
on the river.  
A fence post  
floats by.

At night,  
the petrol station  
glows;  
the kaeaway sign

is a sign.  
At school we factorise  
and expand, learn  
that landscapes keep

changing.  
Man, I say, one day,  
I'm gonna buy  
a brand-new car



and drive the hell far  
away as I can.  
A used car would do,  
she says,

get you just as far.  
Me, she says,  
I want to  
be in a band.

You look like  
a drowned dog,  
my dad says,  
barely turning

when I get back in,  
in that strange time  
between adolescence  
and the evening.



hā pīwakawaka  
Vaughan Rapatahana

hā pīwakawaka  
kei whea koe ināianei  
taku hoa iti?

he manu ki he waha rōreka  
he whaikōrero pēnei i he waiata,  
te taima katoa

he aha tāu kōrero e hoa?  
he aha te tikanga  
o tēnei kōwetewete karawhiti?

kāore ahau he mōhio  
nō te mea kua nunumi kē koe  
ki tētahi atu he wāhi

kāore ahau he kite i tāu whatu kanapa  
kāore ahau he rongō i tāu pūrākau roa,  
kua ngaro koe ināianei  
me kei te ngere ahau i a koe.

hā pīwakawaka  
kei whea koe ināianei?

---

Translation:

*Hey fantail, where are you now, my little friend?  
A bird with a dulcet voice; an oratory like a song, all the time.  
What is your story, friend? What is the meaning of this one-sided conversation?  
I do not know, because you have already disappeared to another place.  
I cannot see your glistening eyes. I cannot hear your long tale.  
You are lost now, and I am missing you.  
Hey fantail, where are you now?*



## Coastal waters

*Tony Beyer*

peninsulas mistaken  
for islands  
and vice versa

the purpose  
of circumnavigation  
inaccurately fulfilled

and the names  
all wrong or  
in the wrong language

after months at sea  
having land ho  
was thrilling in the extreme

excitement in the blood  
distorted observation

surely those hills  
were like home  
and should be labelled so

the disrupted locals  
shouting and grimacing  
made for quick sketches

later to be refined in oils  
and varnished  
in the silence of the studio

(sunlight  
of a European afternoon  
on a barbarous shore)

as many conclusions  
drawn from the telescope  
as from those directed at the stars



## Put Yourself Second

*Sarain Frank Soonias*

walking along the brushline  
even a warm group of four could spook a child  
voices that aren't really there  
but mean so much more  
on our back in the sun  
you're just as blind to it all now as you ever were  
holding up a candle to change the meter  
oh you'd build a kingdom for another  
and shore up the moat  
standing ten feet back to be sure



# This Beach

*David Gough*

If I could love you with a place, I would love you with this.  
And if I could colour my soul, I would—  
in this sun and this sea.

To cover all this dark and hurt in humanity,  
beneath the glow of sand;

and my hand would trace, as it has done before,  
the now that is just now so  
endlessly——

The sea drags against my feet.  
The wind tugs at a sleeve:  
it's this—

    this place.

I meet my everyone:  
they are here who I breathe.



Leaving Orua  
(The Last of the Estuary's Sun)  
*Gregory Dally*

It could be called piquant, the tang  
left by a haystack once it's dried.  
The rain has dispersed. You breathe in.  
It's an indulgence that has you imagining tussock fire.

These vapours can only keep moving your atoms  
in a quest for the ultimate condition.  
You assay the tide's fleet of shivers  
around your legs and your mind. It's soothing

to take in the coolness on light rays  
turned in jade over your head. This is the start  
of a journey, even though your shuffle  
disturbs the outline of the current for just an instant

then masquerades as an imprint  
enmeshed among ancient silicates. All memories  
have vanished. That's apropos for a traveller giving in  
to the night's encouragement. It's time to swim.

As you edge from the shore, the hills diminish.  
Your shadow evanesces too, absorbed in ripples.  
It's easy to make ideas lucid, using a talent  
to read the surface like a glut of clues.

Can a clone of a girl who ceased to exist  
dream herself human again? Secluded in eddies  
that your thrashing assembles, you sing. The hush in a vortex,  
you're harmonic to gulls combing melodies from the Tasman.



piha rescue  
*Hebe Kearney*

the west coast sea doesn't welcome you  
it resists like a creature  
pressing its lips tight  
while you force yourself down  
its frothy throat

into its insides like  
feeding yourself to it  
and in this act  
at mercy to its deep hunger

the glass-clear teal  
of waves washing over and again  
foam aerated,  
churning and so  
open and un-open  
like a door is

so Other  
while you do your best dabbling  
at its tonsils keeping  
all your questions locked  
behind your teeth, you are

simply salty  
bedraggled and grinning  
within this wild world



# Seasons

*Yvonne Wang*

## i. summer

the fan spins artificial wind into  
your face. sweat sticks to the underarms of  
every shirt. pollen drifts up your nose and  
makes you sneeze, and your eyes redden and sting.  
when you go to the beach, sand sticks to the  
wet crevices between your toes and your  
shoes sink into the grains. the ocean slams  
against the shoreline and laps at your legs,  
dampening the hem of your shorts. waves surge  
and calm down and rise and calm, like clockwork.  
the burning sun watches, swimming in blue.

## ii. autumn

orange leaves spiral down and meet the ground  
only to be crushed beneath the sole of  
a careless shoe. caretakers scrape the dead  
children of the trees and pile them up for  
kids to laugh and jump into. rain blankets  
the grass and the sun comes out to warm it  
dry, taking turns to keep the time turning.  
the trees shed their hoard, leaving branches bare  
in preparation for the cold ahead.  
the earth settles down and waits for the chill.  
the sun lingers, hiding behind clouds.



iii. winter

it does not snow where you live, but sometimes  
you close your eyes and pretend that it does,  
white falling from the sky and dusting the  
rooftops. you open your mouth to the sky  
and dream of snowflakes dancing through the air  
and coming to rest on your tongue. you pull  
your jacket tighter around your body  
and shiver underneath your umbrella.  
many things sleep through this period of  
the year; you wish you could be one of them.  
the sun rarely comes out to break the grey.

iv. spring

flowers bloom in thick grass and trees regain  
their clothes, green leaves cloaking long branches. the  
bees hum their excitement as they rest on  
petals and ferry yellow dust between  
blossoms. you open the window and let  
the breeze drift in. birds hop from treetop to  
treetop, broadcasting their joyful song to  
everyone. the air tastes like blankets in  
fluttering fields and honey on warm bread.  
the world comes back to life under your feet.  
the sun reappears, wearing blue and grey.

v. and then it starts all over again.



# Jellyfish Babies

*Trish Veltman*

Sea-stripped driftwood as bleached  
as bones litters the beach  
and the sea is full of jellyfish.

Their bodies balloon  
and tentacles trail in billowing columns  
like mushrooms floating in water.

Stranded jellyfish puddle on dry sand,  
so transparent you can see thin, red filaments  
of veins at their heart—a starburst explosion.

The British exploded a hydrogen bomb  
from this island paradise.  
Thin filaments of lightning sliced the heart  
of billowing dust ballooning above your home.  
They called it a mushroom cloud  
but you saw a giant jellyfish.

They promised there would be no harm.

Birds fell from the sky  
as if it were raining stones, and on beaches,  
the heat fused sand into carpets of glass.

And months later, when your babies were born,  
they lay puddled on the birthing table  
like stranded jellyfish—  
boneless  
eyeless  
transparent sacs  
with thin red filaments of veins  
like a burst heart,  
and you could not even hold them.



## Space Memory

*Emma Carter*

Feet don't itch.

Fingers trace map edges,  
nasal passages reminisce.

Names allow mouth edges to turn up,  
in that fond smirk of familiarity.

Accents tasted like wine  
swirled, lingered, considered—  
you'll probably find that a drop remains on your lower lip.

Your personal kaleidoscope may collide with collision, with.....

The heart may *scream*, but the feet don't itch.



The Witching Hour  
*Yael Klangvisan*

That you would turn to me in the night  
    in sleep  
that you would clasp me then  
    while I, awake,  
        wondered at the magic of it

A witching hour  
    when you gifted me your waking soul  
        warming the cold sheets

The lonely street outside  
    the whine of the police car, vivid flashing blue wail  
        the street sweeper sailing on the river Styx  
            shiftworkers whirling past on broomsticks

That I was caught in your sleeping arms silent  
    in the deep of your sleep  
        I was not alone then  
            because in sleep  
                you had turned toward me



when the sun sets at sunrise

*Ria Masae*

If I were Earth  
and you were Mountain,  
would my love be satisfied  
as soft foundation  
under the craggy arches  
of your stony feet?

If I were Free Spirit  
and you were King,  
would you hold my love ransom  
like crown jewels on a ship  
in an attempt to anchor  
my travelling thoughts?

If we basked in the sun  
setting between our crow's feet  
would our love deteriorate  
into tattered bookmarks  
slid between pages of history,  
repeating predictable comfort?

If I were Necromancer  
and you were Priest,  
would we love in a way  
we're not supposed to love  
but suppose that's the way love  
lives then dies, anyway?

If I hated what you stood for  
and you were Poet,  
would words from your  
burning pencil  
thaw my cold doubts  
before they stencilled themselves in snow?

If I were Boy  
and you were Girl,  
why must our love grow adult?  
Can't we daydream forever as children  
soaring our wings through mud  
and moon walking on raindrops?



# Cannibalesbianism

*Erin Ramsay*

something sulphurous is dripping down  
the inside of my torso  
the inside of a cave  
the damp of my body

in a hotel once—  
the girl pressed into me  
ground herself down to nothing  
until she was as thin as pencil shavings  
and bright as a knife

and the hair she had then is the hair I have now

my envious and Saturnal instinct  
means I eat everyone up



# Rosetta Stone

*Yael Klangvisan*

place your hand under my skin  
slide your fingertips between the soft sheets of flesh  
where smooth parchment and spine  
are littered with forgotten words  
and cuneiform  
that spells your name



# Shadows on New Rice

*Kathryn Marr*

How should I please you? Tell me, pray do.  
So full of criticism,  
You crack my head open and  
Fill it up  
Until I'm so nervous I can  
Barely breathe  
And then off you go to the bath,  
Whistling,  
Leaving melted, edgeless pieces of me  
In your wake.

Today I saw  
Shadows on new rice,  
The wind lifting and lowering rain  
Like a curtain,  
A jagged and beautiful sky.



# Infinity

*Srishti Moudgil*

I know you are here  
Right next to me  
Within me  
Holding me tight  
Just when the tide isn't right  
And when time pierces me  
My head goes up in awe  
In pain and hopelessness  
You are up there  
Wrapped in blue green  
Feathers  
With your flute to  
Take me beyond  
Rhythms of this world

On the banks of Yamuna  
Streets of Vrindavan  
And even though the waves of  
Pacific  
I have felt you  
Witnessed you  
Experienced you every now and then  
When the sun smiles through the cloud  
I have seen you in ecstasy  
Of the rainbow

While I like to test you  
Through those moments, I silently pray  
For you to win everytime  
To kindle me  
And rock my breath  
With your presence  
And longing.



# It's Like This

*Rosina Baxter*

I'm getting used  
To not saying your name

Like I'm getting used to  
This crease between my eyebrows

Like I'm getting used  
To polarised politics

Like I'm getting used to  
Millennial rhetoric

I'm getting good at  
Letting you go

I'm excelling in avoiding  
Stores that play Aretha Franklin

I've de-cluttered my life  
My heart's been Marie Kondo-ed

I've let you go  
Like meat, eggs and dairy

Like takeaway coffee cups  
And planning overseas trips

They say absence is where  
There once was presence

Like the curve in my back  
Is empty of your belly

Like the gaps in my playlist  
Heavy vacancies which

Won't. Stop. Beating.



Like leaving the last of your things  
At your mum's back door

I'm getting used to  
Not having you

Like I'm getting used to  
Tear ducts empty of tears

Like I'm getting used to  
Perfection looking uglier

A fresh farm egg  
Raw with embryo

I'm getting used to saying  
Your name in silent prayers

And all the paths in my minds map leading  
Incessantly to you

Like a well-designed  
Public transport system

I. Can't. Get. Off.



# The Rustle of Things

*David Gough*

So, light to the sombre and dark—  
some other's word and warm.

I keep a soul shrouded.

I hide I shiver;  
in the corners, loom the edges of  
a frost and night.

And while we grow—

while we keep ourselves alone, perhaps,  
and feel so much the rustle of things that otherwise hide,  
we are that, more than this endless

inside;  
that dance around us, that only others—  
that only love provides.



# The Anthropologist Evaluates Her Colleague's Social Merit

*Gregory Dally*

You smile, if a little thinly,  
then hum, a positive hovering

meant to defer the imminence of leaving.  
This tactic draws out the pause

he'll soon breathe in, your offering  
to that grinning friend you think of as your supplement.

Endearments are accretions from lazy idioms.  
The gas of thoughts issues. You love that fizzing.

There's a hint attached to the stemming  
of some undelivered verbs,

a frisson at the halt of air taken in.  
An idea can be kept

in the sanctum of inhalation.  
The act of not having said it

might amount to hesitance which appears kind.  
The cotillion falls still now for an instant.

There's time enough to move quietly to your rest  
and then, if you fancy, at your leisure dismiss him.



# Snapshots of Five Days

*Ken W. Simpson*

## I: Evocations

Hopes merge into dreams that disappear in the distance  
and are left behind as time erases blame  
with opiate fantasies that forget the absence of ambition  
substituting for what may have happened  
the fulfilment of an earlier wish that never came to pass  
leaving behind dark feelings of emptiness  
replaced by addictions that despise both mind and body.

## II: Fables

Images form the blossoms on a rose bush  
flaring flames that scar the sky  
convolutions waving gayly while disporting  
with an artifact in the darkness  
of a subterranean park in a forest denuded  
left bewildered and debauched  
by design in the cesspool of remembrance  
as the carousel grimly dictates  
and as the colours moodily change to black.

## III: Despair

The grimness of depression envelops the mind  
in blankets of darkness  
depriving the day of light in conflict with the sun  
shining instead of sleet  
in a vacuum alone existing as a mindless thing  
hoping for sleep to flee  
from the hell of consciousness and not awaken.



#### IV: Victory

Distant days with echoes of remembrance  
secretive sounds of penitence  
illegitimate lies and admonitions to the sky  
exasperating illogical motives  
without meaning and inadmissible in court  
as mendacity even happiness  
abject misery or tranquillity in the darkness  
floating fecklessly in the deep  
with a flotilla of fish setting sail for heaven.

#### V: Atonement

Regret follows sadness down the trail of unhappiness  
chastised by clouds of squalling rain  
blaming and yet resenting the misery  
while wallowing sorrowfully in self-conscious empathy  
until gloom slowly begins to improve  
the skies clear and the sun appears  
to welcome the joy that scatters the shrouds of shame.



# Shame

*Joel LeBlanc*

Shame is found in church,  
where women go monster hunting  
with glances.

Shame is found in hope;  
in needing people and undressing  
in front of them.

Shame is found in kindness  
offered in the shape of apple pies  
to a lover

who then offers jokes  
to his friends—jokes  
shaped like me.

Shame is in the throat  
that can't swallow jokes;  
I always choke.

I cough up seeds that give birth  
to mountains, to forests, to small shrines  
of little shames.

Shame is the fingerprints and scars  
I left on my own arms; the way I used my skin  
as a pillow to scream into.

Shame is the time lost  
when, instead of shaming myself,  
I could've gone hunting for monster hunters.



# Heartbound

*Trish Veltman*

outside this hospital room  
impatient strangers with empty arms  
and a new name

inside  
me  
my belly a cavern

you  
a curled pink koru  
in a plastic pod

your first breath a feather floating  
a dandelion clock drifting  
your first cry a bruise

empty-armed strangers waiting

me  
my arms a cradle  
you  
a koru unfurling

my breast a refrigerator  
your mouth foraging

your eyes a mirror  
your scallop fists on my fingers  
a manacle grip

the empty-armed strangers turn away

and inside this shell  
you and me

heartbound



Dear Coloniser

*Srishti Moudgil*

You invaded my open space  
Carving maps of your convenience  
Destroying my identity  
Dialects, exploiting  
My culture  
Forcing conversions  
Fracturing my family system  
And rituals

With your ruthless  
Goals of capitalism  
You destroyed handlooms  
Diverting raw materials  
To your self-created war  
Letting my people die in famine

Remember?  
You enslaved my ancestors  
Shipping them to unimaginable places

Now you advocate  
For human rights, environment  
In fancy global warming conferences  
With slaughtered animals on your plate

Mind you?  
You can manipulate my history books  
But the land and sky  
Hold account of your karma  
In their consciousness

Dear colonizer!  
Sun will never rise  
In your empire  
And on your royalty too!



# The Pilgrim Complains

*Les Wicks*

Rowed my way across a sea of appointments  
only to take on water.

I did a search, my favourite tune  
is no longer available.

Paid a wiser woman to prescribe for mindfulness  
dosage not to be sneezed at  
only to find a full mind it's just nasal congestion.

At the demonstration  
streets bubbling with indignation  
so right we were puerile  
the chant was simple  
why did I forget the words?

Climbed a mountain  
on TV, just like  
I was really there.

Dug down into the garden,  
disgruntled tubers reconnected,  
gestured *look up* though the sky was full of worries.

My peace is a work in progress.



## Poet Biographies

- Rosina Baxter** Rosina is a an emerging poet from the rural south of Tāmaki Makaurau. She performs regularly at open mic nights around the city, and is also a singer-songwriter.
- Tony Beyer** Tony Beyer is a veteran participant in NZ lit, currently living and writing in Taranaki. Recent poems have appeared in *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Landfall*, *Mayhem*, *Molly Bloom*, *Mudlark*, *Otoliths* and *takahē*.
- Emma Carter** Emma Carter worked the past two decades in the arts industry, whilst sporadically writing poetry. She's now a full-time mum still sporadically writing poetry, with lofty ambitions of having time to write more. She is based in Wellington.
- Gregory Dally** Gregory Dally has had poetry, fiction and other material published in various journals.
- John Ewen** John Ewen lives on the Kapiti Coast. His poetry, short stories, non-fiction and plays have been published in NZ magazines and anthologies, the UK online literary magazine *Five Dials* and broadcast by Radio NZ.
- David Gough** David Gough lives a traveller's life between South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand with his spouse and three kids. He works in the education sector.
- Michael Gould** Michael Gould is a gay Canadian-New Zealand writer with work published in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom (including *Landfall*, *The Café Reader*, *The Spinoff*, *Otoliths*, and *Blackmail Press*). He is also the author of the critical study 'Surrealism and the Cinema: Open-eyed Screening' (1976). He lives in Wellington.
- Michael Hall** Michael Hall lives in Dunedin. Recent poems of his have appeared in *The Spinoff*, *Milly Magazine* and *Queens Quarterly: A Canadian Review*. His poem 'Fencing' was awarded Third Prize in The Poetry New Zealand Poetry Awards 2020.



- Edna Heled** Edna Heled is an artist, art therapist, counsellor and travel journalist from New Zealand. She studied Art Therapy (MA) overseas and Psychology (Hons) in the University of Auckland, NZ. Her writing includes short stories, poetry, travel writing and non-fiction. She has been published in *NZ Herald*, *Short and Twisted*, *Flash Frontier*, *Fresh Ink*, *Landing Press*, *Poetry NZ Yearbook 2021*, and more.
- Sevgi İkinci** Sevgi İkinci came to New Zealand to learn English in 2011. Loving this place, she has stayed ever since. She is passionate about reading and writing. Her poems were published in *More of Us* in 2019 and *Somewhere a Cleaner* in 2020.
- Hebe Kearney** Hebe Kearney is a poet from Christchurch who now calls Auckland her home. Her work has also appeared in *The Three Lamps*, *Oscen*, *Starling*, *Forest and Bird*, and most recently the *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook 2021*.
- Yael Klangvisan** Yael Klangvisan is a West-Auckland poet, and senior lecturer (Auckland University of Technology). Her creative writing appears in a number of publications including the journals: *Meniscus*, *Stimulus*, *The French Literary Review*, *Tarot*, *StylusLit* and *Hecate*. She is the author of *Jouissance* (Sheffield Phoenix, 2015). She has recently published a novella *Aldebaran* (Scáthach Press, 2020).
- Joel LeBlanc** Joel LeBlanc is a Canadian living in Wellington, NZ with his husband and six cats and dogs. His poetry has previously appeared in *Takahe*, *Poetry NZ*, *Semaphore*, and *Voiceprints*.
- Kathryn Marr** Kathryn Marr is a Christchurch-based lecturer and holds an MA in Japanese from the University of Canterbury. Returning to her native New Zealand three years ago after sixteen years spent living in Japan, she uses poetry as a vehicle to explore themes including identity, culture, loss and belonging.
- Ria Masae** Ria Masae is a writer and spoken-word artist of Samoan descent, born and raised in Tāmaki Makaurau. Her work has been published in various literary outlets and theatre productions, including *Landfall* and *Upu Mai Whetu*. In 2020, a collection of her poems, *What She Sees from Atop the Mauga*, was published by Auckland University Press in *AUP New Poets 7*.
- Srishti Moudgil** Srishti Moudgil is an experienced content writer and published poet based in Wellington. She has over three years of experience in writing content for diverse niches and audiences. Her books, *Half Concrete Half Water* and *Half Concrete Half Water Part-II* can be read on Amazon Kindle. She also writes blogs on [srishtimoudgil.wordpress.com](http://srishtimoudgil.wordpress.com)
- Jack Page** Jack Page works as a musician. He has written on scraps of paper, napkins and stray iPhone notes for years. His poetry explores the symmetry between words and music.



Erin Ramsay is a Pākehā nonbinary poet. She uses she/her pronouns, mostly in the drag sense, and is currently working as a high-school librarian. Eventually she wants to have an academic career focusing on queer history, language and gender identity.

Vaughan Rapatahana (Te Ātiawa) commutes between homes in Hong Kong, the Philippines and Aotearoa New Zealand. He is widely published across several genres in both his main languages, te reo Māori and English, and his work has been translated into Bahasa Malaysia, Italian, French, Mandarin, Romanian, Spanish.

Ken W. Simpson is an Australian essayist and poet, educated at Scotch College and Swinburne Art School. He taught art, and began writing short stories. He switched to writing free-verse poetry and essays, with a poetry collection, *Patterns of Perception*, published by Augir Press (UK) in January 2015.

Sarain Frank Soonias is a Cree/Anishnaabe writer residing in Vancouver, Canada. Sarain's poetry is inspired by his evolving relationship with (de)colonization, trauma, love and healing. Poems from his initial collection, *ALL WRONG HORSES ON FIRE THAT GO AWAY AWAY IN THE RAIN*, have been featured in *The Temz Review* and will appear in a range of forthcoming journals.

Trish Veltman writes poetry, fiction, and a blog [www.verveview.com](http://www.verveview.com). She has poems published in *a fine line*, *Mayhem*, *Tarot*, and *Blackmail Press*. Her story 'Shoelaces' won Page & Blackmore's 2020 short story competition, and 'First, Joseph' won the 2021 Cambridge Autumn Festival short story competition. She lives in Kapiti.

Yvonne Wang is a Year 13 student in a small-town New Zealand high school. She was awarded Highest Honours in the 2020 New Zealand Writers College Short Story Competition.

Les Wicks has toured widely and seen publication in over 400 different magazines, anthologies and newspapers across 32 countries in 15 languages. His 14th book of poetry is *Belief* (Flying Islands, 2019). <http://leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm>

