

TAROT

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TAROT



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Editorial

The last edition of *Tarot* was published the same day that ChatGPT was released publicly (Aoteaora time). Naturally, the accelerating development of generative AI technology is both exciting and threatening to the writing industry. As this technology develops, more people will use it in their writing journey, and I think this is great! However, experienced writers know that the writing process is often not “first thought, best thought,” and short-cutting the entire writing process is a sure-fire way to stunt the development of writing skills. What matters more in writing, process or product? I don’t think the two are separable. The process must be robust for the product to be authentic and significant—these are the qualities for which writers strive.

The question I have been exploring isn’t “Should writers use AI?” but “How?”

The biggest risk of generative AI use for the creative writing domain is the homogenisation of style—that perhaps overreliance on AI will blur the distinct edges of personal voice. The bond between writer and reader is an implicit contract (that is often played with—or set on fire...). When the human component of the “writer” inputs ideas for the AI to produce the body of writing, the conversation is

between the computer and the reader: the writer has removed themselves from the equation—they have written themselves out of the contract.

So, if not in the drafting of large sections of text, where in the writing process could AI be involved that would not undermine the voice of the writer? Perhaps everywhere else! Research and planning—plotting, devising, structuring—revising and editing, and marketing and promotion.

Generative AI can and should support writers by expediting the administrative tasks around writing as well as proposing structures, models, methods of characterisation, ideas for where to go next, and writing prompts. AI can role-play as your character (if you teach it!) for you to explore a range of logical responses and reactions. It can edit chapters at a time once you realise that, yes, you really do want it in third person after all that...

For poetry, these all apply—poetry is narrative. Poetry can be planned, researched, structured, and edited. Somewhat luckily, ChatGPT struggles to write poetry without rhyming and sounding a bit naff. It, then, should be used to support poets in ideation, planning, editing.

To my surprise, I didn't (to my knowledge) receive any submissions this period generated by AI. Perhaps they will come. Whether they get through will be a sign of the merit of this developing technology. Hopefully, literary journals will continue to be strongholds of excellence—whatever that may look like.

There are some truly excellent poems in this edition of *Tarot*. I hope, as always, that you enjoy them.

Kit Willett, June 2023

Lambing Season

Elizabeth Ayrey

It is mid-October
and spring drapes itself
seductively along the peninsula.

A flock of youths rear their heads
at the scent of rain
on the horizon, where thunderheads gather
against a sanguine sunset.

I offer to help my ex-girlfriend
with her mascara.
She can't see the mirror
without her glasses.
Sandflies stagger drunkenly
across the bathroom window, ripe
with our blood.
The onshore wind
is a stropmy mare tossing her head
and rattling the panes.

Stormclouds blot purple
like a makeup wipe, like teeth marks
on someone's throat.
We roam the hillside of Port Levy
pretending to be pirates.
Our footfalls sink
into the grass the way the ship's cat
might knead my belly.

We stumble upon a body
cooling in the lee of a cliff; a ewe
lost to the equinox.

As the sun drips red
on her flanks, we lament
that she could not have a sea burial.
The rock face radiates
a memory of heat.

Shadows creep shyly down the bluffs,
dipping the slopes in shade
but the warm front persists, hot and humid
like the crook of an elbow.
The storm is itching to sink its teeth
into fresh spring soil.

A drumming on the tin roof quenches
crickets' hoarse chirping.
Weatherboards begin to groan and protest
around a nest of teenagers
who sleep with plundered rum
and pineapple juice
settled warm in their stomachs.

Sporadic gusts tease snatches of wool
from the gorse bushes.
Rain spills in rivulets
down the ewe's death mask.
The water runs clear.



We are seeds of this land

Harley Bell

There was a time in our lives
when I could not find Matariki
in the sky. Do you remember

when you drew me
close and lit a fire
without matches?

It was like the clouds parted
so you could name the names
of the stars.

It has been many years since
we have talked, but I wonder,
would you walk with me,
once more,
into the forest
at night?

I can carry the lantern-light
if you bring the maps.

We shall both bear the weight
of our own water
but always,
we can share the snacks.

Sometimes I feel like a stone
at the bottom of the river
when I want to be like pounamu,
carved and curled and safe
around the nape of your neck.

Sometimes the mud runs thick,
especially after the rains.
Sometimes the sticks that have fallen,
feel stagnate
when they are not allowed to rot.

Will you walk with me once more,
even if the yellow eyes are watching?

Soon there could be no more kauri.
If we gather pinecones and twigs
and shelter from the wind,
if the fire keeps burning,
if the smoke swirls to surround us,
and I cough; will you tell me,
is this the good kind of choking?


Some seeds never sprout
beyond the forest floor.
Some saplings never feel
the sun under the shadow
of the canopies.

Once, we were dancing.
Twice, we encircled.

Do you remember
when we wore furs
and feathers
and buried our blood
beneath the ferns?

The pine needles still
fall from the trees.

Some creatures make nests
above the acidic soil



and some burrow deep
into the dirt until the rains
remind them to surface.

Some nights are for walking
and talking through memories.
Some nights there are constellations
brighter than the rest.

Some nights we can see
as far as we need.

We are seeds of this land
and the wind will carry us
where we need to grow.

Season end

Tony Beyer

one sunflower
heavy on the stem
leans towards the garage door
as if contradictorily
seeking shadow

this has been a rainy summer
so all the usual local lore
is in abeyance

men older than I am
stand perplexed above their garden beds
or interrogate the sky

we are those the future
may not have time to harm
but there are children
and their children too

Shelf life

Tony Beyer

I still have my orange-covered copy
of the Penguin Modern Poets selected Rilke

though the only poems that interest me in it now
are 'Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes' and the go

he had at the pompous task of writing
one's own epitaph (his is rather good)

and floating on the front RMR's brooding face
from brows to chin prompted one silly girl

to tell me how compelling his eyes were
something he in fact made handy use of in life

when persuading some noble lady or other to lend him
a castle or chateau to compose immortally in

according to the price pencilled on the flyleaf
the book cost me 80c new in the currently fabled 60s

my Omar Khayyam years of a book of verse
a beer and a packet of twenty at a reasonable outlay

Proprioception

Edwin Z. Canary

Muscle memory
feeling with my hands
hearing with my ears
I forgot my eyes
at the bottom of the lake

Dark, my old friend
Thank you for returning to
bring me peace

Hearing the nothingness
no colour to see
nothing to blind
free to feel

Free to cry
free to die

Muscle memory
I can walk without
seeing
I can sing without
manuscript

No clef needed
no time signature

No longer cold
no longer warm
I am perfect
in the dark.



Carol

Elizabeth Coleman

Every year—
fingertips in grapefruit juice
with a dripping blade
I slice and think of you

The way you took such care
when making marmalade
Sharpening the knife
trimming the fruit of flaws
peeling each orb from its sunny skin

Rejecting the white pith
the papery membrane between sections
and slicing skin and flesh
so thinly, so thinly
with grace and focus
A labour of love, you agreed—

I wonder where you are.

What Life Is

Conor Doherty

The clouds are enormous and sun-lit,
And over the fence the neighbours are laughing.
At nighttime, I can just see the city out my window,
And the wind picks up and starts to whistle.
Is this what life is?

I get coffee with a cute girl,
We stay until the café shuts and I don't know how to feel.
I get tipsy with an old friend in the park,
And I'm laughing about drugs
In the pub with my co-workers, feeling out of my depth.
Is this what life is?

When I phone across oceans,
Getting teary-eyed, discussing the problems that follow us.
When I don't act like I used to,
Getting dinner and a glass of wine rather than blackout drunk.
Is this what life is?

My breath stinks of coffee always now,
And I'm one of those commuters
Who nods in and out of sleep on the bus.
I go to meetings now,
I write a newsletter and act like someone important.
Is this what life is?

Is this what life is?

Someone died in the floods and I slept in.

Is this what life is?

One of my friends ended up in hospital and I didn't know.

Is this what life is?

I'm trying really hard to file my tax returns.

Is this what life is?



Tattoo

Hellie Hadfield

Deep breath as needle thrums
Laying back my body hums

Another breath, calm quickening pulse
A gulp of coke, lightheadedness

A body lost in day to day
Oftentimes all shut away

Moving to a slurring beat
Foggy head and shuffling feet

Still each day I play a role
But here and now I take control

Fingers play and black ink flows
Around the edges pink skin glows

Design unfurls in blackened whirls
Mixed amongst the skin-white swirls

Of my puzzle, another piece
Relief sweeps, feel deep release

Monotone, a scratch of red
For this new start I proudly bled

Excited now I get to see
This new, improved, created me

A tingle runs down my spine
This body now is truly mine

the syrup of enlightenment

Ocean Jade

- I. bargaining baptisms in local lakes/ the syrup of enlightenment/
any takers of cheap woes/ of limp-lipped O's/ pool of divine dribble/
mayfly metamorphosis and slick-back swimmers tinselled in scum like
some backwoods Bogman/ i swash celestial cast-backs/ pretending to be
palming the ash of ambitions/ little lives coalescing skyward until swiftly
corpsed/ ground-bound/ the routine of brief spectacles/ reprieve/ doubt on
the dining table/ re-grief/ bated breath/ release
- II. I am stagnant as a safe synonym,
swallowing sticks of chalk to keep the board blank.
believe this: I used to kiss my fists.
I used to free-float in the sea-gargle
of God's open mouth. sneaking into symphonies and
smothering mud-gospel onto saints white teeth.
fins in fractals; sunken petal; bogged down blanket.
my wet rag washes the rust off of crusted potential
only to be stained blind with the labour.
I guess I'm starting to wonder if it was worth it.

The dolly shot

Lynn Jenner

Last night I dreamed the murder of a woman. I was not the murderer or the woman who died, but I was everyone else. I wrote the screenplay that started it all. I was director of this long and terrible sequence. I was also the camera operator, sliding along one of those dollies, my shoulders high and my teeth clenched with the effort of the single take.

A parable cuts through normalcy to make a moral point, but in my dream there was no moment of dread at the beginning and no feeling that something good would happen at the end. The man who killed the woman was always there, right in the centre of the long tracking shot, taking one step and the next, towards an ending that he knew, and I knew, but she did not.

In the morning I could not think of any moral point but this: I would accept beaten gold if it was offered; even silver, at a pinch. I would accept blue, purple and crimson yarns, fine linen and spices, incense and lapis lazuli, without a second thought. Last night I was offered this dream. I suppose I must accept it too.

Does every woman have this dream?

Bell Curve

Megan Kitching

The shape of afternoon:
 tī kōuka billow brown,
blooming ice-cream cones
 on an hourglass sky

a trickle in time, when
 a bumblebee unclasps
clover, blinks into foxglove
 udders and disappears

sleeps a hundred years
 in sherbet stippled
flowers nodding their
 secret campanology

as the garden dons its moss-
 stitched robe, shade
stretching with a yawn
 across this meanwhile

until a porcelain cup
 on the sill prints
an absent rose, the ruru cry
 of a rising moon.



Pylon

Megan Kitching

The pylon is a skymark
of this gridlocked world:
rain coming down,
metal mortised into cloud
welding the weather to the beaten ground.

And it is horizon's ladder,
a lunar lander with strut and rivet
where it aspires
above the old freezing works,
the lightning belts of pines.

Sunstruck it is a pile of lines
worked into the hill:
two scimitars
sliced clear of wires
eloping into the tungsten glare.

Yet climbing into dark
this tower travels nowhere; is only
the moon's escalator,
a starlit tuning fork
thrumming its counterpoint to dreams.

Sandsmoke

Megan Kitching

Walking, and the wind skimming
swallow-low at my ankles

peeled away the smoking sand.
Furled in gusts of mineral light

like braided, cat-stroked grass
it played around my feet

in currents of palest bone, a ghost sea
through whose lures I waded

to a parched, hair-thin tune.
The surf souged as the beach

streamed out of its body
just ahead of each step

leaving a swept floor gilded
with the barest chime of grains.

Almost-words, whose powdery,
moth wing script lifted

singing seaward as I followed
their ephemeral drift,

a palimpsest inked and erased
under the salt air's aurora.



Swept Away

Megan Kitching

As I walk by the insomniac sea,
under sandbags washed white

by an avalanche tide, the ledge
of beach incrementally slender,

I meet a woman working upshore
the other way. If a tsunami came,

she says, arms arcing wide, I'd let
the sharks devour me, and her laugh

dances us towards the limit
where the city becomes a shanty

rafted and swept away
from our landlocked past, more

and more unreal as if no-one lives
in houses flooded in a tea-time fug,

the sports field goalposts
stuck on nil, those nonsensical cars.

A thing of inordinate beauty (Wai-iti Beach)

Trevor M Landers

It was remarkable
the way he put her insecurities to sleep
with all the skill of an old time somnambulist
the way he dived into her opalescent eyes
and starved all her gnawing fears
& tasted all her incalescent dreams
that she had stockpiled in bone marrow
& when you have swum in her oceans
a lake will no longer suffice
everyone else is a pond but you are always the ocean
find a hand in the darkness of a flood
& if there is insufficient light
I propose you & I enter the water.

Making Maps (Awakino Heads)

Trevor M Landers

I want to measure plumb lines
& to chart new continents;
the contours and curvatures of skin
Draw new pleasures onto pliant canvasses;
to dream a little more
To put every fluid ounce of me into the ink which colours the topography of
you
Stencilled in pale pinks, mauve, sizzling reds & penitent purples
To have at the command of my fingertips—an empire:
Your bluffs; crevasses, major highways, and roads that lead me onward,
imploing;
I want to find flash-flooded rivers that make your tremulous heart race
Find dank doorways in your industrial estates,
luxuriate in long, languid rambles
across the Nape of your neck
To press my face into windowless shops
and to inhale the fragrance that lingers
& to come and know, the splendours of cartography.

barbed evolution

Elliot Harley McKenzie

I want to sink warmly & whiplike into a honey-filled estuary,
for the tide to turn and take me out to sea
& for my ex lover to die of dysentery.

I want to sink naked into the aching shape of you
merging our flesh in white hot fury.....
a fusion of perfect rage swimming through smoking thickets
grass wilting in our wake


I want to sink always into barbed evolution &
dress my heart
in shrewd, briny restrictions
slowly ticking over
like a computer working on updates

I'm a medusoid fungus, a spiralling
line of siphonophores.....
king of the pelagic zone

restless phenotypes betray a wearied mitosis
you kiss my inbox and I swoon like a swan-diving shag.....

muscle with tentacular seaweed
wild and earnest
as our predecessors
the scaremongering enormity of
a sex - changing fish.....

Like the kobudai wrasse
I battle in buck toothed glory
for my spawning rights.....



reeling in the ultraconservative
fuckers and bashing their
heads in with the butt of my knife

I want to float like scum in a tidepool,
infinite, romantic.....

splashing bright yellow cleaner in the toilet bowl
I scrub..... & i think of you

The fang has found the helpless flesh

Elliot Harley McKenzie

Great golden gourds
you pick among the bruised stone fruit
with juices leaking onto plastic
i'm coming up with more and more creative ways to contact you.

I'll speak your name three times into my dirty laundry
& you'll hear my voice coming from yours.
From beaches to hollow peaks,
reach wildly, tearing out lichens and scrub

the fang has found the helpless flesh
the feathered form slumps in a death rattle
faces frozen in uncanny snarls
meat sluicing from bone with a wet chewing sound.

a basket of rotting figs on your doorstep
a fish on ice speaks
what was it all for?
milky eyes staring at the fluorescent lights.

Incident Report

Ruben Mita

the rat took our tomatoes

the rain fell
on the Cook Strait,
crying, crying, crying

big rat,
soft and important

ate our tomatoes
looking at the attractive stained glass window

doesn't know about proteins
doesn't even have a name

heavy-minded, the flies
go unmasked around the open room

along the rat's fur,
water filtered through soil
trickled down to soil

the rat circled his topic
his words gave nothing away

humus, phosphor, Antarctic rain
gather up, down, up

he stole our tomatoes
and I did not know what he meant

The Gap in the Window

Ruben Mita

“Crack the window” she said and he did and the gap in the window was a gap,
not a crack, and the gap was the desert between the divided worlds
of the lichen and spiders and borer of the great window.

The air that passed in good terms through the gap in the window
was good air and it made the room shiver with pleasure,
it raised goosebumps on the grey walls and this was the song
of the gap in the window, the song that chilled

her bare elbow and caused her to say, “Close the window, will you?”
He brought down the top of the window and the gap in the window
screamed and screamed every inch of the way and he lay down on the sofa-bed
and she took the earmuffs down from a hook on the wall and
with a steely jaw finished the job.

Night crew

Harvey Molloy

All day he labours during lockdown
his pale fingers hammer keys, his bedroom office
a haven from the open plan melee of the lounge
where the kids do bursts of schoolwork
between Playstation rounds and skids of egg and beans
stick to unrinsed plates in the sink.

Each night, the film crew shoot their features –
drunk gaffer lighting, French film script, addled editing.
Beneath his velveteen frock coat, crimson toe-curved slippers
capped with bells jingle with each step he takes past
the crashed candelabra on the dinner table and out
through the open French doors to the guests
sleeping in the garden where with a pickpocket's touch
he lifts the smouldering dimple from the corner
of his snoring uncle's mouth and asks
"Has anyone seen the dog?"

Then wakes to a winter storm battering the house
the rain blurred yellow lights of the avenue
the dog, months dead, no longer needing his walk.
The kids will soon be up — there's a good half-hour
for a coffee and a shave before morning emails.
That night the crew will be back and with them
the chance to see departed friends as he steps
through the bedroom window without a clue
as to which street he lives on or where he'll be going.

Past perfect

Harvey Molloy

Back then I could not say where I was going
dust devils stirred at the crossroads
outside the Guangdong factory
where my father ordered next season's
Valentine heart gorillas.

At night the library carrels were empty
as manuka stars flicked the dark
and blurred like grass blades on the edge
of a tea tree's shade.

I had forgotten all that until this morning
when I told you how I've blotted out
some of the best hand drawn miniatures of my want.
You put down your fork and said
there's a Bollywood song about two young innocents
who wait for a long departed train
they stare down the tracks to the dry far hills.
She sings "When did all the others
we could have met leave the station?"
That's when the strings rise, the thunder breaks
and the rain comes. They race towards
each other as pink and purple garlands
fall from the sky, hand in hand
they begin to bhangra in time
from one supposed present to another.



Avalanche

Willow Noir

In the valley
of the smallest
mountain
I will climb
the largest peak
'til it bursts
with swollen joy

Evidence to the Contrary

Willow Noir

I reserve suspicion only for myself.
I hear some irrelevant thing,
then twist it inside out.
My mind gives reason no place to hide.

Caught on the most treacherous thought
I can muster, I exclude all doubt.
With a clasp-hold grip,
I ignore all logical evidence to the contrary.

Caffeine stains my lungs.
My mind morphs.
Inside voices echo as sound bites from the past.

The passage of time ticks.
Cloud's whisper tops hurl stabbings
of angular light as they encroach the horizon.
I wait for my sins to pass.

Optimism is the ridge on my inner right cheek.
To create space, I gnaw slow,
to I know I exist outside of my mind.



There's No Place Like Home

Willow Noir

Eyelets, twelve black metal sets,
black round laces pull against them.
The top three empty divots,
laces weave a criss-cross system.

Dark purple-pink rough inside hide,
from backstay emerges loop branded.
Multiple bent creases splay wide,
smooth outer surface indent pocked.

Mud ingrained on graduated sole,
tread worn out of sight.
Half insole to counteract roll,
scuffed toe-cap rough and light.


Black thick stitching holds it together,
sunlight reflecting polished leather.

Quiet third

Keith Nunes

The quiet third
Person makes the conversation go round,
The man in the middle
Being talked across
As the three promenade
Along St Heliers Beach,
As if he isn't there, and
When he's not
The conversation dries up and
The tide ebbs away,
Anxiety swirls around the pair in a faintly fishy breeze,
The search for a quiet third
Becomes the talk
Of the walk back,
Holding the gap between





Stairways to the jet-stream

Keith Nunes

Desert coloured motes
Floating in my gazpacho,
Across my eyes,
Through cadenced vents in the sky,
On the backs of wild horses,
Digressing in swooning swarms,
Stairways to the jet-stream,
Under the wings of feathered theropod dinosaurs,
Collect in the thoughts of irradiating children,
Linger on the lilting voices of the ecstatic,
Drift in on the intent of the westerly
Sweep away silently in the folds of a chimaera

Wide enough

Keith Nunes

It's a pleasing room with
something of a view,
There's someone else
in the house,
We have engaged
in instances centring on
need,
I've closed my door,
Out in the house
a creak shadows a step,
A cluster of creaks implies intent,
As is usual at this time of night
the steps and their
Shadowy creaks come to a halt
outside my door,
I delicately unlock the door,
Hesitate before opening it,
Listen for the breathing,
'Yes?' I always say,
and open the door
wide enough,
Only wide enough



A Young Apophatic's Attempts at Self-Reflection through Translation

Lorenz Poeschl

From Hesse's "Maria" (1898)

IV

Ich fragte Dich, warum Dein Auge gern
In meinem Auge ruht,
So wie ein reiner Himmelsstern
In einer dunklen Flut.

Du sahest lang mich an,
Wie man ein Kind mit blicken misst,
Und sagtest freundlich dann:
Ich bin gut zu Dir, weil Du so traurig bist.

Attempt into the Literal:

I asked you why your eye
Likes to rest in my eye
Like a pure star of heaven
In a dark tide/flood.

You looked at me for long,
As one sizes up a child.
And then said kindly,
I'm good to you, because you are so sad

Attempt into the Literary:

I asked you why your eye
Does like to rest in mine
As might a purest star
In darkest tides of sky.

You gazed at me a while,
As kindly mother may a child,
Then told me in the warmest tone:
I'm good, for in your head you are alone.

Attempt at Return to Self:

i did not dare to ask
why You like to rest with me,
Your eye in mine and mine in Yours,
like life in dark, like star in void,

since i could not bear to hear
Your kind and loving voice
tell me that You know and see
just how it is in me.



Tree

Poppy Postance

The tree in your garden is a big one
I pass it every day.
Even branches, full and very tall.
Right now it's pregnant
with a portal into another world
red leaves so thick and dark
so fluorescent you'd think they were synthetic.
Soon to be brown and crisp, on the ground
then in it.
A last hurrah before departing to become
something else.

Winter Morning

Poppy Postance

I was on the train that day
snow on the roof of a yellow house
a garden bush, gone in an instant
gently whirring to its destination.
Not sadness, nor joy, I got the call
he was gone. Slipped away from
gurgling pain
into the great mystery
I don't think it's a bad place.



I Wish It Was Raining

Rhys Pritchard

There is no sound,
so I play some music.
My phone breaks: the night remains still.
Everything is terribly transparent.

There is no sound,
so I shout something.
My voice dies: the night remains still.
Everything is frighteningly opaque.

I kick a wall.
There is no sound.
There is no wall.
There is a night
Yet not a day.
I am not real
There is no proof.
There is no sound,
So I

I wish it was raining.

misguided

Robyn Restieaux

your son walks the path you laid
decades of good, hard work
foundations hammered
miles into your earth
coils of tripwire for him
to knife your edge

years into your skin
I glimpse a quarry
so knifed, dropping still deeper
a marvel of engineering
but it's a jungle of crying, stinging
things down there

hauntings where women eat their cries
men punch holes in their dark
climb your scaffold
find daylight

your son chases your light
glimmers too early from that grimy pub
come afternoon pulls him from his Hilux
sleep walks him inside to that slip
of a girl behind the counter
smiling her detonator smile

and your daughter-in-law
with her tightwired smile waits
until your son, filled to the brim,
and always empty
returns to excavate your depths still further,
deeper than you could ever have imagined.

Naming rights

Robyn Restieaux

Bury our names deep
quiet earth forget them
graft our bodies within the forests of
names we learn to mouth then
curl our fingers round and
only in winter
when the leaves twist and fall will
we recall our former selves -
lying in soft dark
pulling deeper each year.

So we'll travel from man to man
named for the one
we walk with
as if we are street names,
named for the landscape
but not for the fact that we walk it

could we be known for the journey?
for voices tightening with age
for the strength bodies gain
for their moon-shedding
for the way we learn to store
tears in trousseau boxes
named for sadness?
for the jasmine browning after rain
named for sighing, as the days
lift from our backs
from bones, softened by the evening light?


escape

Robert Rinehart

spadefuls, chopped soil,
moist, splitting the fat
worm. halves fallen away,
wriggling, claiming darkness
of earth. as trees
break clay, so machines
scab worms,
microbes sift:
detail workers. having dug
beneath the fence,
we become homeless.

your breath, sweet,
mulchy. sparkly, glissading,
natural, pure white, dextrous
fresh as cocaine. trees as
soldiers, softening
the air. when asleep,
your movements sifted
as salt pours
into a cellar, swift,
precise, no waste.

those three nights, remember?
nights of unrest, sticks for
guns, & holsters, blistery
in the cold. beneath
fallen firs, we bought
sleep for duty, as,
camouflaged white
within the snow, our
instants of safety,



noisily imagining a simple
apple's crunch, may give
us away.

our fears, racing
hearts, like flushed
pheasants breaking
cover, skating
into woods' depths,
fleeing across the powder,
escaping capture, grave
faces charmed,
two halves come
together, our parts
forming a whole.

Ngarunui starfish

Robert Rinehart

Sand cut shins/abraded & stung/
nettles in a dry field/air thin/cut glass/left
to its devices, a brittle star/clearly trapped/
tidepools still, afraid/pull,/br/>of the moon, blood pressure/weighted sea/
series of blankets thrown in winter/
embryonic density/five arms, piliated,/br/>flying seeds/feeding sensing moving/willfully
painting, dancing, polishing the ocean floor.

&/a dog, freed to romp & lick/bounce
in ecstasy/shaking dry/white drool/owner's
oblivion, tripping out to
beats/Go-Pro™ optics/"sorry,
Bro"/warm tidepool soak/trampling
rocks, coral, shells/gigantic *kaiju* unleashed
across black sand./Cyclonic,
touching down, damage/
brittle star's long
arm, severed/hidden beneath sight/
once again:/reborn.



Wants

Leyli Salayeva

Place it on the plate
carved in my palm,
place your love and fill it in,
change the manner of thought.
Rain down,
rain the pieces of the dreams
thoroughly collected all of these years,
the pieces of shattered vision.
The night that swallowed the sun
and kicked the moon out.
Hide it in my hair,
hide the darkness that blinds you.
Dance in oblivion,
dance on the waves,
break down your body,
let the music be an escape.
Pour the water,
pour the hot boiling liquid on my skin,
cover me with blisters,
make me ugly,
and love me.
Lay me over
with your
restrained
and odd
love.

The day they pulled the house down

Amiria Stirling

A crash-bang from across the street
alerts me. Peering through the curtains,
I realise they are about to start,
so I have positioned myself to watch
the memories of us be taken apart,
pulled down and discarded.

It starts with the walls, the panels,
ignorant of the house's recent history
of us. It does not care. Blow by blow,
the digger takes it all:
the door where you smoked,
the kitchen table where I watched you,
the lounge where we danced; all gone.

The large red bin is lowered
into your driveway at funeral pace,
and, as the remains of your house
are lowered gently into the skip,
I think of your tragic passing.
Cars are drifting back and forth;
they slow to get a better look—vultures.
What is it they want to see?

The workers are respectful and diligent.
They know what happened; they treat
the space accordingly. But piece by piece,
they take you away, and piece by piece,
I feel like I too can let you go.

A Dream Life of Leto

Lee Jane Taylor

An ancient has so much time for drowning.

She should burn, could be angry will be she thinks so many bloodied spites lists
once might have marked ridges in her mind amongst the free wheeling will again
lists pointless wasteful now, list and tip drip as water, enmity lays adrift in gaps
of atmosphere mass-less mast-less impervious to sense, revenge so many
spites but her fettered dusky points of mind spotting as it turns all sink and set
on this one unfairness of consciousness and night when she slips safe, submerged
in her twin kindnesses of silver silence and golden dark but finds her dream self
a true self, herself in perspective shrunk surrounded by hammered dimensional
tempera panels estimating life shining with deepest bias still working at finding
herself to somewhere, to some shore always slow weighted always tide tired might
ask Hineteiwaiwa, who maybe shifts a wisp points direction with a cloudy shadow
finger but Leto's eyes swim black on the upside down of our phasing moon
dragging not only luggage but full wardrobes every needful thing stuffed
wired coils of time at her wrists, children of unsettled ages broken toboggans
worlds of asphalt lifetimes of one foot after another waking to a want
of rage against slog, through sleep but heat only cools
at first breaths to ash, lifts away leaves
only handfuls of stones and the long
long slow of falling beneath
the cold weights of seas
through the weightlessness

of cold

such are the ancient dreams
of Leto.

*Leto is a Greek goddess of motherhood idealised for her extreme suffering, cursed with landlessness during birth of the gods Apollo and Artemis

**Hineteiwaiwa in tikanga is the spiritual guardian of childbirth, weaving and cycles of the moon.

Horizons

Lee Jane Taylor

The horizon is not a ruled line it weaves into the unseen
it is a seam wearing thin between dreams and the exaltant
exhalation inhalation, the many one more steps the seems
the street below has set up bunting white orange day glow
hip hooray a street party no, no party, opposite - don't come - go
no beats no dance just clank crank progress yanks on our doorstep
these seeming nets, those seems not sputter but
no more tears clean
steam in sip of possibility salvage after sleep's wreck
seep of heat creeping cracks in skins
our papering over temporal arteries, window sills careful
chocolate hot and cold, ticks on charts, questions fast, listen slow
steel your axons manufacture primary colours girdle in
until you enjoy your own show
lean in see eyes are still in motion
luminous as planets cores warm and dark within
one task, one footstep more towards where words nest
the way bars of a song hunt in one at a time persistence
as this fixed eye shutters in reflex, so shifts a horizon line.

The Art of Substitution

Lee Jane Taylor

Pain is inspiration but never spell hurt, don't
words are clumsy damp won't hold the slip if
sensation spikes in what to say when fray of
days hunch minutes linger exquisite porcupine
hours display rows of quills in perfect poise
if you must, tie it down in microfiche decree
bind it up in ribbons shelved keep pith in sight
don't fright the people busy working greasing
filling need diversion need anything but pain
it has no substance only inspiration,
writing in the vacuous calligraphies of skies
lines of moon shapes in looming cloud scapes
don't dwell on ink blot blind spots savour thrills
complicated angles conspire in idiosyncratic spy
games of life aside via leafy wigs nod mindless in
winds blow puff with luck catch the strange creep
creatures of mindsight their glistening carapaces
in the half-light might be an ambulant jewel or a
blowfly, hasty tastes your arm hairs with hungry
feet drops pebble quick floats away slow takes
corpuscles of you to cavort together on fleshy
petals musk and pepper scented, wrap them tight
those limping weeks close your eyes let it flow
the way of rivers course beneath long dry braids
of shingle, unremarked pin the sting to paper
hidden under wings that lie iridescent in
the wavelength interference
of a well-ridged phrasing,
bathe in a preservation
of succinctly tintured terms.

body in two verses

Freya Turnbull

the blue word slips and knocks down my hips
and rests where you grab them
baby
my marrow opens at the sound
i am all pilgrim, with your pearls in my mouth and your saint-sweet palm
girdling my waist
darling
word coloured by early-morning white-gold, white-teeth,
the altar of your collarbone beauty by the Book
i shirk my duties to stay in bed, call that its own piety,

god gave us the colour wheel and other lavish things
and my hunger becomes holy when you call on me

at home

Jedidiah Vinzon

a window is pressed to my eyes
as they box me by the neck
& they cage these bloody lungs
to the walls closing in
soundless & alone
I sit by the grey, the black & the white
where no tears could fall
nor voice to hear
for the walls themselves press upon my lips
feeding upon my sorrow
& screaming at the moments
where I dare shed a tear
& they gag me with their devil hands
crafted solely for their pleasure
& when I scream 'Silence!' with hope
for empathy & rest
they crawl their fingers down me
piercing through my skin
& piece by piece I feel myself fading
as snow in a pool of water
adrift into an eternal night
falling deeper into a darker torment
where happiness dies to sadness
where fear molests joy
here in this house of madness
where I press myself closer to the outside
in hopes, with prayer, that I may be free:


I press my eyes to the window.

insomnia

Jedidiah Vinzon

jupiter beside the a.m. moon
hydrangeas by the redding bricks
misty walking
grey cloud spray
star-catching near the windowpane.





teetering closely to breaking apart

Jedidiah Vinzon

we
no form
or rhythm
asymmetric
pushing and pulling
see-saws never see us
level out the depression
we dug a hole we could not leave
so we returned to our old habits

we balanced above thin sheets of ice
eggshell landmines skating away
roasting marshmallows too close
skimming trucks with our heads
we are Icarus
diving deeper
helplessly
burning
us.

Forgotten Paths

Iona Winter

1. These forgotten paths lead nowhere obvious, but invisible creatures scurry and make their kōanga nests.
2. Later, I walk on pavements between parliament beehives and insurance company skyscrapers, with everyone suited up in masks and avoidant gazes, and hipsters with seven-eight-length trousers pressed just right.
3. I watch the flap of a manu wing in the breeze; the remainder lies squashed on the bitumen. I sit still, inside the tornado that swirls around me amidst the noise, avoiding the elephant in the room - my son's death. It's as though I'm in another dimension, which I suppose in many ways I am.
4. Sometimes I feel like I'm about five, when the mamae hits. It's like when you're a kid and you don't understand what it was you did wrong, you've been told off and it hurts, but none of it makes any sense. It feels like it was yesterday that you died - not thirteen months later.
5. Armour turns your whole body into a patu, and I ask myself does being a crone mean that my only child had to die? How often do I compensate for others when they are faced with my grief? What the hell do people mean, when they say you're looking really good?
6. Outkast's Hey Ya, playing on the cafe stereo, reminders of you everywhere, your joy with music and how you always memorised the lyrics.
7. I never had a daughter, but I had a son and the marama shone out of him from the moment he was conceived. Now he's gone, in the space of a heartbeat, and his light can only shine through those dimensions accessible, when I'm fast asleep.



Whare pūrākau tāuhu (the house of serial stories)

Iona Winter

your mark remains imprinted
unlike my earthen pigmentation
and the impermanence of clay

this whenua echoes in the sea—sky—light
and kanohi manifest in the kōhatu
~ innumerable totems, of you

are the leftovers on the beach all that awaits me
now that you are gone
between pebble-cast-sand and the tide

wave forms and spume couplets coat my stripped-back limbs
in gleaming quartz-like destruction
~ wrought, like tohorā bones from the deep

in shifting landscapes and underwater spaces
taniwha, fresh and salted, flex disembodied muscles
and I am wai—mate

ancient runes and DNA threads lie cloaked and frayed upon my shoulders
but those tohorā bones will rise again
~ agile, weightless and free

Your voice in concentric circles

Iona Winter

Light and dark rā versus pō
the shadows that creased your face were held
then released.

Columns reach skyward, and punga stones rest beneath cubic facades
with sharpened edges. Deconstructed beneath the night sky, I am unable to
hear your voice in concentric circles, that echo and repeat like rings of fire—
there is only **this ever-present black**.

The injustice of it and stark lines
where others lie in their moulded condolences,
amidst rubble piles of revulsion.

Unfathomable pain points me towards the absurdity of your enforced death.
And I count days, weeks, moons, when all that remains is a red mourning light.
Tangi te mapu, I am drawn in and out, until the ground swells where I stand,
in cruciform protest, inside **this ever-present black**.

Kākāriki returns me to your smile
kōwhai your voice whereo your aroha
like a melody of encircled halos — around your infinite absence.

Ancient histories without human voices, where I listen solely to the manu
and the lack of anyone's authority. It is there I lean inwards, in triangulated
opposition to the storm-clouded ether. Now, I hear you say, look up Mā, for
soon a comet will streak across **this ever-present black**.

Poet Biographies

Elizabeth Ayrey is an 18 year old poet from Ōtautahi. Her work can be found in places such as *ReDraft*, *fingers comma toes*, and *a fine line*. She was a 2021 winner of the NZPS international competition.

Harley Bell is a writer, poet and facilitator. His background is in art and business. He is interested in the intersection of nature and mythology. He drinks too much coffee.

Tony Beyer writes in Taranaki. His print titles include *Dream Boat: selected poems* (HeadworX) and *Anchor Stone* (Cold Hub Press).

Edwin Z. Canary (he/they) is a 30-something Queer poet from Tāmaki Makaurau. Edwin's poetry is an expression of living with mental health issues, melancholia, uncertainty; as well as finding love, and the beauty in nature. Edwin draws inspiration from music, as well as Victorian era aesthetics, the macabre, and nature.

Elizabeth Coleman lives in the Kapiti Coast where she writes mainly poetry, short stories and book reviews. It is a creative place to live. She has been published in anthologies, including *Dear to Me* and *Swings and Roundabouts*, and in journals such as *takahē*, *Fourth Floor*, and *Blackmail Press*.

Conor Doherty (they/them) is a queer Pākehā living on sovereign Ngāti Whātua whenua in Tāmaki Makaurau. They are trying to capture life in Aotearoa in writing before they move halfway around the world. They have also been published in places like *Mayhem* and *Re-Draft*.

Hellie Hadfield moved to New Zealand in 2009 rather accidentally, after running out of money while backpacking. Now firmly settled, she loves exploring the wilds of this place. When she's not writing she can be found wild swimming, snowboarding, and roadtripping with her chap and their rescue pup.

Ocean Jade is a 18-year-old student from the U.S. living in New Zealand. She won the Year 12 category in the 2021 *Poetry NZ Yearbook* Student Competition with additional work in NZPS's 'Kissing a Ghost', *Re-Draft*, *ODT Extra!*, and *Minor Gospel*. Outside of writing, her interests are roadside motels, small town underbellies, and atmospheric phenomena.

Lynn Jenner lives near Kerikeri. She has published three books: *Dear Sweet Harry* (AUP), *Lost and Gone Away* (AUP) and *Peat* (OUP). Her author website is pinklight.nz

Megan Kitching lives in Ōtepoti Dunedin. Her poetry has appeared in *The Frogmore Papers* (UK), the *Otago Daily Times*, *takahē*, *Poetry New Zealand*, and *Landfall*. Her debut poetry collection is *At the Point of Seeing* (OUP, 2023).

Trevor M Landers is the *Kauhoe* of *Mātātuhi Taranaki*, the bilingual regional journal of creative writing. His latest project (with Vaughan Rapatahana and Ngauru Rawiri), *Ngā Pūrehu Kapohau: A literary homage to Pātea, Waverley, Waitōtara and districts* is due for release soon. A follow up covering North and Eastern Taranaki is planned for 2024. His poems in this edition are drawn from the latter collection.

Elliot Harley McKenzie (they/them) is a transgender pākehā poet whose work has been previously published in *Starling*. In 2020 they won the Under 25 category in the Peter Wells short fiction contest. They live in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Ruben Mita is a musician, science student and writer living in Wellington. His camera roll is solely photos of fungi and a little white dog. He has been published in *Starling*, and in upcoming issues of *Landfall* and *Takahē*, and won the 2022 IIML Story Inc. Poetry Prize.

Harvey Molloy lives in Wellington. He is the author of three books of poetry: *Night Music* (2018); *Udon by The Remarkables* (2016) and *Moonshot* (2008); he is also the co-author, with Latika Vasil, of the book *Asperger Syndrome, Adolescence, and Identity: Looking Beyond the Label*.

Willow Noir figures out the convolutions of her mind through poetry, collage and the rhythm of a crochet hook aided by naps and strong black coffee. She lives with her sister in Taranaki.

Keith Nunes has had poetry, fiction, haiku and visuals published around the globe. He creates ethereal manifestations as a way of communicating with the outside world.

Lorenz Poeschl (Pöschl) is an academic-English tutor and researcher from Auckland. His work touches on colonialism, pedagogy, national memory, and intimacy. As a German immigrant to Aotearoa, Lorenz writes to think about strangeness in a settler-colonial territory. His work has appeared in zines, *Write Together*, and the *Journal of New Zealand Literature*.

Poppy Postance is a Nelson-based writer of English and Chilean descent. She has worked as a ghostwriter, biography editor, and academic editor.

Rhys Pritchard is a seventeen-year-old living in Christchurch. He has enjoyed writing since his earliest memories and spends his time going from reading to walking around the city, as well as writing works of short fiction and poetry. Rhys is terrified of nearly everything, but he holds it all dear.

Robyn Restieaux is a poet based in Tamaki Makaurau who has happily and recently moved from teaching literature to writing it. Her work was most recently published in the *Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook 2023: Afterburn*.

Robert Rinehart (he/him) moved to Aotearoa New Zealand in August 2008. Recently retired, and damned glad of it, he abides in Raglan. He's been published in *Chelsea, a fine line, Mayhem, Sonoma Mandala, LIPS*, and others.

Leyli Salayeva is a performance poet, writer from Baku, Azerbaijan. She has authored award-winning children's book, two poetry books in English and two poetry books in Russian. Leyli collaborates with local and international artists on numerous art projects. Her collaborative work "Men only, women be not ashamed" dedicated to verbal harassment of women had a resonance in the society.

Amiria Stirling — Ko Kirieke te maunga | Ko Wairuru te awa | Ko Te Whānau a Maru te hapū | Ko Te Whānau a Apanui te iwi | Ko Amiria Stirling tōku ingoa.
Amiria is an emergent writer who submitted this poem to Kit to read on TikTok! The poem in this issue is a memory of a friend and their times together in a house full of memories.

Lee Jane Taylor is a poet, psychologist, mother and "migraineur" living in Otautahi with a menagerie of auto-immune weirdness, teen ebullience and pet anarchy. See Lee's work at SkyHousePoetry.com

Freya Turnbull is currently haunting Victoria University as a Law, English and Creative Writing student. She has featured in a range of publications and competitions, including the Katherine Mansfield Short Story competition, NZPS anthologies, *Redraft*, and more. In her spare time, she likes dressing silly, waxing poetic, and being off-putting.

Jedidiah Vinzon is currently studying toward his Bachelor of Science (Physics). Contrary to what you may believe, he loves music, reading, film, television, and (basically) living. He will not hesitate to lecture/berate/rant at you if you mention BTS to him. You have been warned.

Iona Winter (Waitaha) is the author of three collections. Widely published and anthologised, her poetry and hybrid fiction have been performed solo and in collaboration with other multimedia artists. Iona is currently working on a creative non-fiction book addressing the complexities of being suicide bereaved, and lives in Ōtepoti Dunedin.

