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# TAROT

poetry for Aotearoa





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Cover art is part of Donald Patten's "Master Artworks in COVID Times" series. Donald Patten is an artist and cartoonist from Belfast, Maine. He creates oil paintings, illustrations, ceramics and graphic novels. His art has been exhibited in galleries throughout Maine. To view his online portfolio, visit his Instagram: [@donald.patten](https://www.instagram.com/donald.patten)

Other images, including the card border on the cover are sampled from Pamela Colman Smith's Rider-Waite tarot deck.

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# TAROT



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# *Nature's Vow*

## *Stephanie Hurley*

Plumes of gold  
slump against evening's hush,  
heads bowed,  
holding the sky's last ember.

Time folds in on itself,  
as shadows gather  
the day's remains—  
world between thoughts.

In the silence,  
toetoe wait  
for dawn's bright breath  
to rouse them from slumber,  
murmuring new light  
into being.

# *Full Moon and Lilac Sky*

*Hannah Griffin*

You're so sweet  
looking at me with those generous eyes  
my fullness  
somehow expanding further  
overflowing        somehow

You're singing  
in my living room        heart  
I want more of it  
your song        you  
your hands  
on my keyboard  
making music        of me

You're resting  
in my bedsheets        mind  
I don't know whether to wake you  
I didn't know  
the moon and the sky were a game        until now  
we play  
lilac and gold        dreaming  
as we too  
change  
colours

# *room for a rainbow*

*Lisa Stanley*

after the tears you notice my eyelids  
& ask why the colour

i tell you it's eye shadow  
something a bit different

you tell me you like my eyes normal,  
& i guess "normal" works for me,

but now & then, son, i add the colour  
just to show you what you can do

# *A passing calm*

*Grant Shimmin*

The wind has finally found its peace  
when dawn etches the sky  
Birds sing sweet, urgent psalms  
to the fleeting stillness  
before the rowdy rush of day

# *A young spring*

*Ek. A. Butakova*

A young spring spilled a cinnabar-coloured sunset across  
the sky,

And the first violet flowers bloomed in the meadows. You  
know

That violet and violent sound so alike, and I know.

The golden moon floats among the stars, as if on a  
Kuindzhi canvas.

The artist set down his tired brush, leaving aside  
mountains

and shores, Orion's smiles, lilacs, Eurus's flows.

His muse rang a gong and flew away  
A thousand crows.

# *It carries*

*Prue King*

tools to the worksite  
branches for the bonfire  
raked leaves to feed garden beds  
young trees, stakes and spade for planting  
soapy water for rancid dogs  
fresh earth for the veggie plot  
wood for nights by the fire  
old bricks for new paths

I love my red barrow, a friend  
for my natural burial.

# *Did you sleep like a log?*

*Gail Zing*

Did you record the movement of insect wings,  
a feather falling through the air, a cradle  
in a giant's care, did you  
hear the chewing worms sorting dirt,  
the sooty scale showing honey to the bark, honey,  
did you feel the sway and grow and hum  
of mycelium lines sending out messages  
for you and me and the short-tailed bat, it's time,  
darling, for the wood rose  
to flute its tune, rise up, rise  
from the underworld, meet this fern,  
this lily, this orchid sharing our space  
like lovers, entwined, did you, my love,  
did you dream the dream of a tree?

# *Listening to Mountains*

*Jinnette Oliver*

I hear the mountains  
making sounds  
ancient sun scripts  
casting shadows  
that dance  
moving with time  
speaking to me  
in a river that runs  
through the valley  
a concert of nature  
faces in the cliff  
eyes shining emotions  
reflecting weather  
across the water  
telling stories  
from the gods  
telling me I am my  
heart chamber  
it has life in the  
sounds of the river

# *It begins*

*Jackson*

I arrange my shirts on the empty hangers  
in my mother's side of the wardrobe.

The rail is a flange at the front of the shelf,  
not a rod below it. I wonder if this

is a New Zealand thing. I drag shut  
the wardrobe's bifold doors, scraping

the carpet. Above them, there's a gap.  
That must let in dust, I mutter.

I unpack the favourite books I lugged  
across the Tasman, set them up

on the shelf where my father kept  
the stereo he bought after my mother died

and he really needed good sound.  
The stereo's gone to his rest home room

with the other things his friends  
(thank God for them!) decided he'd want:

the TV, some of his clothes, a few  
of the photos and knick-knacks.

Since the call—Your dad's in hospital ...  
helicopter ... a stroke ... we thought he was dead—

it's taken me three months to get here.  
A doctor's letter to prove

compassionate reasons. Permission  
to leave Australia. A visa. Flights to ghostly

international terminals. A fortnight's  
isolation in Auckland. Three buses north ...

I sluice out the jug, boil it,  
rinse a cup, find a teabag, sit

at the white plastic outdoor table  
in the little living room,

make a list. Bread, salad, muesli,  
oat milk, a tin of beans.

Nothing that has to be cooked—  
not until I've scrubbed the pans.

In the carport, I gingerly start  
my father's new red Swift,

with its crouched-cat shape  
and high-winged name,

slowly back it out  
of the awkward driveway.

I muff the hill start twice—  
two stalls on the slippery gravel—

but eventually  
I get going,

get up to speed

# *mycelial bodies*

## *Elliot Harley McKenzie*

*for Jo*

locked in the warm, dark closet of the womb  
our splitting happens with an agonising tug,  
like two silvery droplets pulled apart by  
magnetic forces. Our mitosis begins in  
tandem, so precisely mirrored at first until  
we burrow separately and grow suspended  
and rotating in rich fluid with our twin life  
lines, twin cords binding us to her & bent  
toward her hot rush of blood. our carbon  
dioxide & our shit flows over the divide. our  
fingers separate, our palms come together,  
limbs brushing and tangling until the basin  
of our urine spills, amniotic fluid draining to  
earth. We are expelled one after another.  
You witness the bright explosion of our slick  
dancing bodies—faces twisted with the  
displeasure of awakening.

# *But tell me how it tastes*

*Jessica Arcus*

it looks like a bowing cactus on the sill  
and an assortment of treasure-trash  
strewn across the woollen rug  
it looks like a swollen eye from the beak of a chicken  
because I was actually inside the cage  
and the big dog lolling on the sun-stained couch

despite it being against the rules

it looks like pink gin straight from the can  
and making biscuits shaped like bones with the little at 5pm  
it looks like a landslide of scree finally being released  
and tumbling without grabbing for anything  
it looks like my shoulders sitting lower  
my fingers taken from all the pies  
and being licked clean instead  
and God it tastes good.

# *soup*

*Lauren Mae*

soup is a pensive food  
and i have been  
thinking  
up to my elbows  
in french onion  
roast tomato  
chicken noodle

a wholesome activity  
fulfills  
(if you believe in placebo)

look at this bulb of garlic  
the cloves are all friends  
cuddling  
i put them in the oven

the pot warps my reflection  
chunks of pumpkin smile up at me  
sweetly  
i turn on the blender

no one is here to help me  
break bread  
mouldy sourdough  
spews spores when it thuds into the bin

soup is a pensive food  
and i have been  
hoping  
i haven't made too much

# *A Modern God*

## *Kieran Haslett-Moore*

I unload the dishes, carefully like a forensic pathologist,  
each item is smeared with the earthly filth of its neighbours.

Pork fat and chili have found spiritual union  
with muesli and custard.

I diligently rinse and scrub,  
each arc of the Steelo a crown of roses.

Clean and dry, clean and serene,

I savour this moment of order.

A new dawn and I load the next soiled and scarred dishes  
into the white box of faith.

I pray this time will be different.

This time the sins of the crockery  
will be washed in the river of Jordan.

This time we will witness the miracle, just like in the adverts.  
Cleanliness is after all, next to godliness.

But then again,

I am reminded,

here Satan reigns.

# *Once more over the sacred hill*

*Keith Nunes*

Ascending Puketapu  
Glide down the other side  
Ribbon of black-lipstick road  
Laid out in linear form  
Divides grapes from hops  
Riverside from hillside,  
Glazed autumnal afternoon leaks into  
Freezer-chill evening shot through with stars and bars alight,  
Turbo under the hood,

Flecks of song,  
Stare and smile, look away, look again,  
Hand tucked inside heater-hot hand,  
Arrhythmic beat in the chest.

# *Hospital suite*

*Tony Beyer*

drip stands  
nose tubes  
gut bags  
pressure stockings  
the entire  
mobile population  
of Ward 4  
excluding staff  
is in the patients' lounge  
watching *Shortland Street*

hospital is high drama  
to them  
the competition  
for attention  
the complaints about  
unimportant matters  
the being out of danger  
for a while  
also the possibility  
of love

# *Across the reserve*

*Megan Clayton*

Several of my dogs I named for ancestors.  
I meant to confer love and dignity,  
though concede this might not easily  
be perceived. Dignity does not lick, hump

or urinate where forbidden. However,  
dignity might wait outside to let the  
breeze feather its ruff, or bob down  
gently to receive head pats from an

excited child. And though my departed and  
warmly eulogised might in a pinch  
prefer the kindness of an aeon's rest to  
the fuzzy duffers standing by the creek,

barking at reeds, they might not. Lord  
knows I need them at the edges  
of my days, and again in the  
wandering slipstream of things that

are okay. It's me, I guess, calling the name  
across the reserve of the ones who were  
loved, of the new and silly ones now loved  
so dearly. Look at this life, that in your

absence I make daily in your image.  
Look at its ears. Look at its little tail.

# *Predawn, Bus Stop*

*Bee Trudgeon*

Deep in dark-morning cauldron,  
early birds are reduced to hunched figures,  
bubbles of light.

In summer, we nod, smile, or even talk.  
In winter, that's too intimate.  
Our phones are our blankets.

I've been toughened  
by memories of when alone  
really meant that.

These days are like cream,  
dripping from jabbing fingers and slack jaws.  
I am overwhelmed by sweetness.

# *Subzero winter with underfloor heating*

*Jackson*

This morning I tell myself:  
you don't have to wish. Just notice.

There is the window I tried to seal with rags:  
double glazing, warped metal frame.

There is the air purifier my housemate,  
real name Song, helped me buy online.

There is the table: spider plant I'm watering,  
desert dirt in a plastic pot.

There is the living-room wall: flower tapestry,  
map of the 'Republic', red star, circumscribed territories.

There is the tiled floor,  
warm under my feet where the pipes go.

Here are the membranes in my nose:  
smell of burnt petroleum. Don't wish.

*Yinchuan, China, February 2019*

# *Tiny circles*

*Jessica Arcus*

To be a child is to  
put things in your pocket  
without forethought  
of possible staining;  
I have scrubbed at the legs  
but the blue of post-wash  
wet collected confetti  
remains.

I imagine it was worth it—  
each tiny circle becoming  
transcendent in your  
little fingers, so how  
could I begrudge this redemption?

I recall the story of  
a woman/mother/wife  
given an electric washing machine—  
save her time, no more hand wringing,  
but she said: no, I'm not  
hand-wringing, worry has no place

here, what I am doing as I  
thread each piece of baptised clothing  
through the tight lips of the wringer is  
to open mine, transform the washing into  
a rosary of wet fabric

as long as my family

And now I'm thinking  
how we are always trying  
to save time  
but for what?

# *Linger*

## *Amy Johnstone*

You walk a little out of your way,  
Wait for the water to evaporate from our skin,  
You leave a little coffee in your cup,  
We linger.

I sit a little longer in your car,  
I'm not quite ready to go,  
You don't hurry me along,  
You make another joke,  
And we linger.

We wait until our last stretch to prod the unspoken,  
We dance around our truths nervously,  
Then abruptly we run out of street,  
I have to go my way,  
You pull into the intersection,  
We linger one last time.

# *A poem that was supposed to be about moving out is brutally overpowered by Jenny Bornholdt*

*Jay Lee-Guard*

Long skirts and cigarettes on someone's balcony,  
accessed via the window.

A lack of proper chairs—leading to  
beanbags in the sun, before suddenly  
too many chairs and no tables.

Reading Jenny Bornholdt and writing like her,  
just to try.

Realising how subtle her writing is, meaning  
hidden by simplicity and words about road trips.

Nouns and verbs cognate in the sun  
or something like that.

\$50 grocery shops, and always  
back up the hill before bedtime.

A sea view without a salt breeze:  
citrus sparks in the air,  
complacency slowly creeping in.

Trying to push on, but taking the wind  
out of my own sails.

The hill is more difficult to climb  
than I give it credit for.

Living going on elsewhere too,  
but being here now.

# *It's Nice Outside*

*Allan J. Manson*

I looked out the window and there I saw it  
A day so fine you couldn't dream it  
I almost got up from the couch  
to wake you

almost

Breaking the morning  
with the frost between us  
seemed a cold, cruel thing,

when it's nice outside.

# *Heartwood Services*

*Lee Fraser*

Green tea, marmalade toast,  
Robert Plant and Kate Bush's duet.  
Briefcase—wide hat, knee mat,  
clipboard, pamphlets, tissues.  
Nametag—Lea Fraiser, Tree Psychologist.

First stop: surface roots on saplings  
at Central Otago dry stack build site.  
*It may be stone fragments in the soil.*  
*If this anti-schistamine doesn't work,*  
*do reach out again; could be a fear of depths.*

Phil Chloro, landscaper,  
can't stop trunk sprouts.  
*See the bamboo over there?*  
*This tree's got competitive.*  
*Find its strongest branch; attach a swing.*

Neighbour rings. While away,  
her bonsai conifer moved itself  
to lean against the window.  
*It's a pine thing.*  
*Try spruce; been known to do light dusting.*

Last stop: office privacy hedge  
still grows only sideways.  
*Nothing I can do;*  
*it's that rosemary.*  
*Replace the hedge or address the affair.*

At dinner, friend ponders their preschool's feijoa tree  
fruit round, fuzzy, brown.  
*New ABC poster at nearby window?*  
*They're jealous plants. Move the chart*  
*so 'K for Kiwifruit' is out of sight.*

Fill in work log, more loose-leaf green.  
Job requests for tomorrow:  
a dogwood with coarse bark.  
A fir, needles all turned brown near a grooming salon.  
A lancewood that tilts at night.

# *Bridle Path*

*Grant Shimmin*

*Port Hills, Christchurch*

Walking back the footsteps of the colonists before breakfast  
up the nearest thing I have to a maunga  
The Bridle Path... to the Summit Road  
to the bird's-eye-viewed natural harbour below  
There's a concert in full swing  
The bellbird and highway concerto  
Korimako and rolling cargo  
Pitch-perfect notes and throaty roars  
Nature's subtle artistry, humankind's blunt industry

The pīwakawaka, tail fanned  
like a feathered poker hand  
is the triangle player in this improv ensemble  
high-pitched pings punctuating the score's humming baseline  
The bellbird is on lead violin  
stringing out tunefulness above the piston-pumped discord  
and I'm in the orchestra too  
blood drumming in major ...  
vessels, as the scale ascends

Now the warbler plays a stirring flute solo  
that runs, and trills, and floats  
on the dawn's gentle air  
It's virtuoso from the riroriro  
that transcends accompaniment  
Though the magpies slide in briefly on viola  
alongside appreciative bleats  
from watching sheep in front row seats

There's a breathless lull now  
less the climb than the view  
The settlers stood here, or near enough  
but from their colonial perspective  
there was no highway hum, distant but persistent  
or the deeper parallel track, going subterranean  
not even bleats from the expensive seats  
Bar the wind and rain, the horses' harrumphs  
and their children's exhausted cries  
all they heard was this avian a cappella arrangement  
Astounding

# *Card Shark*

*Jim Murdoch*

You have to play with the hand you're dealt.  
but in my experience

Life often deals from the bottom of the pack  
and uses marked cards

so, I watched her like a hawk as she tossed me

- The Hanged Man
- The Five of Pentacles
- The Three of Swords and
- The Eight of Cups.

Fair dues. Trouble is we were supposed to be  
playing gin rummy.

# *Gain*

*Jim Murdoch*

...from Old French *gain*, *gaaigne* “gain, profit, advantage; work, business; booty”

I thought he liked playing games.

*Not so much*, he countered.  
*Winning's what I enjoy.*  
*Games are merely*  
*a means to an end.*

So, what's winning? I asked.

*Technically, it's only winning—*  
*it only counts as winning—*  
*if you play by the rules;*  
*otherwise, it's simply booty.*

A rose by any other name then?

*It fills a hole.*  
*Form's not substance,*  
*but substance*  
*can take on many forms—*  
*some more substantial than others.*

# *Farm Girl*

## *Sadie Yetton*

My father took me to a farm to make a son out of me. I could not run as fast as the lambs and he frowned. I could not watch them being shot and he shouted. When he handed me a gun I was sickened. When I pulled the trigger he saw me shrink. Because it was never in my nature to wield a weapon against it. He sent me to sleep in a one-bedroom barn, but I was not one child—I was a thousand different daughters.

# *To Kill an Agapanthus*

*Kieran Haslett-Moore*

Sweet Lilly of the Nile,  
agent provocateur,  
red flag scourge,  
immortal warrior of empire,  
or so it seems,  
your death will not be easy.  
They say cockroaches  
in an aggie bush  
will be the last survivors  
of nuclear winter...  
Thou shall be vanquished,  
thou shall die.  
This is garlic around my neck,  
and is this a hammer and stake  
I see before me?  
The blood will run green,  
across the berm,  
and the righteous shall rejoice,  
and sacred toasts will be raised  
to your demise. Forever  
we will remember the day,  
the agapanthus died.

# *Parihaka in the rain*

*Timothy J Martin*

Mountains  
Always look taller  
Half shrouded in mist  
You  
Just look a little broken  
As a tear  
Slips down your cheek

Rain falls on the just  
And the unjust  
They say  
Well I say it comes in a torrent  
Enraged  
And  
Without discrimination  
Washes it all away

And sometimes  
Just sometimes  
I see through the murk  
With clarity  
And know what comes next

But most of the time  
I'm just swimming  
To reach the far bank  
To stop for breath  
Before the rain clouds came

# *Waitangi Day*

*Lee Fraser*

*A found poem in Kiwi song titles*

Slice Of Heaven  
Out Of Love

The Queen's English  
A Thing Well Made  
History Never Repeats

Pressure Man  
Bursting Through  
Into Temptation  
Persuasion  
Be Mine Tonight  
Not Given Lightly?  
No Way To Decide

It's Only Natural  
Wandering Eye  
Silver and Gold  
Machine Talk  
Cruise Control  
Now We're Getting Somewhere  
One Step Ahead  
Can't Get Enough

Problems  
Fraction Too Much Friction  
Whispers and Moans  
How Bizarre  
Sweet Disorder  
Take It Easy  
Pacifier?

World Where You Live  
Fade Away  
Locked Out  
Distant Sun  
Hole In the River  
Wild Wind  
Misty Frequencies  
Can't Carry On

Dark Days  
Chains  
Something So Strong  
I See Red  
Don't Dream It's Over  
Good In My Head  
Loyal  
Sorry  
I Hope I Never  
Roll Into One  
Without You

Share the Info  
Breakthrough  
Touch the Floor  
Anchor Me  
Beside You  
Love You Like I Should?  
Don't Give It Up

# *Kaitiakitanga*

*Lee Fraser*

Control,  
how you hold  
our clout, our want.

*Roll out, crank out, count on  
the luck of  
one cut, one road, one crow,  
touting a loaned crown;  
routing a cloaked law;  
talking a hollow lot of *know*.  
What of the whole role, all  
the old unnoted?*

Now the rot:  
clock run out of luck.  
Our looking, acting out  
on unknown,  
not counting on  
the turn, the crack of rock  
a knock: the croak of one who  
woke—low, hot—to haul the toll owed.

Woe cannot halt the knot, no  
atoning on our own; locked out  
of control.

# *Relevant Silk Road<sup>1</sup> Statistics*

*Lee Jane Taylor*

Autoimmune symptoms are not eligible for public healthcare without a specific diagnosis—  
a cocoon is made up of a single thread of silk  
300–900 m long—

GPs are often unable to diagnose autoimmune disease due to the complexity of multi-system illness presentations—  
88% is the survival rate of metamorphosing silk worms -

8 years is the average time from onset of symptoms to diagnosis—  
adult Bombyx do not eat or drink having emerged white and ghostlike from liquification they live a kind of afterlife in which wingbeats

*x* quicken soft as radio frequency radiation measured in hertz—

3-4 days is the lifespan of an adult Bombyx moth—

1hertz equals 1 event per sec—  
autoimmune disorders predominantly affect women of childbearing age—  
computer speeds, musical tones and the energy of a photon

can be measured in hertz—

bombyx larvae live for around one lunar cycle before pupating—

the appropriate measurement for hurts is unknown—

*y*

*where x equals duration of symptoms and y equals impact adjusted by vulnerability.*

*(Figure 1:) Relative Difficulty*

<sup>1</sup> “Old Silk Road Disease” refers to a group of autoimmune conditions first encountered by Europeans on the historical trading route.

# *Inside a room*

*Amanda Faye Martin*

Before, the whole world was mine  
& I moved through it  
Quickly  
& hungrily  
Things took on meaning fast  
& lost meaning  
Fast  
Like air moving through my skirt  
On a warm night  
In India  
Off to meet friends  
I no longer remember their names  
& now  
I remember everything  
Today his eyes are blue & grey  
Steel  
He is slowly flaking off his lizard skin  
He smells like my breast milk  
(or maybe my breasts smell like him)  
I am fine  
& then suddenly flooded with anxiety  
I put him on my naked chest  
& his breathing slows  
With mine  
His father sits beside us  
& holds my hand  
My whole self has expanded into  
These 2 other bodies  
Everything is different  
Especially the things that were always true  
The whole world is mine  
It just now fits  
Inside in a room

# *Things I hate now*

*Amanda Faye Martin*

Pumping

Pumping

Pumping

Pump parts

Cleaning (& drying) said parts

Pumping

Getting like 4 drops from said

Pumping

Actually

Everything else is fine

# *In the palm of a hand*

*Brooke Soulsby*

before you, I had guts—  
the walk across the room | the greeting |  
sheepish flirt | then | the onset  
of yearning | the side-eye | the *go cry*  
*in the bathroom* | there's laughing |  
I hear it | but it's caught in the throat

I ask the mirror | the screen plugged  
into my irises burning | the screen  
fused to my melting fingertips | it seems  
I've slipped | into the void  
of your pixel glare

| you hear  
what we talk about | you send me  
an ad | people I don't know  
are performing aways | you have  
captured | a generation

try to log out—

but where are my hands? | don't  
have guts | and what about  
parts? | where are you  
storing us? | these fists are full |  
of others | who are you? |

# *Germ*

## *Prue King*

She veered, the beech tree glen deep green.

Hell, he heckled.

He'd rendered her better.

He remembered when they met,  
the beery September weekend.

She, cheery: her nerve, her verve,  
her freshness, her cherry  
red dress. Her teeth.

Feck, sexy.

She tempted, he delved her,  
embedded her; they neglected sense.

He remembered her text, then  
the recent letter, the news, the theme.

Hey, here's hemp, here. He knelt.

Wrecked, she wept.

He leered, deemed her extremely less.

Her egg, her jewel;  
the member, the pecker,  
the helmet he'd lent her.

Men felt less. Nevertheless,  
he'd been netted, hemmed,  
cemented even.

He merely sees me.

He regretted her.

Lend less, he jeered.

He seethed. He resented her.

He rejected her.

He referred her needless, ethered, fevered mess  
between the tweezers.

Wretched, she'd never mend.

# FAT WORDS

*Amanda Faye Martin*

i used to say fat words  
sloppy naked things  
like love & soul & god

i handed them over like we were playing hot potato  
i said oh god, please, my hands are burning  
take these from me  
relieve me of them  
i watched them slip out of your hands  
i watched them crack & leak  
& become clichéd shells of what they were  
nothing but wordswordswords  
maybe they were too big to hold  
and it was cruel of me to ask you to take them

so i learned to use other kinds of words  
i buy them at the clown store  
i buy the cheapest ones i can find  
i pass around jack-in-the-box toys  
tiny ghosts of myself  
hidden inside their plastic walls

& i'm happier like this  
i swear  
like i used to be sad  
when i'd feel *bigness* at my fingertips  
& have no way to grasp the bounty before me  
when i'd try to open myself to divinity & let it cry its truths  
through me  
but—  
how can i speak when i am constantly learning new things  
not to say?  
Oedipus didn't continue to sleep with his mum  
after he learned the truth  
so just  
gouge my fucking eyes out  
i'm happier like this  
or at least  
i don't dream about you  
anymore.

# *Summary Table of Pupation*

*Lee Jane Taylor*

*(qualitative Silk Rd Disease<sup>1</sup> progression data)*

Adrift, our divorced	---	mana mislays us	---	in empty wells our
friendships fraying	---	so slow drained and	---	cognitive breakages
decry lucidities	---	scooped from scope	---	of relational flakery
in security untied	---	tides of me, you, us	---	in bio-sabotage lie—
wait patiently please	---	dis-occupy roles	---	be ever compliant
uncivilise in private	---	re-wild, bewildered	---	in symptom cocoons
submit, submit, submit	---	to regimented habit	---	a critical unspooling
—you sense its rip—	---	bodily liquid-fiction	---	has now begun—
cell by cell undoing	---	on the Silk Way—	---	Do not hold on.

*(Figure 2:) Prognosis Is Dependent on Accepting Change.*

<sup>1</sup> “Old Silk Road Disease” refers to a group of autoimmune conditions first encountered by Europeans on the historical trading route.

# *At Hikuwai Beach Carpark*

*Hannah Griffin*

The ocean wind shook her car  
it was as if she were in the waves

she wished to be taken away with them  
her heart an enclosed vessel

she longed  
to be swayed  
and shaken

over and under the whitewater

disintegrated and  
rearranged

and to wake up  
whole  
in a different world

# Beeswax

# *Yael Thomas Cameron*

Sound, hushed and dampened  
inseparable from the trailing glance of thread and nails  
the brush of skin, heated, melted wax on paper  
the fullness that time falls into—

A hazy abyss brimming with wants and can't haves  
the years pass here  
yet, it has only been a moment since her lips spoke  
divine commandments against my neck

# *My dry vagina*

*Jinnette Oliver*

My dry vagina  
is like a tin can  
of orgasms  
that I can't cut through  
the bureaucracy  
and exponent of  
its function.

Pavlova with cream?  
lost in the reeds.  
Sunday morning  
peacock dress.

I read a 434-page book  
on the energy field  
of an orgasm  
organising facts on the  
petal of potency.

Washing it in tropical flowers  
yellow, white, and green  
absorbing their lingering buds  
from my head to my feet.

Watching within like frogs eyes  
from another universe  
seeing heated energy fields  
swimming out loud.

Charles Bukowski melody  
in chimes of metal  
incense smoke  
scratching my brain  
decoding mantras  
five times a day  
building my own temple.

An ancient script  
beats into me its chant  
a timeless raw of  
unity in every nerve,  
nucleus and cell.

Among the collective  
eusocial creatures  
blindly sucking nectar  
from the flowers you  
forbid breeding when  
I am their queen.

# *want*

*Lauren Mae*

*i.*

i want to lick the sweat from between your shoulder blades  
i will my tongue to reach  
from under you / over you / between your thighs

we've quit scissors and blades  
growing wild between legs and in damp armpits  
and stealing breath from each other's mouths  
until we crash into sleep

*ii.*

last night i dreamt that you let me  
peel your sunburnt skin with my teeth  
i collected the cobweb thin layers  
left them to harden in a jar on the mantle

there are hearts in my desk drawer  
i am always Mary  
and i have to feed my monster  
though hope should not be fed to wild things  
or writer things  
or things with pupils the size of Jupiter

i am not on drugs i just love you  
and everyone else (according to my pupils)

*iii.*

yes i dream of you  
my mind can't imagine new faces  
and yours was the last one i thought of  
not because i love you  
because i want to wear your skin  
carry your fleshy carcass to the seaside  
so that you may feel the waves  
unencumbered  
by external organs.

# *Subtle*

## *Jessica Arcus*

As if it could finally  
burn away this want,  
I make subtle passes  
at the hot, pulsing sun.

Subtle like my body is  
unzipped and flapping  
in a gust.

Subtle like taking forty  
selfies in search of an  
(in)accurate reflection and  
someone is catching me in  
real-time.

I am practically levitating,  
pulsing *take me*  
with all the non-chalance  
of a dog who has spied her best  
friend lacing up running shoes.

I am only human after all  
born to worship something—  
desire etched from skull to  
ribs to heel and back again,

every hair on my body  
that has been left long  
is tasting something,  
like tiny snake tongues  
flicking.

# *Some Kind of Sensation*

*Chantelle Van Vuuren*

In a wild state she runs untamed,  
barefaced and on guard  
barefoot in the backyard beneath the sycamore trees  
barely a scratch on her knees  
bares teeth at rustling leaves  
to show she's not fearful  
she's ready for just about anything

except limitation

expect push back on conversation  
accept she's unfazed by agitation

would fight tooth and nail  
for some kind of sensation  
sometimes she sinks teeth into the feeling that maybe  
a life of abandon has slowly escaped her  
just slipped out of reach

every moment of aging  
weighs something monumental

place hand on heart racing  
and feel body failing  
that soft light is fading  
watch oceans outpace  
and then waste your time wading and wading and wading  
and waiting.

# *Everywhere*

*Devon Webb*

I'm at the movies & the end credits song moves through me  
I linger as I listen then realise when it ends  
that the internet exists & I can look it up  
I loop it as I leave & take an unnecessary detour down Cuba Street  
& on towards the grocery store & I'm so  
stoned my whimsy's at odds with the fluorescence  
& there are angel numbers everywhere  
on my chicken tenderloins & I think of you  
I think of you as I pull peppermint tea from the shelves  
I think of you like you are everywhere like God  
I think of you as the song loops & loops & loops like I've always known it  
& as I stand on the step outside putting on my winter coat  
I'm a sensed movement & you're the automatic door ever-opening

# *danny*

## *Amelia Kirkness*

it was the year of loneliness and video calls.  
everyone was doing it back then.

my world shrank so i deconstructed  
the concept of friendship  
remade it in a way that included him,  
got halfway to remaking myself.

it feels gauche to name what he did to me  
so i don't. easier, or funnier, instead, to mythologise:  
dead husband lost at sea. evil penpal. big bad wolf.

when he was good, i found him endlessly endearing:  
wonky painter, bedroom dancer,  
tall boy walking a very small dog.  
boy, i say. 21 was not a boy.  
in the years since we've spoken,  
i've turned his age. he'll have become 26.

now all i have to show for it is  
fun facts about the country of Finland and  
half of year 12 barely remembered and  
the fact that i have seen *Donnie Darko*. lol.  
i blocked him one week after moving cities.  
i live out his fears.  
there's nothing more to be done.

# *Witch suit*

*Megan Clayton*

When I was very young  
and my mother told me  
not to lie,

I thought this novel  
spell I'd cast  
was something unique to me.

So when my little friend  
Eloise  
said how when we grew up

she was going to get a  
witch suit  
and she was going to

kill me,  
never for a moment  
did I think this wasn't true.

It's been a while now,  
Eloise,  
and the leaves are falling.

My hair is frizzy  
and my hands are chapped.  
I think this might be

our season.  
The calendar says  
the moon is in Korekore,

and to go slow, old friend.  
We can do this  
how we want.

We can do this  
on the page  
or in the forest.

# *The Omen and Incantation*

*Kieran Haslett-Moore*

There have been pīwakawaka inside all week.  
fluttering around with a bright happy nonchalant air,  
oblivious to the dark tidings they impart on the world  
down below.

I dreamt I was on the edge holding on for dear life.  
He dreamt he killed Simon with a forklift gone rogue.  
When I awoke my hand hurt like hell  
from holding myself up in the world.  
It's getting worse, swelling and becoming less mobile.  
Ill omens made flesh, my flesh and creaky bones.

\* \* \*

In Wī Parata Reserve, along a cool path beneath the  
widow makers  
and Ruru nests, a pīwakawaka alighted between me and  
the dog.  
The bird sang a prayer to me in a language I did not know,  
sweet but haunting. Its deep black eyes sparkled wise  
and calming under the forest ceiling.  
The nature of the hunt was momentarily quelled  
by the bird's ancient lullaby,  
irrepressible bloody desire forgotten in the moment of  
calm.  
An incantation that paused the world, my world and the  
kuri's fire.

# *The Lake*

*Timothy J Martin*

The lake shore has a hard L-bend here  
An ochre bank scarred by excavator talons  
A topographical broken bone  
Where the embankment  
That dammed the Waiarohia  
Met the hillside  
And drowned this stream-cut forest valley  
Regimented grassy banks  
Holding back  
Its waters

This lake breathes  
Inhaling through the winter wet  
Waters rising  
To almost meet  
A palisade of kanuka  
Flaky-barked trunks guarding the terrestrial realm  
Khaki-feathered reflections jostling for space  
Manuka petals drift down and alight  
Joining a drift of a thousand white boats  
Pushed by a needly southerly to where water meets soil  
And casts them up to alight on green-velvet cushions of  
Campylopus

Exhaling through parched summers  
When its waters feed faucets and cisterns  
In the town below  
Exposing silty banks  
Blackened rotting stumps  
Exposed radial roots  
Once buried boulders  
Minuscule swards of *Glossostigma*  
Adrift with mauve constellations  
A muddy gap traversed by a water snail  
Leaving silty drunken pathways in its wake.

# *Piopio*

## *Sarah Kessell*

An old friend  
Waits by the concrete steps  
We start talking  
Her small brown eyes sparkle  
A little bird  
Stops by my feet  
Beak too thick  
To be a thrush  
We watch as  
One piopio became many  
They took flight  
Blocking the sun in seconds  
The sight inspires  
A hokioi's ambition within  
They quickly vanished  
Into the swirling grey clouds  
And we're reminded  
Of the piopio's doomed fate.

I wake up  
The dream repeating itself  
The hokioi's ambition  
Merges with the pouakai's rage  
My friend passed  
She departed like the piopio  
For their sake  
I will continue the fight  
In hopes history  
Shall not imitate the dream.

# *The selfishness of children*

*Gail Zing*

# *Riverside*

*Allan J. Manson*

Upon this river I shall build my  
home  
for me and my kid  
or no kid  
or kids  
or one-day-kid

or maybe it'll just be us  
me and you  
sitting on stones and pebbles  
as water rushes around us  
and it gets cold.

Cold.

Cold.

Cold.

Or maybe not  
maybe it's just me  
with frostbitten fingers wrapped around  
what's left of our  
usness.

or oneness.

or twoness.

now

noneness.

Maybe I'll stand up;  
dust the water off my coat  
go down to the pub  
looking for happiness

or something to make me the happiest

or something to make me smile

like drugs

or the way we used to be

but we both know that none of that comes  
for free

so I'll stay broke

close my eyes and never be  
awake in the river-lands  
at least, I guess, that's a plan.

or maybe I should make a plan  
to grow the fuck up and be a man  
to quit bitching  
and quit writing  
about my dead kid  
I'll curl my knees to my chest  
and try my goddamn best  
to be a man  
drink till the feelings die  
living life on the riverside.

# *Inertia*

## *Loredana Podolska-Kint*

Sometimes, I have to remind myself  
that there is poetry in the brain,  
but that coral-white on your glass-grey scan  
doesn't tickle metaphor,  
nor does seeing you, prawn-like,  
in linen swells.

Tides shift, shifts change, but you're still  
parched and powerless,  
clinging to life like a barnacle,  
defying educated guesses.

Where is your poetry? Who  
distills your pearly essence  
who will chart your syringe driver,  
watch for the dawn of a half-smile beyond curtains deep,  
poetry? I'll write it, if you show me how to sleep.

# *Weathering, with two vignettes*

*Brooke Soulsby*

Thinking back, I mostly recall the humidity—  
that steady stream of reverse-rain defusing  
over the whenua, frizzing my thick  
Celtic mane; the sodden, yellowing armpits  
of my school uniform.

I see football practice at seventeen—  
drops falling like a parallelogram, heavy,  
defining and re-defining in the high-beams,  
funnelling down the neck of my top,  
straight into my boots.

\*

These days I rely on chilblained extremities  
to runically predict the onslaught. Yielding  
more accuracy than the weather app—  
and despite all that, I am back at the bus stop  
backpack heaving—a six-year-old again.

July's effervescence paints my skin  
blue to purple; beneath stretched shirtsleeves  
and corduroy trousers left too long on the line  
during odd three-day spells of all wind no rain—  
muscles taut and groaning; kneecaps newly tender;  
eyelids crisping pink; hair going grey, or white—  
oh god, how we love to complain.

# *A last last word*

*Mary Cresswell*

real or imagined, don't leave me regrets  
at the end of the day, there should be no regrets

smooth over the rough bits, iron them out  
forget both the big and the little upsets

the harsh light of reason outlines us all  
our best-designed figures are mere silhouettes

when sooner or later we get tired of games  
we see there's no point in hedging our bets

it's a farce to pull strings in a world full of frets  
remember that each of us deserves what she gets

# Stroke

# *Mary Cresswell*

little Bo Peep  
has her sheep  
and  
to them  
  
and they'll  
their tails  
behind them  
  
where  
them alone  
home

# *Raindrops or Everything is impermanent if you look closely enough*

*Baxter Kamana-Williams*

The pane is crowded  
with the first drops  
of golden rain  
in the angled twilight  
of a fading summer day.

The pain of knowing  
all this is just  
a fleeting spark  
in the empty nothing  
of the endless cosmic dark.

# *Blood rites*

*Elliot Harley McKenzie*

Under the sun, through the dry wrinkled streambed, a dead rabbit is nestled so sweetly in the grass. Dried blood, exposed ribs, an explosion of fur, missing eyes, maggots writhing in the cavity where its organs would have rested. The hot scrunch of gravel & the soft bend of stems, seeded pink heads bumping in the wind. My cup is overflowing already & we're only part way through the morning. I slick the earth with my blood. Wild clover, delicate mosses. The forest is loamy and lonely. We walk down to the river. Strip to our underwear. Frolic in the fast flowing current. Rinse dinner dishes to lazy birdsong. A weka picks her way through the long grass towards us. The next morning, I leave a long streak of blood on the inside of the long drop. Clouds bear down on the mountains. Framed by incessant blue, recession at the peak. The mourning mists roll down like a tide in reverse.

# *Purification*

*Elena Philp*

A storm lashes at the pool of my being—  
sediment stirred from turgid depths  
hail, stabbing a once blue surface to  
a boiling brown mess

All was well before you came!  
tranquil surfaces undisturbed  
but on you beat and strike  
relentless shower of aqueous spears  
—for quite some time  
Hours and years  
water spilling everywhere  
to nourish other fields

Now the rhythm softens, quietens—  
soft pitter-pattering taps on the  
emerging surface  
golden rays peek over lightening clouds  
All is quiet and calm

The pool is still—  
surface once more blue  
restored it seems but  
there's more

The murky depths are purged—  
stagnation driven out  
Impurities unseen before  
washed clean

Crystalline waters shimmer  
above and below the oasis  
—where love may show

# *Slow Boat*

*Bee Trudgeon*

I'm drunk, I'm high, I'm shooting smack.  
Take my rare pressing of 'Jean Genie'.  
I don't want my records back.

No more *Blue Lines*, Massive Attack.  
Take Kristin Hersh, blues in 'Houdini'.  
I'm drunk, I'm high, I'm shooting smack,

Kurt's ashes in a bear backpack,  
rip off my 'Rebel Girl' Bikini.  
I don't want my records back.

Keep *Songs About Fucking*, Big Black,  
*In Utero*, Dry, Steve Albini.  
I'm drunk, I'm high, I'm shooting smack,

'Pavement Saw' gives me heart attacks,  
recycle my '50-Foot Queenie'.  
I don't want my records back.

Soundgarden, Sonic Youth, Shellac,  
Chills, Cult, Cure, Pink Martini.  
I'm drunk, I'm high, I'm shooting smack.  
I don't want my records back.

# 6 weeks

*Amanda Faye Martin*

*for hōhepa te tuaono (poem #1)*

it's the particular green of it  
against a particular blue  
covered by a semi-permanent haze  
you could show me a photo of anywhere in Aotearoa  
& it's the same—  
a green & blue  
that immediately feels like home

i whakapapa to people who would not know the name of  
their maunga  
who could not point in the direction of any awa  
perhaps if they had been able to stay in their  
tūrangawaewae  
they might have been able to  
or perhaps if they had been less afraid  
had fewer reasons to be afraid  
they would have let their feet sink in somewhere new  
& let other maunga stir their hearts & become known.  
perhaps they would have been able to point to more than  
a few people & think “whānau”

here, i do not share blood but i am “auntie”

i never knew what people meant when they said they  
loved a child before they were born  
i thought maybe they were actually loving an idea  
of something that could be  
but i think it's more about  
loving them, those few cells  
as they are, now

& the more i think about it  
the more i know it's true  
that no matter how small your life or short  
i will be able to say that i loved you  
not just for what you will be or could have been  
but for showing me what i had seen before  
but never felt so deeply to be true—  
which is that the life i built was made to be shared.  
that the love & support & joy expressed at the very fact of  
your existence

are the very circumstances that made me want you in the  
first place

i did not want you in a nucleus  
but in a wide network of blood and not-blood

yes—it's clear to me now  
i designed this life for me  
but want nothing more than to give it to you  
& nothing more than for you to see  
this green & blue  
your aunties & uncles  
& how much you are already part  
of the whānau

# *Dawn*

*Baxter Kamana-Williams*

Rosy fingers grip the Eastern edge  
of the grey Pacific sky,  
their grip first tentative, then stronger,  
as the last stars retreat  
from the colouring heavens.

Waves glimpse the pink-and-gold ensemble  
for brief foaming moments,  
before spilling  
onto a cold canvas of damp sand.

Above the waters,  
the edges of windows  
glow with the first electric light,  
switched on by fumbling hands  
still warm with the dregs of sleep.

Bodies roll out of beds and onto cold floors;  
rooms fill with light and sound  
as steam rises from showers  
and the smell of coffee fills the heavy air.

A door slams  
and an engine sputters to life;  
soon the roads are thick  
with throbbing hunks of metal,  
each slicing the dawn  
with twin sabres of light.

This is how a city wakes:  
first slowly,  
then all at once.

# *Kids these days*

*Jan Pihama*

It's raining, the sky is black  
and she's walking around the library on her lunch break,  
not really looking for anything  
just something to do.

It makes her think of her 20s,  
when she worked split shifts  
and would nap in the library on her breaks.

Which makes her think of the time it snowed in the city—  
the tiniest white flakes falling from the sky,  
screaming and giggling with her flatmate  
sticking out her tongue.

Which makes her think of the nights out—  
the boys,  
and the girls.

The kisses and the arguments.  
The night thirty people sat outside a bar on Devon Street  
and cheered on a couple rooting in the  
apartment across the road.

Like it was Broadway  
her heels flying in the air.

And the kids these days are just butterflies with their  
wings clipped  
with love apps,  
and basement podcasts,  
and PTSD.

God damn.  
God damn.  
God damn.

# *Déjà vu*

## *Jan Piñama*

Like a magnet finding an attraction—  
you could find me anywhere.

You find me in the darkest grottos of my mind  
and dive into the depths of me.

You find me with force and thunder,  
blow down my walls like you're the wolf in that story.

You find me when I don't want to be found,  
twist me like a roll-up around your index finger.

You find me, and time is suspended—  
for two eternities  
then speeds up like déjà vu  
just to make sure I'm not late for work.

You find me like roots find soil.  
Like it's not just a want but a need.

Like I'm the food and you're the hunger.  
Like I'm joy and you're yellow.  
Like I'm life—  
and you think it's worth living.



# *Poet Biographies*

**Jessica Arcus** Jessica Arcus is a poet from Ōtautahi who is compelled to give voice to the quiet and overlooked things—watching for divine presence in the day-to-dayness of life. She has been published widely and has recently released her debut poetry chapbook *Counterweight*. Find her [@jessica.arcus](mailto:@jessica.arcus)

**Tony Beyer** continues his writing life in Taranaki.

**Ek. A. Butakova** (Ekaterina Butakova) is a Russian writer and poet who currently resides in Rome, Italy, where she enjoys the culture, architecture, and pasta. Several times a year, she takes selfies at the Colosseum—it's a tradition.

**Yael Thomas Cameron** is a poet and educator based in Aotearoa. Her work explores longing, memory within the mythic undercurrent of language. Her poetry has been published in journals: *Meniscus*, *Stylus*, *French Literary Review*, *Swamp* and *Tarot*. She teaches at AUT and writes between pedagogy, ritual, and resistance.

**Megan Clayton** (she/they) writes and performs from Sockburn, Ōtautahi and works in higher education. Poems and essays by Megan have been published in journals and collections in Aotearoa and Australia.

**Mary Cresswell** is a retired science editor (natural history) who turned to poetry in self-defense. She has had poems published in NZ, Australian, UK, US and Canadian journals, and she lives in Waikanae Beach.

**Lee Fraser** is from Aotearoa New Zealand and uses poetry for nerding out about life's fascinating details, for emotional archaeology, and comic relief, sometimes simultaneously. In 2024-2025 she's had 45 pieces published, including in *Meniscus*, *Micro Madness* and *Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook*. She placed fourth in the 2024 NZ poetry slam.

**Hannah Griffin** is a poet who lives in Pōneke Wellington. She draws inspiration from her relationships with people and with place.

**Kieran Haslett-Moore** is a poet, writer and brewer who hails from South Wellington, New Zealand. Descended from migrants from the South and West Country of England, he lives in Waikanae on the Kāpiti Coast with a terrier named Ruby.

**Stephanie Hurley** is a writer and English teacher based in Manawatū, New Zealand. She is passionate about all things creative—in particular, using writing to examine the world around her. Her work has been published in *Tarot*, *Mote*, *Chortle*, and *fiftywordstories.com*.

**Gail Zing** is an award-winning writer and author of three collections, including *Some Bird*, selected for Best NZ Books 2024 by *The NZ Listener*. Published widely in Aotearoa and overseas, when she's not dreaming up poems, she's editing them at the kitchen table or teaching them at Write On School for Young Writers in Ōtautahi.

**Jackson** lives in Ōtepoti Dunedin. Their fourth collection, *A coat of ashes* (Recent Work Press), is based on their award-winning PhD thesis. In 2021, they moved to Aotearoa from Australia, where they are well known as a poet and performer. They were born in Cumbria, England. [writerjackson.com](http://writerjackson.com); [facebook.com/writerjackson](https://facebook.com/writerjackson); Instagram: @thewriterjackson

**Lee Jane Taylor** Lee is a poet, mother and former psychologist, of Scots-Māori/Pākehā ancestry (Kāi Tahu, Polish), who lives with health disability. She is currently studying literature at Massey. See more at Tarot Poetry, Aotearoa Yearbook, or [SkyHousePoetry.com](http://SkyHousePoetry.com)

**Amy Johnstone** (she/her) lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara and likes to be outside, on her bike or in the sea as much as possible. She writes policy by day and is exploring writing personal essays and poetry by night.

**Baxter Kamana-Williams** (he/him) reads and writes poetry in Ōtautahi. You can find his poems in *a fine line* and *Tarot*. He also works at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, where he researches and teaches about sustainable energy systems. [@b\\_xt\\_r](https://www.instagram.com/b_xt_r) on instagram

**Sarah Kessell** is a beginner author and poet from Wellington Te Whanganui-a-Tara. She often writes whenever she's not at her part time job or thrifting. She's the mother of two rambunctious cats who like getting into trouble. She has poems published under *New Zealand Poetry Magazine/Poetry World* and *Neon Origami*. Her short story 'The Waimanu's Ghost' is included in issue 11 of *Suburban Witchcraft*.

**Prue King** is published in many poetry anthologies, most recently *London Grip*, *Kokako* and *Fast Fibres*. She's also written flash, stage plays and a parenting book for new dads. Prue lives in the luxuriant far north of New Zealand where she's edited an anthology of local writers' work. Read more at [bywordsnet.wordpress.com](http://bywordsnet.wordpress.com)

**Amelia Kirkness** is a Pōneke-based writer, bookseller, and English Literature student. Her work has been featured in publications like *Starling*, *The Spinoff*, *bad apple*, and *a fine line*. She is one of the editors of *Symposia*, and in 2025 is co-editing the New Zealand Poetry Society's international anthology.

**Jay Lee-Guard** lives in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara where they write sporadically about what they see out the window. She currently studies psychology at Te Herenga Waka, and her current favourite drink is cheap Moscato—or anything sugary from the bar.

**Lauren Mae** (they/she) is a student and poet currently residing in Pōneke. They have taken several creative writing courses at the International Institute of Modern Letters, and received the Michael King 'Signals' Young Writer's Prize for Poetry in 2023. Their work has been published in various literary magazines, including *Tarot*, *circular*, *Overcom*, and *Nine Lives*. She has recently become a co-editor of the poetry journal *free body problem*. Lauren primarily writes about 'what-ifs' and is prone to daydreaming.

**Amanda Faye Martin** is an Ōtepoti-based playwright and poet. Her poetry has been featured in *The Spinoff*, *Bad Apple Gay*, *Gasher Press*, *Oddball Magazine* and other online and print outlets. She is also a Senior Teaching Fellow in Theatre Studies at the University of Otago. You can follow her on Instagram @amandafayemartin.

**Timothy J Martin** lives in Whangārei with his wife, three kids, seven frogs, and, due to a fit of madness, a pound rescue whippet called Gypsy. Timothy works as an environmental scientist who loves the arts, so poetry is a much-needed creative outlet.

**Allan J. Manson** is a Wairoa-based poet and journalist for the Wairoa Star. His work explores whenua, family, work, and river towns, favouring plain speech and precise image. Previous publications include *Kiss Me Hardy*, *Mayhem Literary Magazine*, *Stonecorp Literary Magazine*, and *InkNest Literary Journal*.

**Elliot Harley McKenzie** is a poet living in Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland. Other places they have been published include *Starling*, NZ *Poetry Shelf*, *Takahē*, *Turbine*, *Tarot* and *Ōrongohau / Best New Zealand Poems*.

**Jim Murdoch** is a Scot, gatophile, honorary woman, classical music aficionado, novelist, Whovian and producer of half-to-three-quarter-(and-occasionally-actually-fully)-decent poems for over half a century.

**Keith Nunes** (Aotearoa-New Zealand) has had poetry, fiction, haiku and visuals published around the globe. He creates ethereal manifestations as a way of communicating with the outside world.

**Jinnette Oliver**, born in Dunedin (1980), teaches creative writing online and has recently travelled through 15 countries as solo female writing poetry. She is influenced by the works of Tracey Emin and Sylvia Plath and explores the blurring boundaries of intimate and public life, using poetry as a container for the heart and the subconscious mind.

**Jan Pihama** (Taranaki, Te atiawa, Ngaruahine, Tainui) is a mother of two from Ngāmotu/New Plymouth. She has just been named a finalist for the Pikihiua awards in the Poetry in English section, and will be published alongside the other finalists in the Huia short stories 16 anthology.

**Elena Philp**'s heritage includes Rakahanga, Atiu, Aitutaki and Scotland. The rhythm of relatives speaking on life in the Cook Islands in the reo, and her Grandpa Murray's library of poetry, instilled in her a lifelong love of language. Her work is imprinted by the cultures in her DNA.

**Loredana Podolska-Kint** writes about her experiences as a young female doctor navigating the heartbreaks and hopes of working in medicine. Her piece 'five cents' won the 2025 New Zealand Poetry Society International Poetry Competition. She has been published in *circular* and *a fine line*, and she has three self-published books. Find her on Instagram: @loredana\_poetry.

**Grant Shimmin** Grant Shimmin is a South African-born poet living in Ōtautahi Christchurch. His work is widely published, most recently in *a fine line*, *Raw Lit*, *Fuego*, *Catalyst*, *Tiger Leaping Review*, *Backstory Journal* and soon, *North Dakota Quarterly*.

**Brooke Soulsby** is a writer and publishing professional from Whāngarei, currently based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. She wears her heart on her sleeve, literally. Brooke is one of three founding co-editors of *circular*. Her writing has appeared in such places as *Tarot*, *4th Floor Journal*, *Mote*, *bad apple*, and elsewhere.

**Lisa Stanley** (samoan/pākehā) is an emerging poet in Tāmaki Makaurau. Some journals in which her poems appear include *Yellow Lamp Poetry*, *Takahē*, and *Landfall Tauraka*. Her poem, 'afakasi māmā', was selected for October 2024 Poem of the Month by New Zealand Poetry Society Te Rōpū Toikupu o Aotearoa. Find her at [@lisastanley.bsky.social](https://lisastanley.bsky.social) and [@lisastanleywrites](https://www.x.com/lisastanleywrites)

**Bee Trudgeon** is a writer and children's librarian, published in *RipItUp*, *The Sapling*, *The Spinoff*, *audioculture*, *Muzic.NZ*, *NZ Poetry Box*, *NZ Poetry Shelf*, *a fine line*, and the NZ Poetry Society 2024 and 2025 anthologies. Read more on the Patreon page of her alter ego, Grace Beaster.

**Chantelle Van Vuuren** (she/her) grew up in Tāmaki Makaurau and daydreams about being a full-time writer in her law lectures. You can find her work in *circular*, *The Quick Brown Dog* and *The Free Body Problem*.

**Devon Webb** (she/her) is an autistic writer & editor based in Aotearoa with award-winning work published extensively worldwide across a range of genres. She is currently working on her debut poetry manuscript & a publishing initiative advocating for grassroots community consciousness. She can be found online at [@devonwebbnz](https://www.x.com/devonwebbnz).

**Sadie Yetton** is a student interested in pursuing creative writing. She adores literature and fiction writing. Her output consists mainly of poetry and short stories, although she also hopes to publish a novel.

