

# MAYHEM

LITERARY JOURNAL



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*Mayhem* 6 | October 2018

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# Tracey Slaughter

## Editorial

There is something at work in the world that wants to put its hand over our mouths again. It wants to steer us back into dark rooms and pin down our voices and keep our bodies mute. It wants to buy and bury our stories, mock our sounds of resistance with locker-room sneers; it tries to smear our memories with boys-club laughter, it uses rape jokes to rally its troops. It wants to keep the corridors of power safe for men in suits to violate us. It wants to dress capitalism up in the white sheets of god and make slavery gospel again. It thinks it has the mandate. To put children in colour-coded cages. To cash in the planet for celebrity shares. To reinstate the closet. To polish the glass ceiling. To litigate the neck of our wombs. It thinks it is entitled. It thinks it has the right. And it's easy sometimes, when confronted with image after image of its sleazy ascendancy – like the recent spectacle of a Mississippi stadium roaring support while abuse-survivor Christine Blasey Ford's testimony was taunted, filling the bleachers with a bloodchilling reprise of the jeers that soundtracked her original trauma<sup>1</sup> – to think it has momentum. To think it has tapped into ugliness and found some monstrous traction. To fear it has swung the majority and there is little, now, that we can do.

But what it doesn't have is the words. It has a kind of script but it's drained, cheap, jaded; it twitters an obsolete, bloodless doubletalk. It can bat around labels, trade dumb comebacks of macho might-is-right mentality, slap on fake slogans, it can rhyme *mobs* with *jobs* for a quick right-wing scare – but it can't even pronounce *compassion*, *integrity*, *dignity*, *revolutionary tenderness*.

---

1 'How Christine Blasey Ford's Testimony Changed America | Time' <<http://time.com/5415027/christine-blasey-ford-testimony/>>



It can't speak the language which has driven generations out into the street, a ferocious chorus of resistance which continues on the page, and fills language with fire again, wields it with meaning and muscle and empathy and voice and anger and pussy and heart, to counter the shorthand evil that stamps its brand on empty soundbites of privilege. I've sat in workshop after workshop this year, with writers of all identities and ages, and we've found our talk reaching the place where we're punchdrunk with politics, staggered by the cutthroat conservatism which seems to be somehow sweeping the planet again, by the merciless commercialism which is driving it blindly to the brink. It is hard for us not to come to class gutted, as one student phrased it, by the suffering in the world; it's hard for many – far, far too many in the fragile circles where our stories are shared – not be overwhelmed, bodily, by the way this regime's abominations calls up our own bruises, triggers pain we've fought a private lifetime to get through. And even in a ring of writers, we've found ourselves questioning, how can our pages help, what can our words do? But the writer in me – who, as Katherine Mansfield wrote, has always been powered by a 'cry against corruption' – will always get hold of her battered banner and say: words can save the world. They're all we have to save it – and they'll always be the source, the flame, the way forward. They're how we reach out, move ahead, how we show the hurt and heal it, how we join in protest and in aroha, how we endure and connect. There's an image in a recent exhibition of photographs celebrating suffrage at the Auckland Museum where an older woman stands at a rally, her small blunt placard a tattered chunk of cardboard reading **I can't believe I am still protesting this shit #1970**. She looks sick to the back teeth of fronting up to the same old system, its ignorance and atrocities; she looks let down and used up and frankly fucked off. And I can relate. But the point about this woman is that she's still got her fist raised in defiance, still got that crappy sign in her tired grip, and the sturdy mid-frame forearm below it has had enough, is drawing the line on this eternal shit. And the other point is: she's surrounded by a crowd of women holding up their own words – and above her forearm and

its disbelieving banner there's another younger arm jabbed high, and the word it's waving is cut off at the top of the shot but we can still see it's SOLIDARITY. Another word the current powers-that-be can't hope to pronounce – or to vanquish. This thing that's at work in our world won't ever win, because it doesn't have those words. It doesn't own them, it can't control them. The war is being waged in our mouths, it is aimed against our voices – but it won't ever claim that territory. It can't stop the sounds we make there, the sounds of insurgence and challenge and rage and hope – the sounds which fill the pages of *Mayhem*. Not so long ago this journal was dismissed by a critic as representing 'angry boys and girls' – far from taking it as a deterrent, we've worn that quote like a bloody badge of honour. Issue Six is still wearing it. Because let's face it: what the world needs now is more angry girls and boys and those who identify with neither (because it's not the 50s, and we will no longer be moulded into matching Janets and Johns), angry human beings turning their voices out onto the pavement and into the screens, mounting the counterstrike in full vocal colour, using their words to hammer the status quo, and (says the woman still raising her ancient beat-up flyer) making sure no means no after all these fucking years. It's the time for tears not reason, blasphemy not balance. Passionate testimony versus fascist tweet, poetry versus popcorn evil, blistering, lit-up, loud, arterial, unashamedly human language versus the last bloated cartoonish gasp of a dying patriarchal state. I know which one I back. Welcome to *Mayhem*, Issue Six of many to come.

# Rebecca Tegan

## Mickey to Tiki Tu Meke

And there you are,  
a fragmented acid trip  
on this woven flax stage

a reminder  
a taunt  
a lick of what you tell me I'll never be without you

we are one, but five funerals apart

you flick words at me;  
*Why aren't you more like my mother?*

I was born in '97.

Eyes ahead  
talk through teeth  
smile bitch

the image lies  
we only do this at night;

lights out  
under cover  
limit yourself; two positions  
there will be no foreplay

These are the rules for sexual relati...

*Did you just cum?*

Roll back to my side of the page  
you let me down  
I take you down  
leave you ignored against the wall  
with your strict lines

Cause me... I'm a fucking Van Gogh  
I want to dive into your glossed skin  
while eating yellow paint off a spoon  
I love to love  
but I don't love you

somewhere in the middle  
we became one

sleep      no touch  
lips                      cold  
whiteness surrounds the red lines  
scribble confuses the punters that this  
is a happy home

I want to smear you  
Stubborn bastard,  
move me out of these rigid lines  
Shift you around the room  
will, I see another point of view?

The light falls  
transparent and chipped

I'm not welcome here anymore  
I'm a slurred fucking bitch

six whiskeys every night to put up with my shit  
I'm a girl on her knees who removed your comatose  
shoes  
left the water on your bed side table  
I'm an embarrassment who's needed in the kitchen  
A fire mouth liability  
till you return to a thick sleep

You are an emotional brick

*I'm sorry?*

You don't get to talk  
and I'm done listening to the silence  
We have no arms to stretch this distance

I'm gunna cash in my chips, bet on the change in me  
  
'cause all that remains is you with your cult following  
and me with my culture, my whanau, my aroha

I spit you out of me  
Let you drip  
drip  
drip off my tongue

You say –  
*Good girlfriends swallow*

**Dear Amy**

You got 364 days on the guest list;

be a freak show in the coven of  
twenty plus seven

You could be home with a speedball  
and Blake;  
the lover of your money and you

But you carved the bottle to a shank,  
it coaxes you,  
play the strings beside Jimi,  
get loaded with the man who once said:

*Nobody dies a virgin,  
life fucks us all.*

Did you ever hear the preachers?  
If you just came to the lord

Sing I repent, I repent

We are all healed from the paper you gave for  
a collapsed vein cured with black oil  
See the light flicker fast before the fall

What happened Winehouse,  
did you find the high?

Grasp peace that was paid for with 21 grams?

You went somewhere  
but it wasn't to a chiller

Lowered down a roof top window, into  
A macabre room,  
like you fought some unholy war  
for five too many vodkas and  
an everlasting packet of camels

I don't believe your smile  
Not because someone painted it on wrong  
I see you in the faded beige  
what you were below the loud  
And I'm the one smiling and you're the one drowning  
You choked on the palpitations of a heart  
faded to black  
To be a little girl who stood for...

*Oh well, we can't save them all*

# Carin Smeaton

## **Birdpeoples make it to ngā Rangī-i-Totongia-a-Tamatekapua**

David Blaine where r u now cos i havent seen u since the Symonds street off-ramp where i showed u a card trick or two & u recommended youtube talking bout friction levitating us back into the 90s our tūrangawaewae our stomping-ground bridge it was still open-access back then barrier free from glass fast & escape was way easy or at least inevitable visible to the naked eye an express flight to Rangitoto 4 hauraki-healing if u made it that far (& not all bird-peoples did) tho when we did we all got the same dead gorgeous view same as any prophet who got lured away from her exodus hell by such dazzling balancing-acts stretchin it out til kingdom come & that is how u take yr mind off an emergency says David Blaine on Grafton bridge u dont see the drop see the vision the mission of possibility a future on Valium vs a life at the lights stuck on red in the rain when u cross David Blaine he got a way of possessing u watching u he'll tap on yr window wit his deck o split spades he'll take it away bleed into the fluorescent night of moon where my birdwoman once flew my rona in blu rising above Rangitoto



## Lucky Country

she's not entirely alone she still got the lorikeets outside in the flowering elms chattering away at 40 degrees waiting for the rain and judy & john hav been trying take her mind off things they go on and on til sundown bout refugees and free social services let the floodgates open they mock then sigh how can they hold their head high when they get nuthin but a clit kiwi pension they go it's not fair in australia but she just bites her lip and swallows it dry like a griffins wine-biscuit theyr no socialists not like poppy he'd give em an earful if he was here in mind

good thing her bp's low so low sometimes she think the lorikeets cud pretty much carry her away outta this world into the next whenever they wanted wit nuffink but a molecule noticing her shadow on the ground da sky spinnin around she misses the rain she still loves a good stiff gin but not as much as how she loved poppy wen he was a dirty old man wit an enormous atomic cock he'd grab her ass in light n dark ( in the days wen he knew where he was)

life's for the living (siale says siale knows) but it dont need no reason jus oxygen and a host of its own to grow like the tomatoes on the road sproutin up out of concrete cracks commando where her & poppy go walking most days he's most lucid first light but it's uphill from there and it's thumbs down for respite cos he dont wanna go the parrots tell her so he only wants to be wit her & no one else will do

now she wears the crimson streak of a lorikeet lighting its way across her skin everyday watching her cross the street everyone knows

everyone sees where his nails hav stuck into her gin n tonic hit wrists  
(cos he dont wanna lose her when the sky finally folds) squeezin the  
veins of her lov 4 him how she hates the smell of old man he used  
to taste of nectar she says but now he smells of old vegetable she  
mutters of curses n mothballs medicated sweat and broccoli

# Conor Maxwell

## Venice

Never thought we'd be here—

ass-end of  
the Event's Centre,  
tracing  
artichokes and cupcakes  
into the fog of a birdshit windscreen  
turned opaque by  
hot Chemistry.  
Snails getting high off  
dashboard salt,  
a frayed AUX cord  
and volume capped at 30.  
Head back,  
churning ballads with your wrists  
in the red-orange-yellow  
of the speaker lights.  
Songs about thunder,  
battleships.  
Your gear stick's chaos neutral but  
the vacuum between us  
is blown tight  
so  
maybe our fingers will touch by accident.

Never thought

your gaze  
would spend so long in my direction  
that I could map the splatter-green

of your eyes  
that I'd  
taste your Zero on my tongue  
that I'd be  
sharing skin with a jet-black miracle;  
face stained with lilac  
and all the words to Perfect Places  
buzzing from your lips.

We'd be

counting strobe beats  
and sirens  
in town.  
Switching cars like we swap stories of  
exes and whys and  
how no one can handle me quite like  
you  
haven't slept in twenty-four hours.  
Tomorrow, my sensibilities will be  
mustard on the tar seal,  
but fingers-in-mine we're

here,

up St John's Hill—  
cheating on the sunrise  
with something brighter.

## All My Clothes Smell Like Me Now

Give me an hour  
and I'll banter your bra off;  
rustle your solar plexus  
with assortments of M's,  
daffodils in macramé boxes  
and crime documentaries  
on Netflix.

There, tonight.  
Up at six and Audi.  
Watermark kisses on your shoulder blades  
—spiderbites under  
spaghetti straps—  
a keepsake  
in latex  
as expected  
as corsage

(or chlamydia)

at the school ball.  
Drizzle your perfume  
through my letterman  
so my car reeks of  
naked weather.  
Clutch me like a boa  
'till your polycotton starts to sweat.  
'Till I strip

the paint  
from your nails.

You think  
I've got no time for you.  
You think today I am trying  
to plug a waterfall with  
a bamboo mattress but

you are the hands  
you are the face.  
You're the eclipse  
I never hoped to see.  
A monsoon in the South  
in September.

I can't lob a rock around the sun  
or tip a trawler in the Atlantic  
without your breath  
for company.  
A hunchback rots  
on the steps of a churchyard

and all the king's horses  
can't reach the bells.

## Smiling (as the shit comes down)

### I

Six months is a lifetime in  
dragonfly years.

Our love is

half

a chameleon

a house mouse

the timespan

of Tony Award-winning musical

*Rent*.

In six months you'd flip your mattress to  
work out the kinks

that I left when I

worked out your kinks

you'd love me and love me

choke me

with your fingernails

then vermicelli

then BPD

### II

I'm shell-shattered

and don't you think it

improper

that I'm trading ragers with

twenties

and twenty-somethings

Funneling pizza because like I'm  
going out of style.

I'll drum the baseline to One Week  
on the headboard in your bedroom  
if you suss the Uber  
and get us home

I'm at my Van Wildest  
singing Air Supply through a desk fan  
to find out if robots can cry.

### III

You left me  
with a baseball cap  
from a brewery tour  
that you bought as a joke.  
I've tried to  
wash the you from me  
but it's Winter—  
and my sheets won't dry.

### IV

Most nights end with  
joyrides through tsunami  
the windows cracked  
flooded to the neck  
low enough not to  
drown but I  
want to



V

Once  
there was a tui on the Meteor  
    but that was Summer  
    you had lavender hair.

You're sweating through your toga;  
posing like white Nike  
next to psychedelic pups,  
war paint passive  
in all colours but red  
and charcoal as bright as our future.

Our future is black.  
    The joke is that it's black.

VI

I told you  
I'd learn all the lyrics to 3005  
    Take you water walking  
    on Waiheke Island

and you told me you'd never do me like that but I  
    guess this is where we are now

# Joy Holley

## What Love Must Be Like

I am in the losing-your-virginity-room, spread out on my bed, translating an interview with Lana Del Rey that has only been printed in French. My eyes skip ahead to the word *nostalgie* and I hurriedly type the rest of the sentence into Google translate. *I am nostalgic for an era I never knew.* I write this down on a pale pink piece of paper and blu-tack it up on my bedroom wall, between Marlon Brando and Marilyn Monroe. Brigitte Bardot is just underneath, along with a page ripped out of *Romeo and Juliet*. *How sweet is love itself possessed, when but love's shadows are so rich in joy* is underlined in red ink.

\*

*60 years earlier, on a Sunday afternoon, a group of girls meet a group of boys at Elbe's milkbar. They say they are there for the ice cream, but they are there for something else entirely. None of them are entirely sure what that something else is. Each booth becomes a bubble of boy and girl. Nothing comes between them, except a sundae or a banana split. They make secret plans to meet on the banks of the Hutt River that night and kiss goodbye on the pavement. The boys get on their motorbikes and drive home to their mothers. The girls pull their tops down past their shoulders and sing "Bye Bye Baby" until the boys are out of sight.*

\*

It's first period on a Tuesday. Jasmine and Katy propel their wheely chairs back and forth across the computer room, stopping only when our French teacher comes to check that we're doing research for our assignment. As soon she leaves, I exit out of google.fr and return to

google.co.nz; typing “juvenile delinquency 1950s” into the search bar. After scrolling through the New Zealand History site for a while, I find an article on the “Mazengarb Report”.

“Woah guys, this is cool.”

Jasmine and Katy pull their wheely chairs up next to mine. I read out a series of headlines:

“Groups of Lower Hutt teenagers meeting at local milkbar to have sex: parents wonder what society is coming to”.

“Youths charged with carnal knowledge of underage females: 61 boys and young men arrested”.

“New Zealand Government issues a ‘Report on Moral Delinquency in Children and Adolescents’ to more than 300,000 homes across the—”

“Wait,” Jasmine says. “My Mum totally co-directed a play about this when we lived in Wanaka.”

“No way.”

“Yup, it was definitely this.”

“Filles!” Our French teacher glares at us from the doorway. “Qu’est-ce que vous faites?”

\*

That night, I put on an Elvis record and write in my diary *I’m in love with the idea of love*. Thanks to *Romeo and Juliet*, I’m also in love with the idea of fate. Just before I go to bed, a girl from Year 13 posts a link to the audition dates for the play that will be put on by the boy’s college this year. It’s based on a “Lower Hutt sex scandal” in 1954 that led to extreme moral panic and a government inquiry. This will be the second time the play has been performed.

I go to message Jasmine, but she is already typing.

\*

I don’t fall in love with you at the audition. If Hollywood has taught me one thing, it’s not to trust boys with blonde hair and blue eyes, and you have both. Your friend has brown hair and brown eyes. I

consider falling in love with him.

As soon as we leave the drama room, Rita says to me, “Can you believe how beautiful that boy was?” I admit, you did look a lot like 1996 Leonardo DiCaprio.

I don’t fall in love with you the second time I see you either. Rita whispers “*Angel face*” into my ear as you laugh with your friends in the lobby of the St James theatre. The group of girls we’re standing in take turns looking at you, so it won’t be obvious.

You have a cold at the call back. Maddy whispers, “He does have a really sexy voice” while the director gets us all to sit down so can she tell us about the characters in more detail. You’re sitting behind me. My feet are tucked around so they’re just in front of you. The director describes the lead roles and the Year 13 girls listen carefully. You tap on my saddle shoe and murmur something to your friends. I’m too nervous to turn around. The director smiles: “And then there’s Henry and June.” June is the girl that everyone wants to be. She isn’t the main character, but she’s beautiful and Henry is her boyfriend. Henry is beautiful too. He is two years older than her. They have sex. They are in love.

Towards the end of the call back, the director asks you and me to read as Henry and June. We sit on plastic chairs and read lines to each other off our bits of paper. I realise your eyes aren’t blue, they’re green.

\*

A few days later, I am asked to play Juliet Capulet alongside two of my close friends at Rongotai College. The director cast all three of us because she was worried about only having one girl at rehearsals. The show will be performed three times, so we get one night each. None of us have ever kissed anyone, and we think it’s hilarious that we’re all going to kiss the same boy on the same day. I think it’s hilarious that for a whole year being Juliet was my dream, and now I just want to be June.

\*

I wake up to an email telling me I got the role. The director says we had a “wonderful dynamic”. You will be playing Henry.

Jasmine gets her email during French class, and we spin our wheely chairs around in excitement. In the school corridors, I see other girls who got in and we grab each other while both saying “Congratulations!” When we finish hugging, the other girls say, “I can’t believe you get to kiss Robbie”. I laugh and shrug my shoulders.

That night, I don’t sleep at all.

\*

*The girls open their bedroom windows as soon as their parents start to snore. The air smells like something beautiful is burning. It smells like falling in love. They straddle the windowsill and drop into the night. The moon is never quite full; it is always just waxing or just waning. The girls meet under the apricot trees to borrow each other’s make up and check their reflections in a tiny mirror. The static-y sound of cicadas gives them the feeling that something important is about to happen.*

\*

Every Friday, I wait impatiently for the 3:30 bell to ring, then hurry to the bathroom and change out of my uniform. Jasmine, Rita and I meet at the gates and walk down to the boys college, where we slip into another bathroom and fix our hair. I put on lip balm and Jasmine asks if she can borrow it.

“Sure,” I say. “But it’s kind of shit. I just liked the name.”

Jasmine reads the bottom of the tube and grins. “Robbie’s going to get your Cherry Kiss.”

The first time we read through the play, we all sit on chairs in a huge circle. You and I smirk at each other across the hall whenever Henry and June kiss. The Year 11 girls giggle. In the Parade scene, June has a red, heart shaped shoulder bag, and I decide that one day, I need a

bag just like it. The play is very sweet and very sad. There are two rape scenes, but the director tells us it's extremely important to her that families come along to see this show. When Laura Ford – the female lead – is questioned in court about what she was wearing the night she was raped, all the girls go very quiet. The Roastbusters case is still fresh in everyone's minds. At the end of the play, Henry is ordered by the court never to see June again. I can't help but draw parallels with *Romeo and Juliet*. The fact that our initials are R and J does not go unnoticed.

After rehearsal, all the girls walk into town together. Sofia quizzes me about you, then blurts out, "You just seem so chill about it!" I laugh and tell her I'm glad. Jasmine, Rita and I meet the rest of our friends at the night market, and someone's playing Elvis off a big speaker. We dance and people stop to watch and take pictures. When one of us is home alone, we all come over. We drink our parents' alcohol and smoke our parents' weed and jump on the couch to "Break on Through (To the Other Side)". Eventually, we turn off the lights and I put on "Green Gloves" by The National. "Not this depressing stuff again," Jasmine whines. She goes to hunt for snacks in the kitchen. At least half of us end up crying.

\*

Lines from the play quickly work their way into our essential vocabulary. A particular favourite is when Darrell the policeman describes the sexual proclivities of local teenagers as "a web"; more specifically, "the web of depravity". I make a playlist called "The Web", made up entirely of songs that remind me of you. Most of them are by Lana Del Rey. After every rehearsal, I play "I Don't Wanna Go" on repeat.

In an interview, Lana lists seven songs she listened to everyday while recording her new album. I look them all up and The Flamingos' "I Only Have Eyes for You" instantly becomes part of The Web. Soon I too am listening to this song everyday. I play it to all my friends, but none of them seem to hear it the same day I do.

One evening, we're at Slow Boat Records going through the two dollars bins and I find it on vinyl. The sleeve has a picture of a pair of saddle shoes on it that look exactly like the ones I'm wearing. Even my friends agree it must be fate.

I download Lana's singles during maths class and listen to them while I'm busing home from school. As the opening bars of "Shades of Cool" begin to play, I think about how perfect it would be if you walked past right now. I realise you're walking towards me. *My baby lives in shades of blue, blue eyes and jazz and attitude.* Your cap was blue. So was my school uniform. We make eye contact through the bus window and you raise your arm in the air; too cool to wave.

\*

*The boys bring tiny paper envelopes. The girls know what's inside, but it feels like they're receiving a love letter. They pinch the rubber between their nails and ask the boys where they got them. From the pharmacy on Lambton Quay, the boys say. They lie down to look at the moon, then turn to look at each other. The moon watches. Their bodies leave shapes in the wet grass. Afterwards, they sit and watch the river run by; eating small, fluffy apricots stolen from the orchard. The boys offer them their leather jackets. The girls try them on, but after a few minutes they feel silly and give them back. The oldest boy has a car. The girls squeeze into the backseat and squeal as he speeds down empty streets. Something crunches under the wheel. They pray it wasn't an animal.*

\*

I'm sitting under stage lights with your arm around my shoulder. Everything is too bright to be real. We make jokes about neither of us knowing how to have a fake conversation while we drink imaginary milkshakes out of big metal cups. When The Cowboys and The Sheilas saunter in, you turn to me and say, "I only have eyes for you, baby". I'm too surprised to do anything but stare. Your eyelashes are sandy and spidery and longer than mine.

I find myself flirting with almost all of the boys in the play, except you. With you, I'm careful not to appear too interested. Whenever I say something sarcastic you laugh like you've never heard a joke before and I feel slightly confused. No one has ever found me so funny.

On Sunday, you're tired from staying up till 2am watching movies and I'm tired from staying up till 6am talking to Rita. You can't believe I'm here. I tell you we talk that late most weekends, and you say "If that was me, by 3am I'd be suffocating you with a pillow."

Halfway through rehearsal, you and your friends go outside and come back smelling like smoke. I raise my eyebrow and you smile back, only a little sheepish. "Sorry."

I laugh. "It's fine." Really, I'm ecstatic. All of the boys Lana Del Rey sings about are smokers. When I find out that you have a skateboard, I wonder if this whole thing is a dream.

You miss at least half of the Friday rehearsals. One of these times, my friend Milly – whom I deeply trust because she's a Year 13 – tells me that another Year 13 girl told her you are "really stupid and a total dick".

I tell Milly, "Yeah, she's probably right." I don't tell her "That's part of your appeal."

\*

I buy Lana's new record the day it comes out, and listen to it religiously in the months that follow. Side A always gets stuck just after she sings "You're my cult leader"; repeating "I'll love you forever" over and over, like a chant.

\*

On the way to our first kissing rehearsal, I chew three pieces of watermelon gum; hoping that when we kiss you will be shocked by how sweet my mouth is. The rehearsal lasts more than an hour. At some point you smile and say, "So you're the one who always



smells like vanilla.” We start breathing in sync. Our acting coach asks us, “Have either of you ever been in love?” You quietly shake your head.

Afterwards, we walk to the bus stop together and talk like nothing happened, because nothing did happen. I’m wearing my Audrey Horne outfit (saddle shoes, blue plaid skirt, tiny red jumper) but I don’t think you’ve even heard of *Twin Peaks*. We catch our buses from opposite sides of the road. Big, grey clouds loom silently above us. The road has never felt so wide. *I don’t wanna go home tonight.*

\*

*While their fathers are outside gathering kindling, the girls steal the newspaper out of the fireplace. They cut out the articles on the Parker Hulme case and bring them to class the next day, folded up and hidden in the pocket of their school blouse. At lunch time they huddle in a circle and read the articles aloud. One of them is headlined “BRICK AND STOCKING MURDER”. They try to imagine a situation in which they would want to kill their own mothers, but they cannot. There’s a policeman outside the playground. The boys are nowhere to be found. The girls rush home to call their cousins in Christchurch. Curfews lower all over the country.*

\*

When Jasmine and I have nothing to do during rehearsal, we each take one of my headphones and huddle over my iPod. She asks me what that song was that I played at Katy’s on Friday night when we danced with all the lights turned off. I immediately put on “Jigsaw Falling Into Place”. We stare at each other as we listen.

“This would be like... the perfect song to have sex to.”

It takes me a moment to believe what I just heard. “Jasmine, that is exactly what I have thinking for the past three weeks.”

“You and Robbie should have sex to this.”

“Stop.”

“Lets go dance.”

We run out of the hall and find a tiny room with four glass walls. We have no idea what anyone would use this room for other than dancing, though even with just the two of us there is barely enough space. We close our eyes and play the same song three times in a row; only remembering where we are when our arms brush against each other.

\*

There’s a scene in the play where Henry is talking to his best friend William, who is only fourteen and very shy. It’s nighttime and Henry is carrying punnets of cherries and strawberries. When William asks him if he was with June, Henry says, “Yeah. We picked the fruit”. I like this scene because since the first time I went to a cherry orchard, I have thought that fruit picking is the most romantic thing in the world. I don’t even like cherries.

The boys sit down in the grass. William says, “I saw you. And her. And I thought yeah that’s what love must be like. What’s it like?”

“It’s cherries and strawberries.”

\*

All week, I wait for Friday. All Saturday, I wait for Sunday. On Sunday evening, I put on *Boxer* by The National and lie on my bed feeling sorry for myself because I know I won’t see you for another five days. In my diary, I write *He has a smell and I know it*. In my diary, I write *I saw that play and it was good, but I would rather look at the back of your head*. In my diary, I write *Am I acting onstage, or offstage?*

\*

The first time we do a kissing scene in front of the rest of the cast, all the girls come gushing at me. “You guys are really good at acting in love with each other.” / “That was so genuine!” / “You’re going to get together in real life, right?” The director congratulates us, before

adding, “The kiss was so natural!” Even a few boys come over and say to me “You guys are perfect for each other”. I sit next to Rita and she nods: “I believed it.”

\*

The director can never get both of our names right. We are always “Joy and Henry” or “Robbie and June”. Sometimes I don’t know who we are either. Like in the milk bar scene, when you touch my thigh under the table. Or when we have to hold hands for an entire rehearsal and we start rubbing our thumbs over each others fingers and knuckles and palms. Or in the moments after we kiss, when I have opened my eyes but yours are still closed.

\*

*The girls are pulled out of English and taken to the office. A policeman interviews them one by one. Some of the girls roll their eyes, but even they are scared. He asks them what they do with the boys they meet at the milkbar. Eat ice cream, pick fruit, kiss, the girls answer. He asks them how many boys they have done this with. The girls answer “one”. Another girl fiddles with her skirt before answering “twenty?” The policeman asks her if she knows where babies come from. She shakes her head.*

\*

The performances pass by in a rush. Before we go onstage, all the girls in the dressing room sing “Hit Me Baby One More Time” at the top of our lungs; dancing and putting on lipstick. I am the only person who doesn’t have to wear a costume, because my clothes look like they’re from the fifties anyway. Jasmine names my blue plaid skirt and white tie top “The Britney Spears outfit”.

I get home around eleven every night, stay up an extra couple of hours to write in my diary and try on clothes, then get up at seven to go to school. Rita and I curl up under our English teacher’s desk during class and she makes no attempt to wake us. By the third show

my eye has started to twitch from exhaustion, and I am sure the entire audience must notice. I ask Jasmine if it's obvious, but even up close she can barely see it.

On the ticket desk in the foyer there's a box of Crunchie bars marked "\$2 each". As soon as one of the boys decides to steal one, all of the boys steal one. You snap yours in two, and pass me half.

Everything that happens onstage is played live on a box TV in the corner of the greenroom. We spend a lot of time in there. There aren't many chairs, so all the girls sit on each others laps and the boys stand leaning against the wall. A few of The Cowboys are given electronic cigarettes to smoke in the party scene, and they never put them back on the props table. It's like pass the parcel: all the boys taking turns on the tiny machine. Someone slips it into your hand and the room goes still. You blow Os and we all O back at you. "How do you do that?" someone asks.

"You have to use the tongue."

On the TV, Laura Ford is lying on a mattress while a boy in a leather jacket presses down on top of her, but we watch the smoke rings dissolve instead.

A few times, you and I nearly miss our cue and have to sprint backstage; slowing down just in time to grab hands and step into the lights. Your skin glitters from spending so much time close to my make up. Our scenes are always perfect; we even make the "hard audience" laugh. The moment we're offstage we do a victory dance.

I can't make eye contact with you, Rita or Jasmine when we're singing "Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?" at the end of the first act, or one of us will snort with laughter and we'll all break into hysterics. I count down the scenes we have left together. We practice "Apple on a Stick" in the wings, and as "Tutti Frutti" starts to play we rush back onstage for the last time. When the show ends, you pull my head into your chest and hug me so tight I can't see the lights anymore.

\*

*That night, the girls sneak out to meet the boys in their secret spots.*

*They promise they will get married and none of this will matter and cling to each other like baby animals. The boys use a pocket knife to carve their initials into one of the apricot trees, but the bark is too soft and keeps falling off. They drive the girls home on the back of their motorbike. The girls sing "I'll See You In My Dreams" under their breath.*

\*

You tell me the final performance is on the night of your birthday, and I pretend to be surprised even though I worked this out from Facebook weeks ago. You tell me you're probably going to miss the after party and I pretend this has no effect on me.

In the dressing room, I take off my sheer white top and replace it with a tight velvet singlet. The velvet is such a dark blue it almost looks black. All my friends want to touch it. Our Mothers buy us bottles of scrumpy without checking the alcohol content and we promise we'll stay at Katy's afterwards. Jasmine's Mum drives us to a house in Kelburn and soon we're in a crowded living room singing lower than our voices can reach: *I've dreamt about you nearly every night this week.* I've dreamt about you nearly every night for months. When the parents kick everyone out, a string of people start wandering up the road to someone else's house. Rita and I go with them, holding hands as we walk. The boy with brown hair and brown eyes from that first audition is leading the way, and soon we're at his house. We get stoned and nibble on crushed-up chips and the boy with brown hair gives me a back massage. I feel tiny in his hands. Rita and I sit in the hallway with our legs in each other's laps and continue to reassure people we're ok, we're not too drunk, we're having a good time. The boy with brown hair tells us to let him know if there's anything we need. We secretly name him Gatsby.

We take turns pushing each other around the living room on a wheely chair so fast we nearly fall off. When we get tired, we go downstairs and lie in Gatsby's bed. Rita falls asleep, but I lie awake; waiting. I

recognise your laugh as soon as I hear it. I shake Rita awake without telling her why and put on the very last of my Cherry Kiss lip balm. When we get upstairs, I take the communal bottle of gin and juice out of your hands and drink more than you, or I, expected. You are surprised to see me here.

Rita and I sit on the kitchen bench writing in a stranger's journal while you roll up the twenty dollars notes your parents gave you for your birthday to do lines off the kitchen table. We play "Florida Kilos" off someone else's iPod and dance on the linoleum, singing along to all the cocaine references.

Around 4am, Gatsby puts on *Shrek*. I write a poem about plastic tulips and draw a picture of everyone in the room. I draw you and Rita twice. At some point during the movie we all fall asleep, and when we wake up Gatsby's telling everyone to pick a bed. Rita and I take his sister's room. We lie under her duvet, laughing and shivering. Rita says she saw my drawings and that the ones of you were freakily accurate.

Rita's mum yells at her on the phone when we wake up. Gatsby comes to check that we're feeling alright. You walk past the open door and turn to look at us for a moment.

When Rita and I come upstairs, the kitchen is full of sunlight and the boys are reading what I wrote the night before.

"I can't believe you didn't tell me you were writing poetry!" you say to me. I've never seen you look so impressed.

\*

Rita goes home to her angry mother and I go to help clean up the hall at the boys' college. Seeing it so empty nearly makes me cry. Jasmine's sad too. We go sit by a field where boys are playing soccer and talk about what we're going to do with our lives. We walk to my house and lie in bed watching *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless*

*Mind.* Jasmine cries into my arm. When her mum comes to pick her up, she's just as angry as Rita's mum. My mum is only a little bit angry, but she bans me from staying at boys' houses after parties anyway.

\*

*The boys go to court. The girls still meet at the milkbar on Sundays, but they are too sad to eat. Their fingers trace the cracks in the red vinyl seats until someone kicks them out. The radios stop playing "I'll See You In My Dreams" and the girls can't understand why. They sing the lyrics out their bedroom window and hope that someone hears. Their fathers cut up their little white blouses and the shorts they sewed in home economics. Their mothers say an extra prayer at dinner time. One of the girls is put into care. There are no more apricots that year.*

\*

You drop out of high school as soon as the play's over. I don't watch *Romeo + Juliet* for weeks, because Leonardo DiCaprio reminds me too much of you. I take a lot of baths and talk to Rita on the phone almost every night. She tells me she still finds it amazing how little I ever talk about you. I eat six apple muffins in one day and decide I should stop eating altogether. Rita and I realise we've accidentally fallen in love. I spend two parties talking to a boy with brown hair and brown eyes and realise I've fallen in love with him too. I realise you were his childhood best friend. At that same party, Gatsby tells Rita and Jasmine that when you and I met, you were sad that everyone thought you treat girls like shit, and decided you would try to treat me well. "How boring," I say. A few years later, I realise the lines you snorted off that table were only Panadol. My friend and I listen to your songs on SoundCloud while we lie on her bed in Auckland; seizing up with laughter as you rap in an American accent. I buy a red, heart-shaped shoulder bag. My boyfriend's parents invite us out for Yum Cha with you, your parents and your girlfriend. I don't want

to go. I go to Australia and see Lana Del Rey perform twice in three days. When she sings *You're screwed up and brilliant, you look like a million dollar man, so why is my heart broke?* she looks like she might cry. You grow your hair out and sing shirtless in a club full of people. I wake up from a dream about you and spend all morning trying to go back to sleep.



## Why Girls Always Go to the Bathroom Together

The Lonely bra you want to wear tonight has five hooks down the back and crossover straps, so you can't do it up on your own. You hold your hair up in your hands and your friend asks which hook you want it on. "The tightest one," you tell her. Her fingers climb your spine like a ladder. It gives you ASMR and you wonder if you even want to go to the party; maybe you should just stay home and plait each other's hair. Then you remember the guy you're in love with and how you're determined to make out with him tonight. Your friend plucks your bra straps. They untwist. You are corseted and ready.

The guy you're in love with is telling a group of people why *Eraserhead* is the best piece of cinema to date. You will him to hurry up and let you drag him off somewhere. He doesn't. You unscrew the jam jar that you have filled with vodka and unbend the plastic straw you have folded inside. You know that plastic straws are bad for the environment, but you also know that if you don't use a straw, your lipstick will be ruined, and that's not an option you're willing to consider. Of course, your lipstick will be ruined if you end up kissing, but that will mean the lipstick's already had its intended effect. The boy you're in love with moves on to *Mulholland Drive*. You decide you don't even like him that much.

Your friend rolls a joint in celebration. You get high on the bathmat; "like Aladdin," she says, but all you can think of is Jasmine and the three wishes. By the time you remember the magic carpet, you're both in hysterics. You don't break eye contact for what feels like hours. You're laughing so hard you've stopped making any sound, and the soft drip of the tap makes everything even funnier. Someone bangs on the door and you both shout that there's another toilet upstairs. She takes the joint and finishes it off. You could almost swear the bathmat is hovering a few centimeters above the ground.

“Come on Eileen” starts playing. Everyone puts down their drink and migrates to the living room; dancing their way into a circle. The row of boys on the couch are the only ones who don’t join in. You are all too aware that they are watching you. You have no interest in any of them, but you turn your body so they get the best angle anyway. Your hips brush against the guy next to you, light enough to feel like an accident. He shouts along to the chorus without looking at you once.

You decide you need more make up. First you sit down on the edge of the bath, but your friend says the light isn’t good. She looks at your face from various angles, then puts the lid down on the toilet and makes you sit on top of that. You feel the plastic bend under your weight, then relax. She gets out her pencil and begins drawing wings onto your eyes. “Make them bigger,” you tell her. “Like Amy Winehouse.” Her face is so focused that you are afraid you’ll twitch and break her out of it. Your eyes begin to water. You realise you haven’t breathed for a while. You inhale just as she exhales. Her breath smells of white wine and ice and peppermint chewing gum.

You drink a bottle of scrumpy and take control of the aux cord. After three go’s, you finally type in “Promiscuous” without any spelling mistakes. There are some hoots of approval and soon you’re at the centre of a small crowd. There is a lot of slutdropping, and then you’re crawling on the floor, but in a sexy way. Some guy gives you a piggyback ride and you feel like a queen up in her tower. The song ends and another guy asks you to dance with him. You accept, but you don’t dance how he wants you to. You try to turn it into a joke, but he steps forward so you’re pressed against the wall. He tries to kiss you. “No, no, no,” you say, slipping away while he calls out “What? What? What?” You’re vaguely exhilarated by such a near miss, but you also feel kind of sick. You want to tell your friends what just happened because that’s what people do, but you’re worried they’ll think you’re proud of being wanted so much by someone you don’t want at all. You’re worried that they’re right.

You and your friend push open the door and two girls spin around to face you. They are smoking out the bathroom window. You know

them well enough to join them and the pretty one gives you both a cigarette, because “your outfits are always so cool”. Soon you’re talking about love. You turn the bathroom lights off, and the pretty one says “I don’t usually talk about this but I’m really drunk...” She tells you how her boyfriend just broke up with her after two years of togetherness, and now she’s scared of sleeping alone. You tell her you’ve never had a boyfriend and you’re still scared of sleeping alone. In the dark, someone squeezes your hand.

On the kitchen windowsill, there’s an empty beer bottle with a bunch of flowers in it. They’re wrapped in cellophane and no one’s taken the price sticker off. You peel it away and stick it to your left boob: \$3.99. You know you’re worth more than that, but you’re starting to get pretty desperate for someone to love you. Through the window, you can see people jumping on a trampoline. You step outside and some guy immediately offers to peel the sticker off for you. His friends snigger in a “Beavis and Butthead” kind of way. You push past them, take off your shoes and part the trampoline netting. Someone offers you a hand up. Your body is thrown into the air before you’re even standing. The boys bounce so big you are almost constantly hovering in the sky; feet barely skimming the black canvas before you’re propelled upwards again. Flying over the net and into oblivion feels like a definite possibility. You’re over the moon and a little bit terrified. You wonder if this is what being in love feels like.

You’re seriously dizzy. Your friend helps you to the bathroom and locks the door. You lie down on the tiled floor, like you used to do when you were little and you got sick. Your eyes land on a set of bathroom scales, pushed under the sink. You tell your friend you think you should throw up. She crouches over you and touches your hair, pushing it back behind your ear: “You don’t have to do that”. The light is so bright it’s giving you a headache. She gets up and turns it off, then comes back and lies down next to you. Just lying there with her makes you feel way less sick. After a few minutes, you turn on your side so you’re face to face. It’s blurry in the dark, but you can see her blinking. You move towards each other so slowly you are not sure if it’s just you or if she is moving too. When your lips touch, you both go still. The music from the living room is faint

and far away. You make out the lyric “We’ll talk about it soon”. You make out for the next three songs.

When you go outside, someone is playing “It Wasn’t Me” on a Bluetooth speaker. You walk across the yard, climb up to the treehouse and squeeze in. Some girls are trying to convince some guys that romanticizing *Lolita* is seriously problematic, but they aren’t really paying attention. You join in and one of the guys actually listens. You start talking to him about music and find you like some of the same bands. You ask what his favourite songs are. The titles are all familiar, but the most you can remember about any of them is the album that they’re on. You don’t say this. You say “Oh, I love that song too!” and “*Hail to the Thief* is definitely an underrated album”. He’s too drunk to notice your lack of further knowledge, and soon you’re talking about your favourites instead. He seems genuinely interested. You feel genuinely interesting.

While you’re peeing, you tell your friend about the guy in the treehouse. The downstairs bathroom was taken so you’re using the upstairs one, which turns out to be much fancier. Your friend has opened up the mirror cabinet. First she inspects the bottles of pills, then the bottles of perfume. She sprays some on her wrists and rubs them together. You don’t tell her that’s not how you’re supposed to do it, and you don’t tell her that you think you’re in love with the treehouse guy. You just keep peeing.

# Mere Taito

## Kāunohoga

dear Satendra Nandan  
i have a pair of black shoes

knee-high winter boots  
cobbled for family brawls

they know how to  
bust up laundry buckets  
as if they were marriages with  
voluptuous red lips

try them on  
Satendra Nandan  
if you don't believe me

slide a foot in nice and slow  
imagine the zip as hair  
grab it and drag it screaming  
all the way up the boot shaft

an elastic gusset will wrap  
the shaft in a choking hold  
around a full taro calf – (do you  
have taro legs Satendra Nandan?)  
never mind  
stand up straight and take  
a few careful steps  
the heel should not make you

teeter like a stilt walker

if you find yourself falling  
Satendra Nandan

that's the sucker punch  
of a step mother  
hidden in the synthetic lining of  
my pair of black shoes

### Case Notes

his nose cannot lift the  
scent of self-help books  
stretched across their bed  
like a marriage protector

he fingers the newspaper  
convinced her orgasm  
can be found in the comics

# Luana Leupolu

## Nihilistic Singles

i hope we all grow out of these things,  
the peach-scented candles from kmart and the rosé blend from countdown  
and the protein powder we only bought because we saw it on instagram  
as we draped our bodies across each others beds, each others hearts  
marshmallow guts jiggling and hips bursting out of mini skirts  
g-strings reaching right up our butts and into our self esteem  
shins and thighs all bristly and bitter and alive.  
i hope we all learn better jokes than the ones we repeat now,  
about failed fitness regimes and never getting enough coffee  
and how we *can't stand men* when our problem is  
we love them better than we've ever loved ourselves.

## Aeroplanes

I am up on Dad's shoulders: one leg on either side of his head, both hands wrapped around his chin. We start at the house, and fly past the Japanese lantern plant; past the swan plant, with the stripy caterpillars and the cocoons waiting to hatch; down by the big shed, tangles of passionfruit vine cascading down its sides; between the fruit trees and their accompanying scents (lemon, feijoa, apple, peach); we reach the back fence, touch it. There are sheep on the other side, and when we are not running, we count them, but there is no time to do that now: as soon as we tap the fence, Dad whips back around and starts down our route again.

His beard is prickly under my fingers. Sometimes he makes aeroplane noises while he runs, taking each of my arms and spreading them out like wings. I let the sensation of soaring rush over me, the crisp, dusk air surging into my face; I tilt my head upwards, giggling at the thrill of being so high off the ground, bum getting sore from the ride. Our garden, blooming and endless, is a single blur below me as we run, and every time we stop for a break, there are more clues that the day is ending: less and less of the sinking sun, the sky a darker shade of blue; the waft of the pork roast inside, the murmur of the six o'clock news.



# Loren Thomas

## How it Colours Your Tongue

Alcohol cleanses.  
Rub our walls  
with it  
before

we hang our memories.

Dip our hands  
to kill  
microbes.

Threaten cells.

I was thirteen the first time  
I got drunk.

We traded Christmas for poison  
as a rite of passage.

Our 'rents watched on  
as we slurred adoration.  
Our marks of pride in shiny glass bottles  
with blue perfume  
better than the stain on the underwear  
or the clashing of genitals.

We pour                    one out

to mark the  
passing.

We pour            one out  
to  
cleanse.

I            cleanse            love.

Tomorrow        I            love        him

and I'll drink

to cleanse

limbic

Cleanse  
limbic  
cleanse  
limbicclea  
nseelim  
bic

# D.A. Taylor

## fold

they put a roll of taxpayer's single-ply on the lino  
sprayed it with lynx      flicked a bic      and  
expected the best two of the cool kids  
one who knicked pall malls from  
his mum's frankton market D&G & who  
everyone joked about taking out by the skip  
    really not really  
caught the idea  
off an older brother      anarchy at melville  
high      smoke & burn out      the gym bathroom  
and they shot behind the canteen to watch I heard

but the paper didn't catch just kept almost  
-ing      enough to stop the lunch fourty-five  
we were  
spared the fire engines      the alarm  
didn't work      just got kat g. busting her  
polyester elbow and nail bed  
on the emergency glass

the carpet tile scabs  
still going soft under warehouse specials  
    on      wet      days

    on      nights      still  
you can hear ben and curtis puffing their  
chests      ripping codys  
a slip of rizzla around their indexes  
telling each other how fuckin cool  
they were in 2006      still are      i suppose

**Excel (a found poem)**

```
=  
IF(RANDBETWEEN(0,1)=0,“and ”,“but ”)  
&  
IF(RANDBETWEEN(0,1)=0,“he ”,“she ”)  
&  
IF(RANDBETWEEN(0,1)=0,“loves ”,“ doesn’t love ”)  
&  
IF(RANDBETWEEN(0,1)=0,“her”,“him”)
```

but she doesn't love her  
and she doesn't love her  
and he loves him  
but he doesn't love him  
and he doesn't love him  
and he loves her  
but he doesn't love her  
but she doesn't love him  
but she doesn't love her  
and he loves him  
but he doesn't love him  
but she loves her  
but she doesn't love her  
but he doesn't love her  
and he loves her

# Mark Prisco

## well fuck me, right?

### I

If my days were a broken vase with all the bits scrambled on the floor,

I'd make a start – set aside the blue skies, identify the bland skin, teeth, eyes, glass on the sand like sea shells, a night in the cells, the long walk home.

The street's lined with shit but in my dream everyone's on it. The emotion is... excessive. I'm mastered by it, recognise my soul mate, kindred

spirit. The police officer, however, doesn't, & I'm dissed, undressed, arrested. But he doesn't know me, so it isn't his fault.

### II

I set it aside, as an aberration, not up there with post-modern torture, bad nevertheless. At

9 I knelt on the bedroom floor, forlorn, smiling for the camera was there. The sun had cast shadow, framed

the light & I shone by the window.

You told me I was beautiful  
& I wish you hadn't;

I'm dumb-  
fucked now, when I think about it.

### III

But I lay this aside for the bird song  
that stills the bare trees of winter;

you in the morning, pale  
after love, yes; &  
crushed; the freesia

ossified between the pages  
of your book: *a man in love*  
*with his solitude* –

ladies, gentlemen...  
*Giuseppe di Lampedusa!*

I'm bewildered by the  
multitudinous fragments:  
shards from a cup      hurled 15  
ff-fucking years ago.

I can't say it without my,  
chest contracting;      stench of  
                                 carpet, non  
                                 compos  
                                 mentis; Mentholatum, non capisco  
niente. Gynolium. Bathroom. You make me  
sick, but it's not your fault-it's-my-fault-



3

I Remember a day so distant  
like it's Ancient Rome.

I'm in  
the hall. The sun  
strikes the hard  
institutional  
floor;  
    & I walk toward,  
like the dead,  
the light

& then there's  
nothing after that.

II

I remember nothing, howls  
over the mountain; & when the sun  
rose... flocks roll with the season;  
cattle bow, slowly.

Drift. Become,  
into. How lips  
form, the tongue curls  
the word. What you mean.

When you talk. Talk  
slow-  
ly, like

we're alone in the room  
& the world

stops.



\*

Resumes.

It's difficult.  
Hard. Every second  
Hour

beat  
the bass – Master/Slave –  
drum. & in  
the interim hit  
the high  
hat cymbal.

### III

Pain is good if you deal with it, understand how it happens.

But no sod knows nothing about it  
except for scientist & they don't know shit;

the metaphysic. The  
Rock 'n' Roller  
whips

Sisyphus still; chains the  
Hero &,  
rapes him.

Calls him names.

Bends Him [sic] to his [sic]  
will. I discover this

as the Son shafts the crack  
thru the stained-glass window,

& when it's over, there's  
resonance.

**drift**

I'm wasted in the strange city.

There's reason to be  
& not. In the haze between

light & dusk. My knees are where  
the heart was.

I live it still  
like it is. In morpheus

dreams wild pigs are driven from  
the precipice.

Lord, what dost Thou think?-

of that?

II

Flat as a bedspread, I'm on  
the Nod,

between blinks I know how god's  
mind works: is slow, an' ee- zy

Fuck

me, Son: *you wanna watch where you're going.*

Save the World,

*then* orgasm. Think of the  
children.  
Recycle. Public morals Oh,

Scandal. What if I?  
finger the cracks in  
my cell, embryo. Decorate  
the wall, paint it shit  
brown  
to express my displeasure. I'm not  
young but

I'm an animal the in-  
articulate King,  
the Lord

in a manger.

Drooling on the sofa. *Deus* -  
come, why-not. Now.  
In a brand  
Spanking.

On a

Motorcycle ex  
*Machina*. It

happens. For reals – I'm dead! &  
the Hand descends & lo(l)! I'm on  
the street again, Lumbered but,  
ok.

**something out of nothing**

I

0  
<

II

An eye

III

behind the bush; the whole

IV

face, twin-  
starred.

Lord scorcheth.

I can crawl but,

...

there's skin where a scar was.

You was. Framed  
by the abstract

beauty  
of the flame,

slow but  
curious  
as a cloud  
sails across,  
V

Libra, Centaurus,  
as a hand  
waves across

the night  
like a

Magellanic cloud.

\*

*All things tempt us*

**2**

Turning something into nothing also feels miraculous.  
The wife in the photo, mother, has that look about her  
like she's gone, not coming back & never was, there  
in the frame, even the furniture's arranged, props  
for the mind. There's only emptiness, atoms of  
our experience, a soul-less chair in the corner,  
blade on porcelain, talcum powder.

Do you feel like such a liar? when you comb your  
hair  
in the mirror & take your shoes off at night.

Anyways, it's like you're really missing, which demonstrates the passing of time: you're in the room they were in –

& they're on the outside,  
looking in.

3.

*(As an aside –)*

Do you think you're better than me?  
I know people that ask that are wankers but,  
Do you think you're better than me?

4.

I punched him suddenly.  
The feeling that prompted my reaction  
stirred gradually: a minute

thirty passed from the initial surge  
that penetrated the back door  
of my system,

& went like a brick,

out the  
fucking window.

5.

If you were a bat or a cat  
would you (want  
to) be anything else?

\*

In a parallel world I did something so bad  
& you beat the shit out of me.

Knocked me down, struck your  
boot in so  
hard – cracked my  
ribs jaw. Skull. Out

there I heard the Word  
*Stop.*

You knocked 2 times  
more.

I never answered.

—

(I can't think to line the stars,  
anymore, & the shape of things are,  
extraneous;

none of my business.)

6.

\*



# Tania Collins

## The Outline of You

The silver ring you wear on your right hand covers a raised, jagged scar. It's from some guy's tooth puncturing your skin when you punched him. You were doing your brotherly duty. No one gets to pick on your little sister. Except you. A branch that stabbed you as you fell out of a tree left its mark just below your knee.

There's a diagonal line in your left brow where the hair doesn't grow. You got that scar when you were four or five and pulled a rake down on yourself. You tell me about it when you're drunk, when you're sober you tell everyone it's from a piercing being ripped out during a fight.

Those are the marks left behind by life and childhood adventures; there are also the ones you sought out and put on yourself. There's the wobbly, slightly faded line of script running along a rib. It dates back from the start of your brother's career. You let him practice on you. You also let him choose what he etched into your skin. It's in Polish, four words I can't read but you tell me it's something dirty and funny as hell.

Along your left arm is a line of numbers, representing your Grandfather's time trapped in a place that was a literal hell. His everything was stripped away, and his identity reduced to nothing more than a string of numbers. Above your heart lies a Star of David designed to remind yourself that Catholicism was not the only faith in your family's history.

An image, the size of my palm, of Tatiana, Queen of the fairies resides on your back in all her Technicolor glory. She sits with an arm wrapped around her knees, a poem in her other hand and her wings spread out as if ready to leap off your skin.

A few years from now, I'll pay for some guy with a needle

to scratch something into my skin for you. It'll be a line from Shakespeare and I won't be sure you deserve it. I'll do it anyway. It will be after enough time has passed that I can think of you and smile instead of cry. It won't mean I forgive you for chasing that last high, it will just mean I miss you. It will be harder and harder to picture you as you really are and not as I want you to be. There will be days where your flaws and your worst moments will cloud my memories of the good. There will be days when my favourite things about you will be illuminated in the foreground.

Like the way your voice sounds when you've just woken up – gravelly and low – and the way you blink at me slowly, trying to bring the world back into focus.

Or the way you imitate Taylor Swift, your voice falsely high-pitched, cracking at moments from the strain and paired with a lopsided grin.

Cigarette smoke and the unique smell of an industrial kitchen cling to your skin and clothes. It should make for a sickening combination, but on you, it works.

The image my mind will keep coming back to long after you're gone is you sitting outside on an old upside-down bread crate. It's an old, fading snapshot in my mind, the edges blurring but you remain in clear focus. Tatty grey hoodie shielding you from the fickle English weather, hood flipped up, twirling a cigarette around as if contemplating whether or not to smoke it. You'll smoke four and watch me through the glass panes of the door as I polish cutlery or making me giggle as you tap out our made-up Morse code.

## Coming Back

“How was Poland?” I ask, pressing my hip into the doorframe. I watch you take out a paper, balance it on your knee, press a filter to your bottom lip, take out a hunk of tobacco pinched between two fingers and spread it along the paper. It’s something I’ve watched you do a hundred times but it’s still the most mesmerising thing. I want to etch it into my brain, work out the exact measurements so I can follow the directions like a recipe.

You shrug, “Polish.” You say it in a bored tone, around the cigarette and behind cupped hands shielding the flame.

“Well that’s vague.”

You narrow your eyes and point a finger in my direction. “I don’t know what that means. It’s not fair to say shit I don’t get.”

There’s an edge to your tone, which is weird considering we haven’t seen each other in three weeks. We’d been fighting before you left, I can’t remember what about. Maybe you can. You probably can’t but it’s clear we’re both grasping at the anger we felt. Even when we’re not fighting, we still are. I want to talk. You don’t. You won’t get up from the rickety chair propped against the dumpster and I won’t leave the confines of the doorway.

“Fine. Whatever.” I start picking at the peeling white paint on the frame, revealing something underneath the same colour as when I would mix all my paints together just to see what would happen.

“What do you want?”

“I want you to tell me something about your trip. Anything.” Something about your family or childhood would be nice. I realise how little we know about each other outside of the walls of this traditional English pub. It’s like what we’re doing is the interlude that will only last until the main act of our lives resumes.

You exhale a lungful of smoke; “It snowed.” You say it as if you’re conceding something extraordinary. I’m not so easily impressed. Snow is snow.

“It snowed here.”

“Not the same. Here snow is... it’s a *suka*. There it’s magic.”

“Magic?”

“Yeah. Magic.”

“Magic? Care to elaborate?”

Some kind of look

“Right. You don’t know what that means.”

And the conversation has come full circle. We’re playing some kind of game. It’s like you have the dice and all the counters and the rulebook and I’m fumbling around in the dark trying to figure it out. I’m reminded of a song my Dad used to listen to: You’ve got to know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em, know when to walk away, know when to run.

Now might be a good time to walk away, shelve the conversation for now. But instead of following my instincts, I stay put.

There’s a wedding reception happening in the function room and strands of music drift out and fill the silence between us. It’s all *Endless Love*, *My Heart will Go On* and *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*. No, Mr Elton John, I’m not feeling the love tonight.

“Did you miss me?” You ask out of nowhere, your gaze fixed on the smoke you’re rolling before you’ve even finished the first.

“Yeah. Of course.” I want to ask if you missed me too. I’m not certain I want to know.

“I got you something.”

You rifle through the ratty backpack you’ve dumped at your feet. Ready to stay. Ready to leave. Not looking up you hold something out to me; “Here.” I have to step forward and leave the doorway to take it. It feels as if I’m relinquishing ground to the enemy.

“Chocolate.” I look down at the crinkled foil, “Half eaten chocolate. Just what every girl wants.”

You toss me a small white box and it’s a miracle I catch it. As it is, I nearly drop the chocolate.

“I got it at my church.”

“You know I’m not actually Catholic, right? Not like you.” My kind of Catholic was having blessed water poured over my head as an infant, going to Mass at Christmas and Easter and when someone got married. Or died.

“You’re Catholic enough.” Are you trying to convince me, or yourself?

Lifting the lid on the box I pull out a silver chain and hold it up and watch the medallion spin back and forth. It’s not what I was expecting. I stare at it and you watch me.

“It’s a Saint Christopher Medal,” you explain, “He is the patron saint...”

“Of travellers. Yeah, I know.”

“See,” you say, the corner of your mouth quirking up to something that could resemble a smile; “Catholic enough.” You throw me a wink but then you ruin it by saying; “You should never have been let out of your country without one of those.”

“You should never have been let out of your country at all.”

“Poland’s nice. Maybe I’ll take you one day.” You live in maybes and somedays.

“Really?” Experience has made me skeptical.

“Yeah, I promise, one day.”

“You promise? An actual promise or one of yours?”

“What the hell does that mean?” And here we go round again.

# Lillith Fontaine

## Don't Dream of Gravity

I am phosphorous on a winged stallion  
a planetary dreamed sequence.

Supersonic through folds of space  
Sophia in  
atomic silence & primordial wisdom  
waits  
to hand me the universe  
etched on an earthenware vase.  
Each hieroglyph each bump  
braille under eyelids  
scratch them open.

I have awoken  
a fragrant lotus on a gilt mirror.

I am the colour of symphony.  
a congealed palate of dead stars.  
The Jaguar god  
that leaps at the sun  
to create a tsunami  
in a shot glass.

I am thunder's aftershave  
and a perspiration of rain.

# Rebecca Hawkes

## The Land Without Teeth

the year my body learns about want  
I am waking with hunger before the dawn  
I rummage stale raisins from the muesli box

& suck them until the grapes rehydrate enough to denude  
from their tasteless skins with my tongue it makes them last  
I pocket five withered fruits as though that breaks the fast

I whistle the dogs to me from their kennels  
ready for ascension in corduroy & gumboot  
& scuff through hoarfrost to the bush gate

up a route I take every morning in the hours before light  
early riser clambering up the crest of the mountain  
away from the family home the little cat warming my bed

the taunting kitchen I come here  
to get back to the stone that made me  
to escape my mulchsoft body returning

to the old volcano's swollen belly  
fleshpink rhyolite muscular with its red web of veins  
like mine thinblood anaemic red knees skinned on the rock

crumbling iron & crystalline structures  
walking the dogs up the mountain in the dark  
& stumbling my malnourishment but oh the sunrise

gilding the frost      fenceposts polished to silverware  
the light so cold and loud it clangs like a cutlery drawer in anger  
my pores whorl open like spiracles to gasp for extra air

becoming so unbodied      I sublimate  
I get with the dirt  
dizzy with cold & light I

am the black beech & the red tussock & filigree  
lichen I'm honeydew I'm  
braided into silver ribs

like the river below oh no I'm  
more slender than harebell stem  
which can hardly hold up its pale head      five petals

bluelipped      but this body's no alpine native  
I am introduced to this place  
like the gravel track tattooed on the slopes

& the unstrung barbed wire  
spangled with needlefrost I am  
the pregnant heifer wheezing in the valley

I'm the dogs I'm buttery  
gorsebloom yes I'm that  
impregnable alien

pricklebitch skeleton  
sway underneath my nodding  
marzipan scented yellows

forbidden stellated spindle I could rag you like plasticbag  
all claw & fang      tell me I am your favourite colonizer  
besides you couldn't unroot me if you tried



which I would know      I try so  
hard my seeds lie dormant  
still      I'm evergreen

me & my entire invasive species  
consuming this landscape once so toothless  
its homely fatbirds plumped defenceless in the shrubcover

where my little cat      collarless      devours them  
with malice      leaves them gutted in my bed  
as though I need a reminder of bones

# Eefa Yasir Jauhary

## The modern woman

*trust me that as I ignore all law to help the slave,  
so will I ignore it all  
to protect an enslaved woman  
—Susan B Anthony.*

I am  
the avalanche that broke the backs of men  
the cracked teeth and mangled bones  
the blue-black bruises  
the blood under the sun

Our picket signs are for you  
Men, who say:  
*Flesh, only good for a fuck  
Baby making factories*  
And we say,  
“Give us a voice” in red ink  
Blood drips down your batons  
Blood of the womb that made you  
A woman’s place is everywhere.

Vodka stained velvet couches  
Trap beats and flashing lights  
Sundays are for Church  
Saturdays are for The Hood  
Blurry visions do not hide  
Hands that grab every curve  
*“Your tits, big and juicy”*

*“Your ass, fuckable”*  
Zig zag run to the toilet  
Spew on white tiles  
Alcohol breath at every turn  
There’s other girls waiting too.

Femen, fuck the men,  
Take back our bodies!  
Our flesh burn  
Paint clings onto sun soaked bodies  
Sweat fuses with the red  
Drips down our legs  
Is this what you see  
When you open Playboy  
And hide your tissues in the morning?  
The silhouette you crave at night  
Become the weapons that will conquer in the morning

#FreeTheNipple  
Bodies that give life  
a *“violation of community guidelines”*  
Instagram deletes our freedom  
Breasts that you suckled on as a baby  
A violation  
Drone strikes  
Mangled bloodied corpses  
Animal carcasses ravaged by humans  
Violates nothing  
But—  
Censor the nipple!

# essa may ranapiri

## Irrational Animal Cross-Dresses

irrational animal is born in a hospital kicking the walls with a bruised  
body  
the premature ward is sweating sweet with anxiety  
take a shower and hope the kid don't die while  
you wait for the water to warm  
irrational animal eats liquid and chews the air  
while turning yellow under a lamp  
curling like pages

irrational animal moves from boy  
to girl  
to nothing

irrational animal cross-dresses everyday  
isn't sure wearing a dress is cross-dressing  
feels everything leave their body  
curdled

irrational animal becomes a cross to carry  
deep-fried and served with a freshly squeezed guilt  
feels it roll in their gut when they are referred to as brother  
sister fathers  
eyes

irrational animal isn't related to any species in that way  
isn't related to themselves anywhere  
will cross  
over with

no sand in  
their hair  
nor glass  
in their shoulder  
blades  
irrational animal carries groceries home  
the loops of plastic pulled taught to tear at the skin of their  
knuckles  
when cars slow down the animals inside their mobile coffins  
make spitting noises  
from their fuming throats  
unfold dated copies of *the binary for dummies*  
animals roll windows down and point  
at

irrational animal as wrong wrong wrong wrong  
optical illusion of human rights  
the sun cascaded and spilt through  
the lens of platitude

irrational animal spends their nights writing to  
woolf in orlando's clothing  
sending letters to themselves  
about being and alone and  
a dark room

irrational animal sings a song made of split pockets and chipped  
greenstone  
a repetition of why the body really gets cut up about it

irrational animal eats the corners of evangelical pamphlets when they  
are nervous  
not golden tablet nor wafer melt but a self-made  
protestantism  
letting luther nail ninety-five theses to their body

and promising an even split

irrational animal is scared

that they

are trapped in

a grammar of repetition

irrational animal is the roar leaping fragmented from the throat of  
utter

animal agitation

is a werewolf with a straight razor

is a unicorn with horn cracked to the crown

is a seahorse with no saddle drowning

is only a word shaped like a circle no oxygen inside its pages  
fragments graceful meaningless ornamental hung like a body on  
a clothes rack stacked like brittle-pick-up-sticks in the brain stem  
irrational animal is dying like an irrational animal barking fuck you  
for the all the stars to ignore

**hovered over the surface broken**

your painting of the scene was *bleed-all-over*  
great apes of all kinds  
lying down in car parks  
their hot bodies meshing into the tarmac  
a paradise of mangled wrecks  
part with the self in the clover  
of rusting axles and

I play on a canvas of tortoise shells  
pressed onto rocks  
they never left the garden  
it was too big to leave  
the angels disappointed when removing their own  
underwear

# Therese Lloyd

## Mornings with Men

In the morning of the sun  
with the skittering birds  
and their devilish looks of launch-pad  
I am on fire with ten words  
driving me into a poem

The blossom that showed too early  
her vain career over in one crisp afternoon  
has escaped the fate of the rest of us  
How, when a world so tranquil it's forgotten its brand  
can this white blossom be our leader?

I was too old to break free and run  
as Jeff Buckley said  
before his levis killed him  
You want me to speak of something  
other than death? Well, let's see,  
"there once was a young man from Glenn Enis..."



## Marine Parade

Last night I was surprised by the moon  
that it exists  
out there in the open  
so stealable.  
I watched it stealthily  
not for too long,  
but lifted by some kind of inner unrest  
a stillness on fire  
in this town where the earth moves  
on shift rotation  
and fantails merrily sing to your death.  
The moon is a cocky apparition –  
who does this? Gives grief to the moon  
drinks a bottle of Christmas brandy  
while someone's busy cooking a turkey?  
I do I suppose, just a small town kid  
thinking of the time I dropped a cough lollie  
in the sand and bam! Mum took a photo.  
Dreams of playing Lear, of being a man,  
of having a father who cared  
and a mother who knew how to capture the essence of never  
through the lens of a camera.

## Oh Ingeborg!

I am just like you this morning  
pock marked and twitchy  
with a spilt cup of coffee  
as my signature.  
I discover that my possessions were unfaithful  
and close the blinds on the world –  
not even sleep makes sense  
when your bed doesn't belong to you.  
In such company as these stars  
in this constellation  
you would think I could be grateful  
humble, or even kind.  
But instead I use images to separate us  
to sew drop curtains between the real and the fake.  
I celebrate that strain of infidelity  
that runs through us all  
bright golden threads thick as elastic for some  
or self-formed lint balls tucked in hemlines  
invisible, for the most part  
for others.

# Dani Yourukova

## **A Practical Guide to Vampires in the Urban Environment**

Your common, garden-variety vampire is not seasonal.

In fact he's available all year round like canned asparagus, or an onion or, (ironically) garlic.

He's local, and perplexingly free-range, despite many women having previously reported his criminal activities.

Be ready:

The vampire has many associates who are prepared to provide glowing testimonials about his gentle nature and community outreach programs.

He can be difficult to pick out of a crowd. His method subsists on the basis of how effectively he conceals his teeth.

(He prefers the arrangement where he finds you.)

The vampire is unlikely to kill you outright. He enjoys the security of a regular blood supply, but his demand increases in direct proportion

to the development of your bleeding capabilities.

You didn't even notice his parasitoid feeding habits until your anemia was chronic and you started lying to all of your friends and family.

The vampire persists

until you become a wrong rubbery balloon-animal version of yourself,  
leaking hydrogen and profound experiences of depression in your local supermarket

until you're crying extravagantly about cereal, Palestine  
and the concept of swans

until you wish you had the motivation and self discipline required  
to lie down at an intersection and wait for a middle aged commuter  
to kill you

The vampire might proceed to tell you that you're:

Imagining things

Mistaken

Tired

Overreacting

Or lying.

Don't you understand you're making him look bad?

(you crazy bitch)

But then  
Where did all your blood go?  
Because it isn't where you left it,  
and he keeps trying to hide all those bloodstained sheets  
in your laundry basket.

But if you're reading this, you're still here,  
bruised and tender and full of the teeth that he left in you

and when you're ready you can use them

to cut his fucking head off.

## Contemporary Witching

I dig the bones from my garden  
Hands stung  
In the nettle brush  
And bramble weeds

To be cast into my stainless steel  
cauldron from Briscoes.  
They clang with mystic purpose.

I weave my fictions  
Out of moonlight  
And supermarket metaphors.

Clinging to my irony,  
Like the tiny foil stars  
Crusted in the folds of my eyelids.

I don't worship the devil,  
But I do think Milton made him a bit sexy,  
And all of the bisexuals from the Renaissance seem to agree.

Plus, I masturbate with my left hand sometimes.

All I have are these slightly literary jokes,  
And when I run out of those,  
I have to laugh about how depressed we all are instead.

I ordered my tarot pack on Book Depository,  
Because I can't remember what authenticity feels like.  
This is why everything is so funny.

Millenials are destroying the Culture Industry.

It gets too sad if you display the symptoms of your mental trauma  
honestly,  
And it makes everyone else uncomfortable.  
It's like crying, alone, on public transport at 10am,  
Or going to get your ears pierced on the day your father dies.

So I bury the bones in my garden  
My hands sting  
As I pick through the nettle brush  
And bramble weeds

# Celine Kayo

## post

this town is running out of spaces that aren't  
stained with vignettes of you. there's bruises in my vision  
everywhere i look:  
the first kiss between the pillars,  
your old school field,  
our makeshift lovers' lane in a gravel turnout.  
i try to keep you at bay but you are always there  
on the backs of my eyelids  
your face is a slit to my throat, your laugh a razor blade  
leaves me folding into myself like origami  
until i can't get any smaller

the most important thing i've learned in twenty-one years:  
sunrises are bullshit,  
that people say it's new beginnings, but i've been around long  
enough to know this is more like an old ending.  
if i pray loud enough  
do you think God will let me turn off the daylight?  
it's just that the last time we kissed we were soaked in pitch black,  
your piano fingers planted candles in the cracks of my spine,  
so now i prefer light that i can kill with my own breath  
(sorry Father i'm up so late after this i'll practise staying asleep)

you were an exercise in:  
shutting off our hearts  
letting our hands do the talking  
waiting for the other to exhale first while  
the room turned blue around us

didn't we promise to be transparent? the day you became indian ink,  
i fumbled through the dark until a nail drove through my flesh.  
had you known the smokier the poetry, the harder  
it is to fall out of love?  
is that why you forgot to say goodbye? how can you  
have a clean break when you've broken your fingers  
making something fake feel real?

this is how I know i'm caught out at sea again:  
body torn open by salt water grating on my soaked-paper skin, and  
none of the waves are breaking in the right direction, and  
i try paddling back to shore, but i'm kicking and kicking, and  
all the water does is just stay still.



# Renée Boyer

## Weeding

Trowel bites dirt,  
stone-jarred wrist jangling,  
roots severed cut by  
jagged cut  
tossed onto the pile  
to die.

pause.

Swipe away sweat  
with soiled  
glove.  
*that's not how  
if you would just  
why do you*

Dig, slice, thwack  
pull, snip, yank  
toss.

pause.

Sun aches on  
pinkening skin,  
*you shouldn't've*

*that's not where  
why don't you*

tiny prickles worm  
beneath gloves  
grow  
barbed tongues,  
lick skin  
from the inside

pause.

Soil watered  
in sweat.

Grasp thistles  
low on stem  
to avoid  
the pricks  
*you can't mean  
what was the  
I would never*

reach, pull, hack,  
crush, reach  
pull, hack  
crush

pause.

breathe.

**An ode to doors and windows,  
which open as often as they close**

The red red rose has rotted.  
The turtle dove has died.  
The angel choir is silent.  
The perfume cloud has dried.

No longer do I wander through  
Sweet scented meadows' flowers.  
My weeks remain unaltered:  
Hours pass like hours.

Stars prick holes in the dark of night:  
My eyes, they twinkle not.  
The fevered brow has frozen,  
And severed is the knot.

And yet my world's not ended,  
My heart's not ripped in two.  
I've cried, but not a river.  
I'll die, but not for you.

## Wanda Barker

### The Ancient Bear of Winter

This is not a country of bears, but  
my ancestral bear is certain of herself,  
curled up like a dusty carpet in my house-cave  
Nuts and raisins stored in perfectly clear glass, in my lair of lament  
She won't take her pelt off

Spring drags my fur into the shrieking sun like a dog heaving a big bone  
Only one more week of harvesting stillness  
More of a shedding of skins than a harvest.  
Winter, oh I will call my next rabid dog *Winter*

A cloak around my fears, a sack of salve closeted by the fires  
tempers old wounds, licking them to death  
waits for new ones that might tear the maps  
of the year apart

I'm not averse to a flash of spring full of azalea lips  
urgent beauty, its vibrating calls to hungry bees  
There's too much of it though  
And it won't shut up

Too many daffodils clashing and competing  
More birds flapping and dying than I can count  
Pulses like a heart beating too fast  
Euphorias I can't keep up with  
Faces stretched heavy with smiling  
You know how it goes...everyone getting everything  
Burning itself out is next. This, I know

The bear of winter is my ecstasy  
The bear of winter sweeps the lights down  
The bear of winter bends into itself and recedes

The bear of winter has chewed the skins of harvest  
endured the passing palette of autumn  
The bear of winter is a pour of grief  
for old loved things and troubled agonies,  
it's not psyched up for bright.

## Tusk

when my canines grew  
they were longer than my other teeth  
no vampire ancestry... it was strange  
how they grew and curled like a tusk  
pushed through my rage  
a millimetre at a time

if I let them free range they would  
wrap around the corner of my upper lip  
white as ivory like a sneer  
they caught the debris of candy floss  
silver beet, and licorice, they were  
easily stained and hard to clean with  
a conventional toothbrush

so I grazed on peppermint  
rinsed with hydrogen peroxide  
and chewed flaky bark to  
make them white

all of it I kept secret, kept my mouth shut  
folding my sweet lips over my tusks  
shaking away the questions  
the cleaning was done quietly  
in the forest beneath the umbrella of  
a full moon and owls and deer  
and wild pigs came to watch  
they said I was kin, the deer said

if I thought hard and massaged  
my head with moss and lichen  
the antlers that were hiding  
beneath my thick hair  
would sprout like wheat  
after rain

the tiny owl said I had wing buds  
under the broad sharp blades  
of my shoulders  
I could trust them.

## Housework

So fuck it...dishes, housework, ironing.  
I am assaulted by memory,  
a trace like a botched colouring book,  
over the lines.

There is my messy mother and my tidy aunt.  
There is the glittering distance between them.  
There is my tongue trying to articulate a thread.

My aunt used to iron sheets, teatowels,  
hankys corner to corner,  
chittering like a fantail about the weather  
and her unkempt neighbours.  
She used to empty ashtrays before  
my mother's ash landed.

My aunt was loving, strict,  
fattened us with huge cakes full of raisins  
that turned my mother's topaz eyes,  
grass-green.

My aunt filled the air with her imperatives.  
My aunt would run her finger along the top  
of my mother's curtains, take a moral inventory  
and pull one of those faces



where everything  
turned  
upside down.

My mother would light another cigarette  
even though the one she had  
was burning. She'd pour a sherry  
well before five pm, swig it violently  
and chuck a heap of lamb chops in a pan.  
Turn them to charcoal.  
My mother laughed at life.  
Mostly.

My aunt had plastic covers on her furniture.  
She sent us outside.  
My mother invited us in...to trampoline her couch to  
death.  
She wanted a new one.  
My mother shoved a jumble of mixed linens  
into her cupboard,  
swept dust underneath.  
We could never find anything.

So fuck the dishes...I see where that came from  
in my own resolutions, although my mother  
would never have said it like that.  
She preferred the garden, her paints,  
the grand piano, a long soak in a soapy bath,  
in a wash of love.

I am in the garden up to my knees in mud and hopeful

plants.

Fuck the house itself, it's a roof, it's walls and floors.  
It's good enough. It's not a mythic dream  
nor has it swallowed  
our small swamp of coins.

I am dealing with life's overload  
backed up like a full revving truck,  
deaths, abortions, miscarriages, my husband's  
parkinson's  
An incomplete inventory of wishes.  
A range of abuses of women I love  
by men I love no longer.

Howling into other's misfortunes, ignoring my own,  
my tongue wringing itself out for poems,  
can't save myself never mind  
the roar and hiss of ocean.

Fuck the folding-neatly-and-putting-away of the  
laundry, too.  
I have other things scrambled in my mouth  
a blur of alphabet. Apologies to make,  
I don't mean to be mean.  
Only when the trace is grasped and the outline  
thickens,  
when what I imagine overtakes what actually  
happened

Only if the wild spirit of a poem  
pushes in like a brat  
and asks for it.

# Sigred Yamit

## Wild Peaches

I want to live my days in poetry  
I want to walk with poetry, Chihuahua-esque  
    have it inside my bag and call it Peaches  
be midnight  
    and have the moon ghostwrite for me  
move somewhere exotic  
    like Geelong, Bruges, or Dublin  
    à la James Joyce and catch my  
    wife cheating on me  
I am a Cat 5 cyclone looking for shelter  
I am my own solar system  
    It's ludicrous to think no one  
    has joined me in revolving  
    around me  
I am a wine barrel with holes  
    Dionysus is my sad daddy  
I am still on my mind  
    like phlegm in my throat  
I want to realign my crooked bottom  
    teeth  
sit on the bath tub  
    for a day and see my mistakes float  
    and wink at me  
    taunt me, call me an idiot  
eat Durian and watch the others  
    retch and hail me as a warrior  
I say the hardest words in the English language  
    with my funny Filipino tongue

Mayhem Literary Journal

list all of men's greatest plights from  
parting the red sea to obliterating cities  
make them into an epic  
it'll rival Gilgamesh and Nietzsche  
make all flowers sexless  
and nature hypoallergenic and finally  
sit on grass  
tell all those people that  
this Filipino can write and  
her Asian vowels may seem inconsequential but  
no  
she's already made you into  
hieroglyphics  
I eat my peaches cold, toast my bread for 5 seconds flat  
enjoy my peppermint tea during passable mornings

# Joanne Tasker

## What I Remember from High School

rape jokes  
and everyone laughs  
what's funny  
is sex-ed didn't teach us  
about consent

we blow condoms up  
like balloons  
look for answers in a word-find  
circle the word penis  
with a penis  
when I hadn't even seen one

bathroom sex  
she lost her virginity  
on a Motorola flip-phone  
pass it around  
for show and tell

depression has a thirst  
that makes her wrists bleed  
she's learning to hide her misery  
in long-sleeves

arsonists  
students armed with Lynx  
and a lighter  
did you know you can set fire to a window?  
burnt glass reeks of melted plastic  
stains like aged rust

fight or flight

I learned that I freeze  
a girl's hair is pulled tight  
like a noose  
I could reach her  
but my feet don't move

there is a gunman  
in a meth lab up the road  
we hear an alarm and line up on the field  
like ducks in a row

three suicides  
but they weren't my friends  
I know more about how they took their lives  
then I'll ever know about them

at graduation they parade me across the stage  
hold me high like a trophy  
lay claim to my accomplishments  
as if they exist because  
rather than in spite of

high school taught me that  
handshakes and smiles can be weapons  
like a piece of rope or a razorblade  
and congratulations really means fuck you

so, congratulations  
I made it through

not all of us did.



# Jo Buer

## The Walnut Tree

The bus pulls up outside the entrance to Four Square. An abandoned trolley has been left with its nose resting against the window of the building. It is a small town. Trolleys are scarce. It is a rule that customers must return them to the trolley bay inside. You wait a moment for the swollen aisle of teens with canvas bags, shoving and pushing, to exit the bus before you stand and follow suit. You wonder which one will take the bait. It's a third former, the brother of a friend of yours. He swipes at the fringe that drapes his eyes, throws his bag into the carrier of the trolley and jeers at his friend to get in. It's all a ploy towards impressing the older boys. You feel your mouth twist into a sneer and mutter *Idiot* under your breath, before turning the other way.

You wait for Sharon at the door to the supermarket, ignoring the hoots of laughter as the trolley's wheels rumble down the footpath in the other direction. Sharon's mother is a cashier there. She has short brown hair and a permanent scowl. Sharon's on a tight leash. She has to check in with her before walking home. Her mother is super protective. They argue a lot.

Eventually, Sharon joins you. She is a head shorter than you and you can see by her tight jawline and balled up fists things did not go well. *Bitch*, she whispers, as if reading your mind. You've been friends since third form, you're now in fifth. Two years covers a lot of ground so you mostly walk in silence. You pass the fence where honeysuckle grows. Sometimes you stop to suck nectar from their necks, but not today, Sharon's too pissed.

The town centre is well out of view. Sharon unzips the front pocket of her fairy down jacket and pulls out a crumpled box of cigarettes and a yellow lighter graffitied with an anarchy sign. She



shakes out a smoke and presses it between her lips, slipping the packet back into her jacket. It is too hot to be wearing a fairy down, but it is her trademark. Its pockets can hide a lot. She shields the flame with one hand and lights her cigarette, drawing a deep breath before passing it to you. The smoke curls around your insides and you count to two before handing the cigarette back, blowing blue smoke into the air. When the ciggy's down to its butt Sharon drops it in the gutter and gives it a cursory stomp with her shoe. She then reaches into her bag and pulls out body spray. It's a ritual. You take turns dousing yourselves in Vanilla Kisses Impulse then pop a few pink smoker lollies into your mouth to disguise your breath.

Your uniform is stifling. The blue and white checkered dress hangs on your frame like a sack. Its stiff white tag carves warnings into your skin at the base of your neck. It has been a long day. You wear the weight of classes and teachers, bitch fights and detention. It is after 4 but the sun still burns. Your thighs have licked each other raw as you've walked. Right now, you want nothing more than to disappear into the cool haven of your bedroom, where you can lose yourself in "Champagne Supernova" on your Discman.

The willow greets you as you turn into your driveway, its tumbling locks sweep against the ground. You wave a last *See ya* to your friend and make your way towards the front porch where jasmine weaves around the pillars of the portico. Only metres away refuge awaits you. Your escape. Your room.

But... something nags at you. Something snarls and snaps and nips at your insides making you pause at the base of the porch steps. The safety of your room must wait. Instead, you take a moment just to listen, then follow an invisible draw down the side of the house towards the back of the yard where the walnut tree stands. It is sheltered by pine trees whose spires pierce the sky and throw shadows across the earth. Walnut husks decompose on the ground.

Static fizzes at the edge of your sight until you're close enough that two ghosts slip into focus. Breaking away from the shadows, your parents appear, lost in their own world and oblivious to you. They are mechanical and ill-fitted to their movements. Your dad

stands awkwardly and holds open a plastic grocery bag for your mother to fill with walnuts. She picks, without consideration, black fleshy corpses from the ground. Some of them are beginning to split open, exposing a hard-wooden shell. They're seductive, these walnuts: you've been fooled before. You've peeled back their fleshy husk and cracked their ribs. You've tasted their meat and been disappointed by the bitterness that still clings to your tongue.

Chester, the family dog, nuzzles the walnuts with his nose pretending they are tennis balls. They paint his muzzle black. His tail slaps against his body but your parents see nothing but the walnuts and the grocery bag. They haven't noticed you standing there, watching them. For a moment, you are a ghost stuck in time.

Your dad is the first to pause. He turns. His gaze settles on your face. A cigarette hangs from his lips. His eyes and mouth have fallen a fraction on his face since the last time you saw him. Since that very morning. Something inside has broken. Your mother has her back to you. She crouches, head fallen forward as she picks at the nuts on the ground. Somewhere in the distance a siren of red and blue cuts through the air before fading into silence. It is not of your world and yet you see your mother stiffen. Something is wrong. She stands up, refusing to look your way, and instead lets the walnuts slip from her hands. Chester dives for them with his nose thinking it a game, while your mother fades deeper into the shadows and through the back door. You realise now, the smoker lollies and Impulse had been pointless. Your parents have bigger secrets.

Your dad remains unmoving. His eyes still locked on your face. Something in your chest pinches at the strange telepathy that has your dad pleading for something you're not sure you have to give. Gentleness, maybe? Forgiveness? The day is drained of its warmth. Just like that, the spell is broken and your dad turns his back to you, pausing for just a moment. A neighbouring lawn mower growls into life and you hear the kids down the street laugh a high-pitched chorus.

Your mother has led the funeral march and the dog has followed. Your dad, a smaller man than you had known, drops his cigarette

and blindly stamps at the ground. Then, he too is drawn into her wake. Your first reaction is to panic. Whatever waits for you inside is bigger than you, and not good. You watch your dad's back disappear through the door. His ciggy still glows on the ground. You pick it up; an inch of tobacco before butt. You gently press it against the earth until its light dims. Hiding it in your palm you feel its warmth and the slight moistness where your dad's lips have been. You slide it into the side pocket of your school bag, kick a rotting walnut towards the stoic pine trees, and follow him inside.

# Nina McCullagh

101

Take me where the party is  
and shove me through the doors

dissolve my mystery illness  
in reasonably-priced champagne

then pour a measured dose  
of pineapple and vodka

and hook me to the vein  
with a novelty-shaped straw.

Drape me in  
a fitted sheet

and top me with  
a wizened wreath

fan the corrupting  
BBQ flames

from the window  
to the wall.

# Dadon Rowell

## Yours

I am your china doll.  
Chip me while you play.  
Snap my index fingers  
So they can't point at you.

I am your blood bag, your donor.  
There are red pictures each morning  
On the bathroom mirror.  
Paint it on your face  
Lick your fingers.

I am your ashtray.  
Force smoke into my lungs  
Thirty compressions  
Two breaths  
Until my tear ducts  
cough ash.

I am your rib.  
Embedded in you  
Red and blue ropes  
Mummify my body  
And compress my lips.

But I was made  
To be your canvas,  
Your grotesque  
To nod my head like a child's toy  
And taste the metal  
Of another woman's perfume.

## Touch Me

It's been a while  
I say  
as your fingers  
slide up my spine  
my skin giggles  
under your hands

You scrape your teeth  
along my neck  
I hum and twist  
tilt back  
    back  
        back

Your mouth  
is wet honeysuckle  
your skin sighs  
against mine  
as you move lower

You stamp fingerprints  
into my hips  
graze kisses  
down my thighs  
thumb the backs  
of my knees

You twist your fingers  
in damp lace  
and tug

# Bronwyn Laundry

## **fuck palmy north**

i drove 5 hours to get my heart broken.

i knew it was coming  
and i still got in the car  
hungover at 8.30am  
on a saturday  
easter long weekend

all because  
i wouldn't let you go  
unless  
you really wanted me to

you were gone when i got there  
literally  
went to the motorbike races in feilding  
with your cousin  
(you knew i was coming)

and i sat in the plaza  
like a fucking cliché  
waiting for the text  
“on our way back,  
it's tough wrangling the lads”.

i knew when i saw you

so we made quick work of it  
a 20 minute walk  
in the park  
while it spit  
and i poured

neither you or the sky  
could manage a real tear  
but after  
we still kissed  
on your uncle's couch  
all weekend  
(for old time's sake)

even held hands  
at lunch  
in the promenade  
in front of all the families  
in the park.

but it's no surprise  
only a fool  
drives to the manawatu  
just to hear it  
in person

i hope the next guy  
spares me  
(the rising petrol costs)  
and does it  
over  
text.



# Maria-Teresa Corino

## A Cup of Cocoa

She pours milk into a saucepan. She doesn't have a bollilatte. Her mother has three or four, but her mother has at least three or four, or dozens, of all sorts of stuff, from whisks to ostrich eggs. The ostrich eggs do look good, four dimpled ivory ovals on a pewter platter, on a polished refectory table, on a perfectly uneven terracotta floor. A jagged hole at the round end of each shell hints at long-gone, sucked-out life. At least all the milk-pots are in constant use, unlike so many of the other things, which exist only to be displayed and endlessly dusted, or hide in deep cupboards, to emerge as ghosts do, at feasts.

Her mother's house: big and empty and full of things. Just thinking about it makes her want to cancel the hot cocoa and have a whiskey. Maybe there's such a thing as Irish cocoa, or she could invent it. Start a chain of boozy cocoa bars.

Potato starch flour or corn flour, or neither? Her mother used potato, just a touch. Was it a teaspoon, half a teaspoon, more? The magic of potato flour for thickening hot chocolate – it's like learning why the spangled lady doesn't end up in two or three pieces, dripping blood and sequins. Almost cheating. Sawing humans in two with no mess, no fuss: that would be a good skill to have.

Her mother's hot cocoa was dark, and not too sweet. Sugar? There must have been some sugar. Pure cocoa. Why Dutch process cocoa? The coldest countries have their names all over a thing that only grows in the most tropical places: the Dutch, the Swiss. It seems wrong somehow.

She stirs the three powders together, dark brown cocoa, white starch, golden cane sugar. A little warm milk, white into pale brown. Stir, clockwise, always. The other way is the Devil's. Pour the

dissolved cocoa into the rest of the milk, brown into white.

A wooden spoon with a crack in the middle. Why does she always end up using that one, why does she keep it? Germs versus waste. Versus dishwasher.

The last thing her father had asked to eat: chocolate budino made with Perugina cocoa mix. Where did that wish come from? He'd hardly eaten for days, you could see him struggling to get something down just to please us. The brand had to be Perugina, and the budino recipe was on the box. It was so good to be asked for food, for anything. She had rushed to the supermarket and bought 3 boxes. How long does cocoa keep for? In a cool, dark place.

Stir, watch, don't let it burn. Around, around, around, thicker, darker. Not dark enough. A few squares of good chocolate. A few more.

In Barcelona, their hotel set out a whole bowl of cocoa powder, sugar, pieces of chocolate, so guests could mix their own breakfast drink. All week, every morning, she used up all the cocoa on their table, and all of the chocolate squares. They tried to see everything. What did they see? She can't remember. There was hot chocolate for breakfast, Gaudi, mashed tomato on fresh bread, arguments, sore feet, heat. Cocoa again, with churros, for afternoon tea.

Pour a thick stream of cocoa into a small cup. She has used too much potato starch: should've trusted her memory, not some blogger. She can see lumps. Through the rising steam, the cocoa gleams like a dark mirror.

The bus would disgorge her and her brother when school was still closed, it had to get to town early enough for the older kids. They walked hunched into their overcoats all the way down the silent street, past metal-shuttered shops. The heavy café door opened into heat and greetings. A burst of steam from the machine, and a tiny cup of brown lava appeared on the counter. You could drink it as soon as you got it, burn the black winter morning away. Or wait for it to set, eat it with the little spoon. Lick the spoon. Pass a finger around the bottom of the cup. Lick the finger. Maybe, back then, she wouldn't have licked her finger in public. She would do it now.

This doesn't taste the same. She drinks it anyway, mashing lumps with her tongue against the back of her teeth.

## **Sol, Planet 3**

### Chapter 1

The symmetry at the beginning of everything gets bored and blows the joint. The first second begins and ends in the electron soup. More seconds follow. Light spreads, burns, dims. Bits and pieces meet up and have a ball along the desire lines of the universe. Infant stars pull Sirius's tail.

### Chapter 2

Andromedan astro-engineers gently place the last planet onto the shell of the last turtle. Flippers beat in careful unison as the turtles enter the Magellanic Stream, holding the erect posture they practiced at Ms Kurma's Cosmic Academy. The engineers have a quick tea break and get started on the main project of the day.

### Chapter 3

Comets and asteroids drop carbon, fat, sugars, and other random stuff. The impacts test the turtles' balance, which helps pass the time. There is a lot of splitting, then a lot of sex. A mountain arranges its rocks and hopes for dragons. Ferns breathe a veil over the earth. Fire learns to burn.

### Chapter 4

The first pterosaur hops and hops until it flies. It catches a bug. A priestess carves a Nautilus spiral into a stone goddess's buttocks. A moray eel shoots out its rear jaws and grabs dinner. A honeyguide bird sings another Hadza tribesman to the hive. Venus's Girdle flashes

rainbows in the ocean. Chickens, remembering their Tyrannosaurus Rex genes, fight over meat scraps. A scientist faints into deep time.

#### Chapter 5

A date clicks over with fireworks and hope. A kitten sleeps on a re-usable shopping bag, one pink-padded hind leg forgotten behind her ear. The total weight of plastic in the seas reaches the total weight of the fish. The last long-whiskered owlet fails to find a mate. Humans attempt to reach other solar systems. This is quietly stopped.

#### Chapter 6

When the recycling crew leave, the turtles tumble off each other and stretch out with somersaults. The youngest whacks into Saturn's rings: this will cause problems later. After some private turtle time, they swim back to Andromeda to lay their eggs.

#### Chapter 7

Baby turtles hatch. Tiny flippers paddle them off into the cosmos. They have plenty of time to play before school starts.

For Caspar Henderson, in thanks for his *The Book of Barely Imagined Beings: a 21st Century Bestiary*

# Harvey Aughton

## Home

Whether or not I noticed  
The city was changing  
Before my eyes, evolving  
And it was leaving me behind

Walking under the bridge  
The river tried to lap at my feet  
I was young then, the nights  
Were long, more alive

Lights change over time  
Now they blur with every step  
As I stagger home an adult  
Looking for somewhere else to be

# Zoë Higgins

## Respiration

She is crying always, lately:  
at questions, and the shape of babies'  
heads, and birds; at sweet solid  
oranges; at high-vis and the offered  
cups of tea. She cries especially at soft  
voices, at skyward branches and the thought  
of emails. She feels unseaworthy.  
Her joints are loose; water pooling in her belly.  
Friend, you do not have to carry cargo. Free  
your hold. You are a tree, unshaped: the  
world is dry and drawing water through  
you. This is a cycle of nutrition. The flow  
of tears is leaving minerals in the bone,  
is softening flesh, is breathing out and in.

## **A Freudian Theory of Orthography**

Of course there are two kinds of letters: the male principle and the female. Related to the male principle are the upright, active and dominant letters. The “l”, “t” “h” and especially capital “I” fall within this category. The female principle relates to encompassing, open, receptive and passive letters. The “u”, “n”, “c” and especially “o” fall within this category. The combination of these principles gives language its expressive social force. This explains why words like “loo”, “hut”, and “oi!” are among the most erotic in the English language.

## **Before the Party**

Her mother is standing on the table again. Her mother's shiny high-heeled shoes are reflected in the table's surface. The table's surface is reflected in her mother's shiny high-heeled shoes.

The table is set for a large dinner party. Her mother's colleagues will be coming as they do every year to be entertained. Just next to her mother's left foot is a crystal cruet set. Just next to her mother's right foot is a sculptural glass vase filled with orchids.

Two years ago, before the party, she snuck into the living room to take an orchid for her rabbit. The rabbit had died the day before and she thought she could take one white orchid from the bouquets. She eased the door open so quietly that her mother, standing on the table, did not notice. She was poised, feet shoulder-width apart, between a vase of orchids and a salad bowl. She could see tension in her stance. Her knees were locked, as if she were standing on a high bridge. She pulled the door closed and ran outside to her rabbit's grave and climbed a tree, to be high up. That was before she was a teenager.

She sees her standing on the table again. She waits to see what she will do; whether she will move. Crystal glitters around her feet.



# Toni Wi

## Annabel

Annabel of the thousand kinds of smile the ripped jeans and floral ensemble bringing belts back into fashion Annabel all collarbone who peers into her phone with lips counting her fork hanging suspended alone in a world of muted greys of custard coloured floors the hint of hormones in the air buried beneath a wave of overlapping currents of meat unidentified vegetable hash an overprocessed cheese her nose picking out food stuffs as if she could break them down to their constituent parts protein an acceptable level of carbohydrate was there ever an acceptable level of carbohydrate limp photosynthetic matter sauce of sugar on sugar and beyond always more sugar

Annabel who with a delicate dip of the wrist selects a crisp edamame bean from a plate of white flecked with green shuttles it towards a mouth used to curling around a no thank you never quite reaching the word she needs saving it away for later saving herself for later the best kind of friend selfeffacing fading into the background so that they never notice she is a calculating brain inside a shadow shaped like someone you used to know at school

Annabel of the teams the clubs and the committees voted most likely to succeed who places a fork onto a plate on a barren tray who still has hope of a hunger later in the day or the week or maybe even sometime this month a girl of potential fearless in the face of public speaking presenting a persona a chocolate shell over the truth the truth a sea of air of egg whites whipped into perfect peaks and a stomach that shrinks shrinks shrinks with each pass of the whisk Annabel who curls in on herself when no one is looking afraid only of taking up space stands and slings the strap of her backpack over a shoulder like a crag skin stretched taut tray in one hand ready to toss the plate of beans to flit into the crowd into the mould Annabel of the thin wrists smiling as she counts down to zero

# Anuja Mitra

## Remembering

if you can you can try to recall  
the sun across the roof and you  
knee-deep in childhood playing  
near the fence with the storm  
of daisies still impressionable  
in the way of dreams still  
believing leaves had voices  
and you might then remember

curtains drowned in burnished light  
how at night the sky emptied  
into a field of stars leaching out  
the guilt you'd soon forget unlike  
the woman you called Nana who kept  
knitting you hats while you kept not  
writing back and maybe then you'd know

the injustices you had no part in  
the lady who bought your house how  
she ravaged your kingdom while  
you were away oh these memories  
spiralling into memories into  
nothing this helter skelter art of  
remembering this bending  
over backwards running out of light

## Ascent

I would like to step outside myself.  
To bow from my body and its trivial griefs.  
So I rise: above  
forests, deserts, seas.

I rise  
and it feels just how “ascent” sounds.  
The soft beginning,  
the reverent end.

I become monarch of the crooked sky;  
clouds name their heirs for me.  
Soon I am written into sunsets,  
cutting the ribbon on new galaxies.

Constellations forget their places.  
Even gravity grows fond again.  
Dining one day I feel the pull of trees,  
the earth calling me home.

My plan backfires:  
I have become too loved.  
Now I am falling through the arms of stars,  
wingless as a thing newborn.

I realise this is happiness  
only when I look down.

# Erin Cooksley

## RED

I see it in colours. Dribbles of colour on a red backdrop. The scene changes with each strobe but the fluorescent red lights always show through. No matter how I paint the canvas, the red will always remain. I could cover the red. Bleach it out of the painting. Cover it with layers of sterilising white. But the colours are all attached. Red bleeds into pink. Greens grow over browns. They need the red. Bleaching the red would mean bleaching the others. The greens, browns, pinks, whites. And I'd be left with only grey.

There is already too much grey. the split moments between the flashes of light and colour. My hands grasp through the air, eyes wide trying to make sense of the shapes, but the silhouettes always bound out of my reach. I can try connect the dots. I can paint the borders, the picture before and the picture after. I can try draw lines through the dark space, connecting what I think happened. But I will never be able to fully see, and then the light flashes again and I wait for the next scene of grey.

*Red.* I always thought of red as the colour of love. Of Valentine's Day cards and lipstick marks on cheeks. Hearts are red, rose petals are red. Honeymoon suites drip red passion. Mothers tie red ribbons in their daughters' hair. When someone mentioned the word *red* my mind would race to the red scribbles at the bottom of my teenage love letters. But now, I see red as something else.

*White.* He entwined his grip into the roots of my scalp and held my mouth deep around him like a mother holds a baby to her breast. Eyes closed. Suckling. It was then that I changed my mind. The words 'stop' and 'no' gathered momentum up my body, in the fists of my hands pushing against his thighs and in the muscles of my neck resisting his hold. They formed in the roof of my mouth, between

my teeth, only to be silenced and pushed back down my throat by his pink flesh.

*Pink.* Skin is pink. There was a lot of pink. There was too much pink.

*White.* White has always been portrayed as the colour of innocence and purity. White was the colour of never-before-seen nightgowns. Of angels never touched. But now, white to me is cold. Hospitals and pill packets. White is the easiest colour to stain. I remember taking a pill the next morning. The lady at the pharmacy took me into a small cold room and invaded the painting. Analysing every speck of colour. She started to scrape off the grey and check what red was underneath. I told her it was love bred.

*Green.* His duvet cover was green. A light green, mixed in with some white. A soothing, peaceful pattern. Found in rest homes, family motels and antique stores. Flowing, light lines arced freely across the spread, transferring gently from white to green and then back again. But the soft cotton did nothing to stop the friction against my cheek as he bent me over. Telling me to shush because his parents were in the next room. I closed my eyes. I didn't want to look at the green anymore.

*Black.* I could taste the black. He had snuffed out his cigarette and thrown it in the drain before he led me inside but I could taste it on his tongue and in the air. The charcoal scraping my throat, barricading my nose. Constricting and suffocating out any air I managed to find.

*Red.* Red is also the colour of anger. A contradiction I struggled to understand. Red is the colour of blood drawn in furious slashes. Of wrong answers on test papers. Children are warned to be aware of monsters with red eyes. Fires burn red as they ravage through the subordinates in their path. Danger and stop signs bellow red in warning. I never was very good at listening to warnings.

*Grey.* He didn't hear me. He must not have. I should speak up. Surely he didn't hear me telling him to stop.

*White.* He asked me if I was on birth control. After he had finished. I remember deciding that telling the truth would not help,

he could not take it back. He could not reverse the liquid dripping out of me, it was too late to prevent the inevitable sequence of events he had started. It was up to me to ratify. So I lied, he nodded, satisfied there would no further consequences.

*Brown.* Short brown hairs covered my dresser as I plucked them out of my teeth when I got home.

*Pink.* He lit a cigarette after he had finished and I put my clothes back on. He sat on the bed, leaning back against the wall, one arm resting along the headboard. One leg stretched out before him, the other bent. He was posing, a powerful stance, for his sculpture or painting. A victory lap after he had conquered the resistant. The lines were perfect. They all led directly to the main focus, the shrinking pink feature in the middle of the foreground.

*White.* I remember him walking out and directing me where to park. I wasn't allowed in the driveway. Had to hide me around the corner, on the grass, slowly slipping sideways into the drain. He waved his arms around, pale in the reflection of my headlights.

*Black.* He had a neck tattoo. I imagine it was a snake or a skull. I remember it being partly hidden by his curly ginger mullet. I only saw a glimpse of it as we entered his bedroom. After that I never looked directly at it. Or at him.

*Green.* I remember him placing a rolled up green towel along the bottom of his door. He said it was so that no sound could get out. This green was darker than the duvet cover. Less soothing. Barricading me into the darker scene I play over and over. The scenes I now associate with killer clowns and giant spiders. The towel didn't only stop sound. It barred every ounce of the outside reality from entering. I was no longer in the yellow and blue world I knew. I was in his red one.

*Grey.* I still include him in my list. In my number. He is written small, at the bottom, but he is still there. Doesn't that form some kind of consent? That I haven't fully separated him from the others?

*Red.* Red is also a name. His name. It might be his real name, or it might be an alias that he uses. Now everything made sense. Red made sense. He was angry, he was rough, he was primal. The alpha

male, taking what he wanted, following the hierarchy assigned to both of us by nature. And yet, he felt no remorse. Felt no need to justify what he had done. It was natural. I remember him asking me if I was leaving as I was getting dressed. I remember his quiet purse of the lips and the tilt of his eyebrows. Surprised at my sudden rush to leave, he had followed nature's way, he didn't think he had done anything wrong.

*White.* He was wearing white socks the whole time. The ones with the ribs in them. Found in brown shoes on old men at golf courses.

*Grey.* I remember sitting in my room with my friend, trying to explain why I had my hoodie pulled all the way up around my head. She didn't understand. Surely it was an easy fix. Just take emergency contraception. She didn't understand. It wasn't the physical aftermath I was crying over. That was easily resolved. It was the erasure of myself. The tossing aside of any personal feeling and the blatant disregard for my identity as an equal human being. Less than the sum of my parts. He never wanted me as a whole. Only my parts. He wanted my mouth. He wanted my vagina. He got them. And then he was finished. But I hid that behind the loving red paint. She didn't understand.

*Green.* Grass. Trees. Mud. It took me 20 minutes to get to his house. Through the country, down side streets and gravel roads. No-one knew where I was, I hadn't thought to tell anyone. Some people might call me lucky. It could have been a lot worse. Stupid girl.

*Grey.* I spent months justifying what he did. Sex is what Tinder is for. Justifying the colour of the red. I doubted the grey, surely I could paint over them. When I told him to stop, surely I just meant holding my head down, not the whole thing. When he told me to shush, surely it was because I was moaning in pleasure and not discomfort. For months I hid those justifications under the veil of grey. I was connecting the lines, creating my own picture, but the scenes did not connect.

*White.* A slab of meat under inspection. Analysed, sliced, poked

under the fake fluorescent lights for any imperfection. Shine a torch and you'll still find his DNA. His skin still sits engrained under my fingernails, his smoke still burrows in my nostrils. Spread my legs and you'll find him. Open my mouth and you'll find him. Slice open my heart and it will bleed his name, his colour.

*Black.* Televisions are black. His parents were in the next room watching their television. I tried to focus on the sounds and play that scene behind my eyelids instead. A comedy show. I remember the laughing. The taunting, like they knew, like they were enjoying the free show. Encore, they would shout, unaware that I didn't have any more jokes scripted. I would stand on the stage. I would be the joke.

*Grey.* I don't remember him taking his clothes off. He was licking the back of my throat with his black tongue and then the lights and colour flash off. They flash back on and I am on my knees on the hard carpet. The confusion reigns. Did I take his clothes off. Did he take his clothes off. Why is he still wearing his socks. I cannot see or feel or grasp any inclination of what happened between those moments.

*Black.* I was wearing black. And then I wasn't. I remember he sat on the bed, inhaling the inches of skin I slowly uncovered. He told me to take my clothes off. And I did. Under his watchful gaze, I threw my hoodie off and sunk my pants to the ground. He looked at me and raised his eyebrows. The black bra floated softly to the ground. Slowly he said when I reached my undies. Afterwards I put them back on. Black seemed like the only fitting colour. Tainted. Stained. Dragged through the ashes head first.

*Red.* I used to fill the grey with other colours. Bright yellows and ocean blues. But red would always start to seep through, uncontained by the lighter colours I tried to paint over it. First it looked like the loving red. The red desire shared between two consenting adults during their intimate moments. But then it would start to grow darker, ooze blood over the canvas. That was when I began to realise. This canvas is not the red of Valentine's Day cards or rose petals. This is the red of anger. The red of primal, animal lust. But then I would paint over the red with the grey and leave it there.



Grey is better than facing the truth of what colour the red really was.

*Grey.* But now the grey is gone. And all that remains is the dark red scattered amongst the browns, greens, whites. I know what colour the red is.

# Melanie Allison

## 42 Degrees

the air in your lungs  
is stuck  
to the charred hand  
of a thousand  
lost memories  
    I'm okay

you're tied  
in a knot  
    doused  
        in gasoline

swallow Clorox  
    spew  
        into a  
            5 dollar  
            bucket

blanket eyelids  
    breath taste  
    of silver ash  
crushed Ibuprofen

saltwater scalds  
    fingertips  
dries throat to  
    gritted sand

construction nail  
hooked in ribs  
pinched heart  
can you breathe?

don't cry  
I know the walls  
are too white  
and the floors  
smell of aloe vera

It's impossible to  
accept someone  
as memory

*you're at 42 degrees, kid*

## Someone Else

you're  
a 1950's movie  
cobalt eyes  
cat smile  
matched with a  
blues brothers shirt

you  
can't see why  
i scream into my pillow  
and pour tears into  
your chest

*tell me where it hurts, baby*

i see  
my sister's head  
smashed against the corner of a  
diamond swimming pool

maple syrup blood  
in a chlorine ocean  
i see  
a demon  
that tastes of  
green apples  
and winfield rum

i feel  
nicotine fingers  
grasp my breasts

*tell me where it hurts, baby*

there's a scythe stuck  
in the cavity of my chest

iron needles  
pierce my cortex

*it hurts, baby*

i dream  
of a yellow lighter  
devouring  
a two-bed  
that was once  
my home

*you've got no reason*

*to cry.*

# Nida Fiazi

## Collateral

their jet-fueled fists  
shatter my grandfather's brittle bones  
on his way to the mosque  
to pray for the daughter he lost  
on September 11

steel blades rip  
my father's beard  
sever ties with  
generations of men  
he is no longer  
the enemy

my mother's blood turns to ice  
as their claws  
tear at the scarf  
on her head

white schoolchildren  
hurl insults like needles  
into the spines of brown kids  
*Terrorist.*  
*Bin Laden's granddaughter.*  
*Go back to where you came from.*

notice the way they echo  
the hatred of their parents

fabric whispers in protest  
as it slips through unsteady fingers  
male and female  
Muslim and Sikh  
fold their identities  
place them in a wooden chest  
at the back of the closet

Deah and Yusor  
foreheads touching  
eyes closed  
lost within empty gazes  
executed  
shot  
in their two-bed  
stacked with unpacked boxes  
by their white neighbour  
who wanted to play God

headlines after terrorist attacks  
if the perpetrator is white  
*Lone Wolf*  
*Disturbed*  
*Patriot*  
but  
*Violent*  
*Muslim*  
*Terrorist*  
if the perpetrator is brown

you receive a letter in the mail  
unassuming black ink on ivory  
titled PUNISH A MUSLIM DAY  
*they have hurt you*  
*they have made your loved ones suffer*

*what are you going to do about it?*  
*50 points to throw acid on a Muslim*  
*200 points to torture a Muslim*  
*with electrocution*  
*skinning*  
*a rack*

these are the victims of 9/11  
attacked  
first by terrorists  
then by bigots

2,996 people died on September 11

hundreds  
of thousands  
have been paying for it since.



# Rachael Elliott

## Junk Store Girl

The back room smells of  
Pledge and regret.  
Cabinets hang without their  
glass  
finishes marred  
by 2cent stickers  
covered in black ink  
to mark their worth

The shop has clothes  
from 94 different houses  
bringing 94 different dusts  
and the skin from  
countless others  
hiding in the seams.  
Each garment  
is a story that no one will hear  
but you can smell them if you  
lean close and breathe quietly.

They waft in, bags  
tied with knots  
bags split  
bags flow over  
clothes drip from the bins  
try to slip their secrets  
but people stuff  
shove  
smash them in.

I bought a denim jacket once  
with a stitched on label  
and artful rippings.  
There was \$20 and an empty  
plastic baggie in the  
inside pocket.

No one asked her story.

I loaded my car with Grandma's  
white woollen jacket  
and her basket of silk scarves.  
I wanted her stories for myself  
but they would not tell.

My lover wears  
chatty clothes with  
neck stained collars  
He makes their stories his own.

He quit me  
to live there with them  
in the past.

The only heartbeat I hear  
is the one that slips beneath  
the music  
from the shadow box.

My toes are on the edge.  
Today I bought  
a handmade purple dress  
tailored to my form.  
I wondered if a mother loved her daughter  
and made it herself  
I wondered if it had commission.  
I wondered if the girl who gave it up  
was quit too.

The only thing you ever brought me  
was a necklace from the rubbish pit  
where you scavenge people's pasts.  
It quit someone to find me  
swing from my neck  
tangle in my hair

My clothes wear someone else  
and hide their stories in me until I am  
filled with black lettered clicking.



and try to fill it with beer

They are coping

They are coping

The men, stained with orange street lights

buy women

to weep in

to cover in pearls and black stretch satin

with arms to wrap their teeth around

shrug off

shun

The men burn the night

against the steel doorframe

with cricket eyes

smoke rising from their fingers

This woman is first aid saline

dripping

she removes her hands

to prevent accidental touching

She is spectacular in last night's make up

black rings cover the bruise to follow

The woman waits behind an orange pillow

cradled to her chest

to prevent coughing

and tries to forestall leakage

The woman is frivolous with silence

and baking

she downloads rejection

one card at a time

her ipod is smashed

the night paints itself over her eye

The woman breathes nerve electric

she is memorable in feathers

She takes her lips and nails to bed

pinkblue

She is coping

She is coping

The woman does not murmur lullabies

or accept cut flowers  
Her selves fight each other  
in a paddling pool mirror  
The woman knows what it is to cross                    last  
she knows what it is to bleed,    blue shadows  
She expects it

She is coping  
                  She is coping

The woman belongs to no one  
unmarked by gold  
she creaks backward on the swing seat  
nauseas  
The woman sighs pinecones  
and a man burns them for kindling

She sings knitted melodies  
he gathers kindling  
                  splits nails  
The woman inserts garlic into a lamb's leg  
                  the man picks the meat from the bone.

She's alone.  
The man sweats through last night's sheets  
                  The woman pushes scrambled eggs around a plate  
she pours vodka and glitter into her mouth  
                  and pants

He's alone.  
The woman sweats through last night's sheets  
                  he brings her warm towels  
drives home  
breathing addresses out the window  
                  she re-reads old letters  
he salts her dinner  
                  limes her glass  
he kisses her beneath her eye  
her forehead  
her ear  
he kisses her hair

billowing through his fingers  
she kisses his mouth  
his thumb  
    his fear.

They are burning.

They are burning.

## Hunting

My hands covered you like the dark  
stuck fast along the length  
of our fingers.  
Your feathers fell to one side,  
stirred with my breathing.  
I felt the map of your wrist  
touch mine  
lines sinking into each other  
like dust into crevices  
why can't I look at you?  
I followed your folded future hand  
along the dunes  
dodging gorse, thistles, brown glass shards  
I laid myself down  
with them and your kisses  
as a covering.  
Your eyes reflected the moon.  
I couldn't touch you  
as you filled me with the gush of sky  
as if it was shot  
and laid its head  
beside yours  
on my shoulder  
But I licked the rain from your face.  
I was a shell  
buried in your foot  
and you needed me there  
as we staggered



though water that fell and hissed in the sand.  
Why don't you need me now?  
As the thunder buries itself in the sky  
the rain becomes your hands  
but the ground does not move beneath me.  
You are gone.  
You do not light  
the room  
with your messages.  
You do not call.  
You do not spread  
a layer of yourself  
along the back of the seat  
to slide into my hair.  
I find flecks of you on my clothing  
and in the creases of my mouth  
you taste of active yeast  
burnt THC  
and disappointment  
But you are not here.  
My body is alone  
unpeeled from itself  
flapping like a wounded bird.  
Shoot me until I am still.  
Breathing the memory of you  
undoes me like  
a shoe  
slipped on and off  
one time  
too many.

# A. Lorraine

## Don't Fucking Write About Me

8

*I just want you to know  
When that bitch told me she was pregnant  
My fist struck her stomach  
I spent the night on a steel bench  
Surrounded by metal bars  
It would have been worth it  
If your cells had given up  
Turned to blood  
And poured out of her*

11

*How fucking dare you  
Pass the fork prongs up  
They could have gone through my neck  
Accidental tracheotomy  
If you don't shut the hell up  
I'll stab it through yours*

13

*I'd give you some condoms  
But you're a slut like your mother  
You wouldn't use them anyway  
Open your legs, honey*

*It's the only way men will love you*

**16**

*You are not my daughter*

*You're a disease*

*The herpes of children*

*Dog shit stuck to my sneakers*

*I should have killed you sixteen years ago*

*So then I'd never have to look at you*

**21**

*Don't fucking write about me*

*Or better yet, do*

*Let memories pour over your laptop like blood*

*So when your fingers stick to the keys*

*You're reminded that no matter how old you get*

*I will always be your father*

*And I will always own you*

*Pray you don't get published, girl*

*If I ever read your name in print*

*I'll show you just how much*

*Slashed veins can run like ink*

# Jane Matthews

## The Game of Life

*Fuck. Denim always shrinks when it's wet.*

Dan peeled his cold jeans down his legs with weak and shaking hands. His thighs and penis pale and wrinkled into fine lines as if he'd been in the bath too long.

The smell of caffeinated urine closed his throat.

He dropped his pants onto a pile of old pizza boxes and stepped across the hall to the bathroom.

He squinted at himself in the bright lights over the mirror—the pasty skin, the dark shadows around his bloodshot eyes, the stubble.

He was a winner though. Alexi and Justis were right on his tail all night. He'd snuck down corridors, around corners where lurking fiends jumped out with guns and nunchucks, he'd ducked ninja stars, jumped rolling barrels, cut his way out of falling nets and dived under flamethrowers. He was exhausted.

Justis should be better at that stuff than him. Justis was waiting on death row. He hadn't said what he'd done. U.S. penitentiaries had pretty sophisticated censor spyware. But Dan looked up his case online. *The Roanoke Tribune*.

Some letters to the editor said the death penalty was a good idea. Get rid of that scum, costing the taxpayer to keep them alive. An eye for an eye and all that. But when they chatted online sometimes, he was just another person.

Seems Justis was a trucker out of Philadelphia. Lost a lot on poker. Had the occasional toke. No previous.

Then the cops found the eyes. Floating in a jar above the sink like two jellyfish.

# Vaughan Rapatahana

## te hokinga ki te kainga

came back to catch  
my life cast into a bus te d  
casket:  
a black plastic trash sack  
dis member ed & discarded  
in the back-shed;  
itself over cast  
by stray *paewhenua* & *tawao*.

scraps of our past s p l a y i n g o u t  
onto  
that cra cke d cement:  
rusted keychains/useless gimmicks from dis c o n t i n u e d journals/  
fuscous photographs from a former life:  
a brick-a-brack filigree t r a c i n g our diremption.

under a doomed lightbulb,  
my rheumy fingers tasted free-sample arthritis gel –  
long since expired –  
blindly caressed crippled wristwatches  
& bygone birthday cards from our kids;

the cache of demode trinkets  
a measure of my own neurotic agenda;  
an absurd autistic panoply;  
and yet,  
m o r e than this

,



## Rangiaowhia, 1864

[I pāhuatia ō mātou tūpuna i Rangiaowhia – our ancestors were killed unguarded and defenceless at Rangiaowhia. – Tom Roa, 2014].

ko wai e mōhio mo ngā whakapiko o Rangiaowhia?  
kāore te maha ki tēnei whenua ināianei.  
ko wai e mahara ngā tamariki mura  
kāore te maha o tēnei rohe.  
ko wai e whakapono te kupu o ngā mōrehu?  
ko he tokoiti anake o ngā iwi kei mōwaho tēnā tāone.

Auē.

Auē.

Auē.

ki ngā hāhi hoki,  
ki ngā hāhi hoki,  
te wāhi puaroa; te wāhi whakaruruhau –  
tēnei rīri whakamataku o ngā pākehā.  
tēnei tārukenga nā ngā tāngata mā.

kia mōhio ki tātou katoa.

## Rangiaowhia, 1864

*Translation from te reo Māori to English*

who knows about the murders at Rangiaowhia?  
not the majority in this country nowadays.  
who remembers the burned children?  
not the majority in this district.  
who believes the word of the survivors?  
only a minority of people outside that town.

alas  
    alas  
        alas.

in the churches also  
in the churches also.  
the sacred place, the safe place –  
this terrible deed of the pākehā  
this massacre by the white men.

let us all know.



[Note: At dawn on February 21, 1864, armed cavalry, followed by foot troops, charged into the settlement of Rangiaowhia, whose terrified, startled and screaming residents ran for their lives in every direction... Rangiaowhia was a place of refuge for women, children and the elderly. It was an open village, lacking fortifications or defences of its own... For the Kingitanga supporters urged to fight in a “civilised” manner, just like the British, the assault on Rangiaowhia was an almost incomprehensible act of savagery. They had complied with requests to move their families out of harm’s way, only for the troops, to deliberately target them in the most horrific manner possible. – Vincent O’Malley, 2017].

**reckon it is time**

reckon it is time  
for a new poem.

not some l o n g w i n d e d agony aunt  
expostulation concerning lost loves.  
nor any political scything.  
about iwi demise  
through the flaccid field of ignorance.

koha the world something instead –  
to harass their heads  
for years to come;  
some sharp barbed verse  
that screws your eyes up every time you scan it,  
that bites you hard in the bum  
every time you search for succour.

forget the tropes, the tripe,  
the silly pedantry about ‘how’ to write a poem  
that some zombie prattle & preach.  
concentrate on the pulse beat, the blood spurt,  
the sheer evisceration  
as some fishhook line disinters you  
years before your grave.

& gush your epiphany:  
‘fuck, that’s what a poem must do’,  
as you then kiss your lover full on the lips –  
meaning it this time.



## Contributors' Notes

**Dr Tracey Slaughter** lectures in Creative Writing in the English Programme at the University of Waikato. Her work has won numerous awards including the 2010 Louis Johnson New Writers Bursary and the 2004 BNZ Katherine Mansfield Award. Her second collection of poetry and short stories, *deleted scenes for lovers*, was published in 2017 by VUP.

**Rebecca Tegan** hasn't left the house in days because she is scared of people and being watched by ducks. Currently she's eating olives in bed. Mixed colours drowned in oil, lemon and herbs. She never cooks and spends too much time selecting deli meats while ordering her groceries online.

**Carin Smeaton** lives in Tāmaki Makaurau with her children Yuga and Kazma. Her first book *Tales of the Waihorotiu* was published in 2017 by Titus.

**Conor Maxwell** is the Taylor Swift of poetry: he's tall, gorgeous, divisive, and gets all his best material from recent break-ups.

**Joy Holley** is currently studying English, Philosophy and Creative Writing at Victoria University. Her writing has also appeared in *Starling*, *The Spin Off*, *Brief* and *Headland*.

**Mere Taito** is a student of WRITE202 Sem B 2018 and loving it.

**Luana Leupolu** graduated from the University of Waikato in 2017 with a degree in classical violin. She is originally from Otahuhu, Auckland, and lists music and writing as her two main life interests.

**Loren Thomas** is a Waikato University graduate, poet, and photographer, previously published in *Mayhem*, *Poetry New Zealand*, and collaboratively with essa ranapiri and Aimee Jane Anderson O'Connor in *Starling*.

**D.A. Taylor** is an editor, copywriter, and graduate of Tracey Slaughter and Catherine Chidgey's writing programme at the University of Waikato.

**Mark Prisco**: I'm a Masters student, & a tutor of Creative Writing.

**Tania Collins**: Currently completing a Master of Arts, I enjoy all things Shakespeare, vinyl records and used bookshops.

True to her namesake, **Lillith Fontaine** embodies the night, the emotional and spiritual aspects of darkness; sensuality and unbridled freedom. Inspired by the magic of words she is a believer that they can unlock universal truth. She writes poetry based on reality and fantasy while balancing a blessed life of full time work, travel, the quintessential companion cat and feverish erratic writing.

**Rebecca Hawkes** is a Wellington-based painter and writer, originally from rural Canterbury. Rebecca's poems have also found homes in *Landfall*, *Starling*, *Sweet Mammalian*, *Mayhem*, *Mimicry*, and elsewhere. More of her work can be found at [rebeccahawkesart.com](http://rebeccahawkesart.com).

**Eefa Yasir Jauhary** is a lover of all things feminine and the color pink. A poet since young and hopefully a published author in the future, she spends most of her time indulging in pop culture, writing or watching tennis.

**essa may ranapiri** (Ngāti Raukawa | takatāpui; they/them/theirs) is a poet from Kirikiriroa, Aotearoa / they have words in *Mayhem*, *Poetry NZ*, *Brief*, *Starling*, *THEM* and *POETRY Magazine* / their first book of poetry is expected in 2019 from VUP / they will write until they're dead

**Therese Lloyd** is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *Other Animals* (VUP, 2013) and *The Facts* (VUP, 2018). In 2017 she completed at doctorate at Victoria University focusing on ekphrasis: poetry about or inspired by visual art. This year she has had the pleasure of being the University of Waikato Writer in Residence.

**Dani Yourukova** is a queer Wellington-based creative, currently studying English Literature at Victoria University. They experienced a belated poetic awakening in a broken elevator this year, and have been putting their Classics degree to work on a folk-lore inspired poetry collection ever since.

Life takes a lot out of **Celine Kayo**, but she likes to think she takes a lot of life too. She's known for always getting her eyeliner even and for being a bit of an oxymoron (but mostly moron). She has previously appeared in *Re-Draft*.

**Renée Boyer** is a Comms manager by day, creative writer at night (and occasionally lunchtime). Her 10-minute plays have been performed all over the world, with the most recent premiering in Hollywood. She is currently attempting to write a novel, as part of the Master of Professional Writing.

**Wanda Barker.** Poems and stories published, nineties, early 2000s.  
Creative Writing Vic. pre IIML.

Poetry novella. *All Her Dark Pretty Thoughts*. 2017. Meniscus Vol 5. 2017.

My mother is a lost envelope.

*Poetry NZ* A fine line, May 2018 Spells. *Poetry NZ*. A fine line, spring, 4 poems, featured poet.

My name is **Sigred Yamit** and my poems have appeared in *Printable Reality* and *Poetry New Zealand*. In my spare time I watch puppy videos, write poetry, and dream of being a film connoisseur.

**Joanne Tasker:** I am a law student with a passion for reading and writing.

**Terry Moyle** is an artist, author and poet. He is currently writing his fourth book, a revisionist history of the Walsh Family who in 1911 undertook the first successful aeroplane flights in New Zealand. He graduated from the University of Waikato with an MA (Hons) in English literature.

**Jo Buer** is a writer, teacher, choc-oholic, dreamer. This is her fourth story published by *Mayhem*.

**Nina McCullagh** grew up in Hamilton and lives in Wellington. She works in marketing & communications by day and is a poet in the notes app of her phone.

**Dadon Rowell** is a poet and English master's student at the University of Waikato. She is also a part-time librarian, and has learnt that saying her thesis topic and job title make her dynamite at parties.

**Bronwyn Laundry** graduated from Waikato last year with a BA in English and History after a three year-long love affair on the *Nexus* editorial team. She now spends her days at an agency desk, thinking of ways to make ad copy more poetic.

**Maria-Teresa Corino** has been an under-age winery guide, flight attendant, broadcaster, researcher, food writer, and almost a lawyer. She is writing a novel based on the history of chocolate as a creative writing thesis towards the University of Waikato's's Master of Professional Writing.

**Harvey Aughton:** I am an Anthropology student at Waikato University. I was born in England, then grew up in Hamilton. I have been writing while being an outdoor instructor and now I am gingerly taking it more seriously. I have been published previously in *Takehe Magazine* and the *Shot Glass Journal*.

**Zoë Higgins** works in theatre and lives in Pōneke. Her writing has been published in *STARLING*, *Chameleon*, *Salient*, and *Aotearotica*.

**Toni Wi** is a recent Master's graduate of the University of Canterbury with an interest in science and policy. She is an avid reader, and spent a year studying English at Waikato University. She is part of the Hagley Writer's Institute in Christchurch, where she is working on a novel.

**Anuja Mitra** is a university student. Her work was featured in the National Library exhibition "The Next Word: Contemporary New Zealand Poetry" and can also be found in *Signals*, *Starling* and *Sweet Mammalian*. She is co-founder of the new online literary magazine *Oscen* at [oscen.co](http://oscen.co).

**Melanie Allison** is a writer of creative non-fiction, studying Theatre and English at the University of Waikato. Her partner wrote this bio so she would sooner assist him with making a cheesecake.

**Nida Fiazi** is second-year student at the University of Waikato. She is a Muslim, Afghan and a former refugee who, as a bibliophile, strongly advocates for more representation of the aforementioned labels in literature. If no one else will do it, Nida is up for the challenge.

**Rachael Elliott** has a Masters in creative writing, and has previously edited *Nexus* magazine. Her work has appeared in *4th Floor*, *JAAM*, *Poetry New Zealand* and previous issues of *Mayhem*. She is currently recovering from an epic case of writer's block in Hamilton.

**Ashley Lorraine** is an English teacher who has bookshelves in her living room lined with leather-bound copies of classic literature. Her kindle, however, is filled with only the trashiest of romance novels.

**Jane Matthews** is a perennial student who loves words.

**Vaughan Rapatahana** is fortunate to have been published widely internationally: his latest collection of poems, *L'homme blanc est venu*, was published – in French – in July, 2018.