

# a fine line

New Zealand Poetry Society Magazine  
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

Student  
Edition



Winter  
2022

FEATURED STUDENT POET • ELIZABETH AYREY  
FEATURED STUDENT ARTICLE • PIPPI JEAN  
NEW BOOK FEATURE • CADENCE CHUNG  
COVER ART • REBECCA HAWKES

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The Magazine of the  
New Zealand Poetry Society  
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

ISSN 1177-6544 (print)  
ISSN 1178-3931 (digital)

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#### *Quotation of the season*

“Listen to these young poets and you'll discover the voice of the present and hear the voice of the future before the future is even here.”

– Philip Levine

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**Cover Art** “Twice as many stars as usual” Rebecca Hawkes

**Contributing Art** Mercedes Webb-Pullman, Lesley Evans



## GAIL INGRAM

Special (adj): Better, greater or otherwise different from what is usual. This is the student feature, where you find talent by the teenage bucketful alongside the experience of member poets like **Rachel McAlpine, Jeni Curtis, Piers Davies, Sue Courtney** and **Debbie Strange**. Welcome to the winter special edition.

Our featured poet **Elizabeth Ayrey** is *seventeen* and writes with the accomplishment and intelligence of a poet twice her age. She is the winner of an annual subscription to NZPS and NZSA, plus \$100 in book vouchers. Join her as



*Selfie by Lesley Evans*

she searches for meaning in mythology, and creates her own. Our featured article writer **Pippi Jean**, nineteen, studies the poems of three of her peers to discover why she writes poetry in the age where souls are uploaded. **Cadence Chung**, another prodigious youth talent, has already had her first chapbook published – *anomalia* – and it's easy to see why when she writes about her inspiration and shares one of her poems in our First Book feature.

If this ain't talent enough, **Rebecca Hawkes**, young poet, editor and artist shares her glorious art on the cover. An equally magnificent piece graces the cover of our [Spotlight on Student Poetry 2022](#), a special supplement to the winter edition featuring the shortlisted poems for the Student Poet Feature. Share it, and enjoy.

And this is not all – **SJ Mannion** reviews 2022 NZ Book Award winner *tumble* by **Joanna Preston**, and NZPS president **Shane Hollands** gives his annual address.

Shane's address was well-received at our AGM in June, as was the smart and sassy reading by **Chris Tse**. Thank you to the NZPS board, volunteers and all who came – you make us stand out from the crowd. Sadly, **Lily Holloway** has left us as Reviews and Editorial Assistant to take up a fully-funded place in the Poetry MFA programme at Syracuse University – wow and congratulations, Lily! Thank you for your mahi in this role and previously in Social Media. Our new Reviews and Assistant Editor is a poet who will be well known to those of you who have organized events for National Poetry Day. **Erica Stretton** brings her many skills and poetry connections to our team and we welcome her warmly.

The theme for the spring edition will be 'bloom/pua'. Members, please send up to four poems (40 lines max) and up to four haiku in one Word doc or in the body of the email by 10 Sept 2022 to [editor@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@poetrysociety.org.nz). Thank you for your continued support of the NZPS, where mā te tuakana te teina e tōtika, mā te teina te tuakana e tōtika / the older will lead the younger and the younger will lead the older.

### ELIZABETH AYREY

#### Marakihau

My cousin used to tell me  
cloud-cast shadows on the lake  
were taniwha.

When I reach the shoreline  
their shapes have disappeared  
in the shade of a cliff  
and the sun has slid north again;  
it is a dry winter.

I knew a woman who fell down a mountain.  
She doesn't remember my name  
but she remembers how to write a poem.  
She told me every time I finish one  
I get a terrible feeling that it was the last thing I'll ever write.  
It was summer, and I wished  
I could roll down a mountain into the sea.

I think as long as we are breathing  
there's more where that came from.  
Ideas flicker like whitebait until the river banks  
are bursting with them.

Or perhaps, if speaking is breathing  
then poetry is an attempt  
at being amphibious.  
Slice gills into your throat,  
let your lungs fill with water.  
But do not let them silence you.

One day, I hope  
my corpse will wash up on a Russian beach  
as a deep-sea leviathan.  
They will cut open my stomach,  
find a novel in verse  
and fourteen missing ships.  
If I cannot be the biggest fish  
I will be the dragon in the corner of their maps.



*Blue by Mercedes Webb-Pullman*

## **Homegrown Mythos**

Medusa is housebound again  
and her mind is being whittled  
from a broken window into a piece of sea glass.  
She can still see herself in it  
but the details are fuzzy: was it like this last year?  
Was it always a curse, o grey-eyed one?

The air is getting warmer  
and the house is stifling, but the jaunty blossoms  
are a taunt.  
She ambles from her lockdown strolls  
to the scales again. Naked,  
looking in a mirror and feeling transparent  
like a child in a bedsheet on Halloween.  
Or too solid, a stone gargoyle  
guarding cathedral gates.

Imagine thinking it were your final moments.  
Perhaps her mirror image blinked, perhaps  
she cried – but the tears  
that fell did not crystallise,  
they slid down her cheeks like honey.  
If only everyone was this immune,  
but that would put all the influencers  
out of business.

Here is the answer, then:  
behind her irises is not blood but ichor.  
This burst of confidence is ambrosia  
when spring is at its heaviest.

When she can go outside again  
she will learn from the sun,  
who shines as brightly as his core.

An earlier version of this poem was published in *ReDraft 2021*

## **Icarus, Dissected**

### 1. wings

*The boy began to delight in his daring flight,  
and abandoning his guide, drawn by desire  
for the heavens, soared higher.*

– Ovid

Ovid, we cannot rewrite this one.  
If we even had wings to begin with  
a fall is programmed  
into their every beat,  
into the parts of us that flare up and weep and burn.  
Maybe the sun is peaking in high school.

### 2. wax

*Survivors are interested  
in the representation of their own survival.*

– José Olivarez

Bruegel painted your fears.  
Are you crashing and burning  
if no one's around to hear it?  
Maybe the sun is the pedestal they put you on.

### 3. flesh

*I killed a plant once  
because I gave it too much water... Lord, I worry  
that love is violence.*

– José Olivarez

When you plummeted, the sun  
eclipsed himself in shame.  
He has known too much love before.  
That one ended in blood  
and flowers.  
Maybe the sun is holding on too tightly.

4. the fall

*We had already found a way to equate this failure with all other failures.*

— Sarah Kay

What kind of hero's journey ends in a fall?  
If we are clay  
then this is breaking the mould.  
It's time to come down.  
To plant our feet in the mud.  
Maybe the sun is 93 million miles away  
and our probes are burning up in its atmosphere.

5. the landing

*There is a bitter triumph in crashing when you should be soaring.*

— Fiona (via Tumblr)

Let's rewrite this to be a leap of faith.  
Maybe you'll hit the ground running.

## **Shear Heights**

Today she is a sheep  
scaling the Remarkables.  
Winter breathes down  
her neck, nips at her ears.

There's a chill  
seeping through her resolve.  
Wakatipu blooms below  
a deep blue bruise, a black hole  
yawning.

She tires from the frost grasses  
and the ice moons.  
She must climb higher to reach  
sun-licked peaks, a gust of hot air  
to carry her forwards.  
Her wool shivers  
with an ancestral memory of talons  
in her shoulders. Blood that runs warm.

She thinks of her cousins  
the Bighorn sheep: brittle horns curl  
from behind ears which are soft  
like hers, muscled mutton legs  
that end in little hooves like hers.  
They are meant to be here.

She thinks *I am meant to be here*  
but gravity proves her enemy.  
Her limbs begin to freeze.  
The crisp air stagnates.





between ‘the’ and ‘quiet’. The word ‘quiet’ also ends the second-to-last line, symmetrically framing the poem in its connotations.

### Off-peak

naïve of me to be surprised  
at the quiet.  
the time of year when the  
vacant bay-windowed flats  
sleep off their collective hangover  
and send snores of yearning down  
the street. sandfly bodies  
keep me company. they  
too wait for the day when

the city wakes up, yawns, stretches,

carries with it  
the lazy return back to  
what was once,  
what was here before the quiet,  
like chasing a dream barely remembered.

— Hannah Marshall, *Salient Magazine* (2022)

In keeping with its quietness, the poem is conscious of embellishment, of exaggeration. The poet is almost absent from her observations. The atmosphere of a place is its own creature entirely, as “vacant bay windowed flats / sleep off their collective hangover” and “the city wakes up, yawns, stretches...” No word is decorative. There are no interruptions, no interpolations. Everything builds toward the clarity of a single image – the essence of silence, and of waiting.

By contrast, I go to Cadence Chung’s work for a multiplicity of image. I first read one of her poems in a music room at high school, and reading her writing still has that surround-sound to me, all the other noise, clash and bang and muted cymbal, going on through the walls. Cadence’s poetry seems to me to come from

every direction. Often experimenting with formatting as punctuation, her poems construct a vivid, elaborate context for the reader to move through.

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‘...her writing still has that surround-sound to me, all the other noise, clash and bang and muted cymbal, going on through the walls.’

---

So I go to Cadence’s poetry to be immersed in the world-building of it, the environment of it. One poem I think does this particularly well is “I am smaller than this summer night” (*eel mag*, 2022). The poem’s freedom of form is its driving force, as the motif ‘I am smaller than’ rushes through an opulent world of ‘white-hot snowflakes’ and ‘wild blackberries’, changed to “I am bigger than” and finally to “I change the world”. The ‘I’ is almost moved to itself by poetry, accepting some identifications and rejecting others, comparing itself to facets of the world inside the poem, and morphing into different figures as the poem runs it through.

### **i am smaller than this summer night**

i am smaller than this summer night smaller  
than a wisp of lace fallen from a ballgown  
smaller than a fluorescent teal pinhead that  
pricks the white spidery first layer of skin  
small enough to be forgotten at a party small  
enough to disappear into the reverb or the  
white-hot snowflakes that fall from the fire like  
fallen angels like sin like burning like burning  
up like fever i fall to the ground ripe and  
unused like the wild blackberries outside the  
window each dark speck of flesh an uncut gem  
all the blackbirds crush them to nothing with  
their orange beaks and unfocused eyes the  
world is changing and it has changed because  
of me i can fold a sheet i can pick a flower i  
can plant a seed and watch pink-and-white  
poppies grow there because of me i am bigger

than some things i am bigger than the  
blackberries and that's why i eat them all the  
smaller things get eaten by bigger mouths i am  
bad at goodbyes but it's not like anyone is  
good at them anyway i am bad at many things  
because i make myself too small and too meek  
bow my head too much let leering eyes see the  
bone-white parting in my hair where the scalp  
shows through i am insignificant in this world i  
am a god and can do anything i don't make any  
difference i change the world every day i am a  
beacon of knowledge i know nothing i know  
nothing and i know this about myself

— Cadence Chung, *eel mag* (2022)

While making comprehensive its contradictions,  
the run-on sentence structure also makes for a  
sense of breathlessness, of speed and energy and  
force. Even repetitions such as 'like burning like  
burning up like fever' escalate as they elaborate.

It's no surprise the poem was later converted to  
song in Cadence's musical *In Blind Faith*,  
because it reads with the pace of a show number,  
with a host of voices holding the stage from  
open to close.

---

**'You begin with an idea you return  
to at the end. I picture it like going  
on a walk, because the poet takes  
you with her, steps you through  
each scene as it follows through to  
the next...'**

---

I first read Maia Armistead's poetry when I was  
sixteen and the first thing I read in it was her  
voice. When I read her poetry, I keep asking –  
what about her voice keeps coming back to me?  
Because it keeps coming back – her poems are  
cyclic, musical, audible, precise enough to  
mistake for your own stream of consciousness.  
Sometimes it's not even the words but the  
rhythm of thought that stays, easing over lines,

saying as much in its pacing of pauses, white  
space and line breaks, as words.

In Maia's writing, timing is everything. You  
begin with an idea you return to at the end. I  
picture it like going on a walk, because the poet  
takes you with her, steps you through each scene  
as it follows through to the next, so that the  
connection between things becomes as  
important as the detail. Nothing stands in  
isolation. Everything is revisited. In "The Year  
I Spent In My Room Studying Repetition" (*the  
Spinoff*, 2022) repetition is a refrain that links  
the threads of past, present and future, with  
phrases like 'I would've / I would've' running  
parallel to 'when will I / when will I'.

### **The Year I Spent In My Room Studying Repetition**

Once I was small enough to fit  
In the kitchen sink. Lately I have  
Been holding onto this thought. I have  
Been holding onto it like water  
And looking on it like a photograph,  
Remembering where I was just outside it.  
The thought is an empty space that echoes  
With everything it ever held. It's like  
Realising you never considered what  
You wanted until presented with  
The question.

Once I was small enough to fit  
In the kitchen sink. Did I outgrow it  
One day, suddenly? As a child my Dad  
Could sense sugar levels. I was never  
So good at that, but I could deal cards  
Faster than anyone. I could be quiet  
For hours. I am always learning  
These facts in hindsight. I am always  
Leaving everything a little too late.  
If I had been a little better, a little older,  
I would've made you a coffee.  
I would've caught you a fish.

I would've spread those silks on the floor,  
Those blues and greens of countryside.

I have spent my life growing and  
Waiting to feel that opulence, that  
Abundance again. Waiting to  
Pull something out of my sleeve  
To give rather than steal, to feel  
Something and say it rather than  
Holding it in the drawer with the silks  
And all those evil thoughts about how  
Some people get hurt without you ever  
Even knowing it at all.

The year I spent in my room  
Studying repetition was a bird  
Scratching on the wall, always  
Telling me to be worse. The year  
Was an evening walk with all  
The windows in the houses lit up.  
It was us standing judgemental in  
The corner, faking proximity. Repetition  
Is really obsession. It's butterflies  
Everywhere. It's this house  
Where the past and present are  
Repeating all at once.

How do I ask to be told everything  
That has ever been hidden from me?  
How do I retrieve everything  
Ever taken from me? That smallness  
and all simplicity. When  
Will I make the art that I promised?  
When will I fit in the kitchen sink,  
And raise the dead, and bring all  
The butterflies back? I am studying  
Repetition which is really asking  
How to become okay with all of this.

— Maia Armistead, *The Friday Poem: the Spinoff* (2022)

Her free-verse style continues over three or four lines, then stops. It's a talking rhythm. Full stops stylise the pace, regulating it. This movement between conversational enjambment and full stops reads as a balancing act between openness and restraint. In this poem, it makes the reader slow down, take notice, especially where it varies, such as the release of thought over eight lines in the third stanza, or the sense of mantra in the final stanza, with every separate thought

repeating in short questions. No matter the differences between Maia's poems, her voice is unmistakable.

That's one of the things I think is important about poetry. Even as our generation becomes one of the first to have our whole lives, like, audibly, digitally recorded, I think it becomes important to record how you sounded, how you actually sounded. The shape of your words in you – the shape of the world in you, too, the ways it got in through.

---

**'I feel like there's maybe an expectation for teenage poetry to be overflowing with feeling, but something I noticed in all these poems was *reserve*...'**

---

With poets my age I admire, I can almost find similarities between the recordings of our voices. I feel like there's maybe an expectation for teenage poetry to be overflowing with feeling, but something that I noticed in all these poems was *reserve* – conditional but not confessional, not referencing person or pronoun or place but invested in particulars, ever aware of how a poem is delivered and shared. How do you remember what you remember? What do you want to be remembered about how you live now? It's questions like these, and poets like these three, that keep me writing.



### RACHEL MCALPINE

#### The dancing body

I am a wrinkled apple  
with an equator girdling  
what used to be a waist.

Yet I am allowed to dance  
my darlings.  
Turn away if you must.

My upper half is crumpled  
but it works. Watch it stretch  
and bend and flick and flow –  
watch it go!

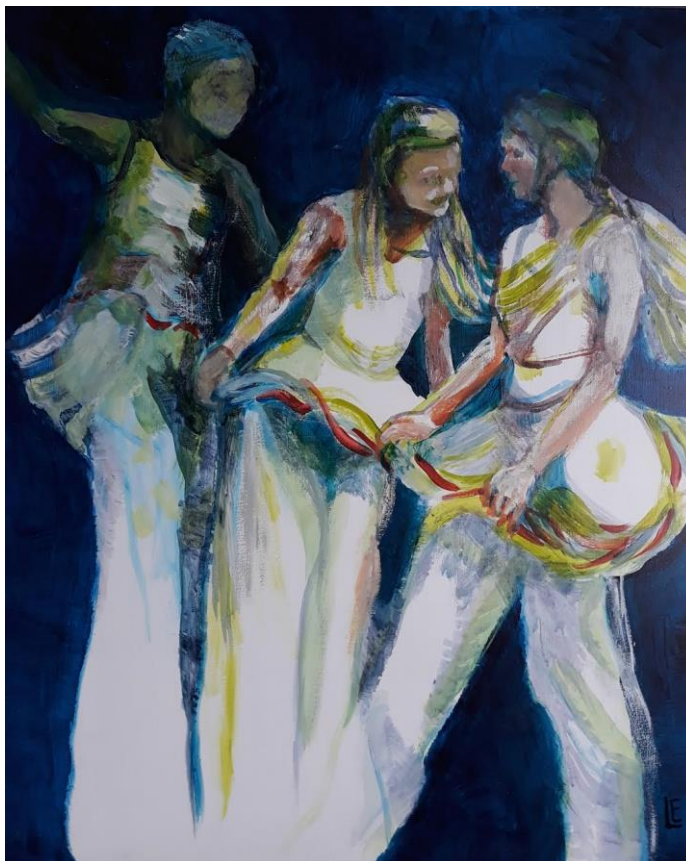
Down in the Southern Hemisphere  
a committee intermittent  
struggles to keep control.

A single pain commutes  
from knee to arch of foot  
to hip.

Warnings from the North Pole  
travel slow in Morse code  
and get diverted on the way.

The Southern body will not  
bend or flip. It's all locked in  
like old Gondwanaland.

It's not quite anarchy  
here in the dancing body  
more a quiet disagreement  
with the plan.



*Stilt Dancing by Lesley Evans*



**The like of me**

I want to like all of me  
not only the me in slippers now  
but the me in a weeping Honda  
in a different century

I want to like all of me  
not just the sensible me  
but the dumb and desperate  
messed-up me

It's easy to like the presentable me  
the on-to-it over-it into-it me  
who scrubs up well and brazenly  
dares to be nice  
and offer advice  
for free

I want to forgive that me  
who did her best but did it wrong  
and now can only sing the song  
of a sorry sorry sorry she

I want to start liking the me  
who wasn't me  
who was only a hint of the like of me

I want to forgive the historical me  
kiss her better  
set her free

carry her safe in a pocket  
and let her see  
a world that survived regardless  
even some who are able to love  
the grown-up me

and would (if she'd only agree)  
let her sleep  
and let her be.

## PIERS DAVIES

### **Amuse Bouche**

My watch stops  
just before midnight  
no significance  
it's been losing time all day  
I am stranded  
in a zone of dreams  
a smorgasbord of images  
all culinary all edible  
but without taste  
I rush from plate to plate  
sampling:  
white chocolate love apples  
marzipan Easter eggs  
wildly coloured candied fruit  
and morbidly obese pomegranates  
always hoping for pleasure  
always disappointed  
there is no substance only appearance  
I remain in a void of suspended animation  
deprived of feeling and  
unable to measure the movement of time.

## MICHAEL GOULD

### **Fear of Feathers**

Some sounds of birds (unseen but heard)  
may confound those with no sense of the absurd:  
take the duck whose quack could bring on a heart attack  
in the timid or the meek; it's no mere squeak  
this shrill squawk could lead a paranoid to think he's being mocked.  
Or take the gull whose cry sounds like a human about to die.

How more preferable the pigeon's cooing and purring, so comforting  
I find myself concurring: life is good.

*Landfall* 233 (Autumn, 2017)

## LINCOLN JAQUES

### Clint Rides into Tāmaki Makaurau

In Sergio Leone's classic  
a stranger (Clint) rides  
into the pueblo on a mule  
stops at a waterhole  
raises ladle of cool water to lips  
a small boy all in white  
like a discarded cherub  
climbers into a window  
gets chased out by a villano  
gun firing into the dirt  
at the angel's ankles.

Here in Auckland  
The Pacific wild west  
we had our villains  
and our strangers  
and everything  
from those lawless  
days are now squeezed  
into cupcake residuals of Empire.

They are shooting  
at us in the suburbs  
they are dragging us  
from our comfort zones  
they are revealing  
our souls in dark alleyways  
they are shortening our memories  
we have shrunk, we have withdrawn  
we pay wave our lives in syringes  
we give blood samples  
we offer all our fluids.

The Pandemic rode into  
Tāmaki Makaurau  
we raised the last ladle  
of cool water to our lips.

I forgot to mention  
Clint passing under  
the hangman's swinging  
noose the church bell  
ringing and everyone  
running for cover.

### Remembering Lena Zhang Harrap

We've forgotten about her  
already. The bouquets all  
blown away by the winds of fear.

She saw the world differently, she  
would have looked upon the trees  
as her friends, the maunga her shelter

from an unaccepting world. I  
think of her strolling through the light  
on that early morning, the sun her only companion

the kākā and the tui looking down from their  
high branches; the ruru's eyes closing. The  
pīwakawaka pecking tenderly at her hair.

Somewhere up ahead a car door slowly opening.

The butter-yellow flowers of the kōwhai  
still make an outline of her body  
where each morning the sun warms

the whenua, the breeze coming like a  
final breath. The walkway is her  
memorial; the canopy of trees a

sighing of regret. Often I walk  
where she walked, gazing back  
down the darkened path, thinking

of all our wrong turns.

## GILLIAN CANDLER

### Wave

sea  
surges  
builds up  
to a towering  
mountain of water  
until at its highest peak  
the wave is like green glass  
rimmed with frothy white-caps  
it cannot hold, gravity demands  
that it will topple, curling over  
into a perfect forward roll  
it plunges            falls  
crashes  
splashes  
foams  
up the  
beach  
until  
that  
is  
it

## JENI CURTIS

### octopus colours

her mother would send her to the shore  
*get seaweed for the garden shellfish  
and wild figs take the wicker basket*

mothers provide teach how to make  
do milk goats for cheese  
mend torn garments

in the shallows under the water  
stones shine rippled as agate polished  
as amber ochre umber apricot

the octopus watches her motionless  
tentacles grip rock suckers round  
as the keys of an old-fashioned typewriter

if she touched the pads to spell  
her name would it float out to sea  
would she drown in the letters

the octopus will die too she knows  
if not from fishermen's tridents  
roasted succulent on charcoal

it may willfully starve alone  
with its eggs sacrificial motherhood  
in its anorexic extreme

her mother taught her  
to make rainbows a drop of oil swirled  
in a bowl of water

but she knows mix all the colours  
together look away  
a patch of black in a cloudless sky

Poet's Note: According to the series *Life* (BBC1), the female octopus finds a safe hole, lays 100,000 eggs and tends them tenderly for six months, caressing them with her 12-ft arms. David Attenborough said, "She doesn't leave the den. Not once. Unable to feed, she is starving. Her last act of devotion is to blow water over the eggs to help them hatch. She's giving them the best chance she can. After her long and lonely vigil, she is dead. Surely this sacrifice must make her one of nature's most devoted mothers."

### Security questions for your online account

Answer three of the following

- What was your mother's secret name?
- What did your father call his dog?
- What was your sister's hidden shame?
- What is another word for God?
- What was the name for Schrödinger's cat?
- What number of bees remain in the hive?
- What is the reason the earth is flat?
- What gives delight to keep you alive?
- What makes mosquitoes happy in June?
- What causes the world to be so warm?
- What do wolves howl at a midnight moon?
- What will hide you from the oncoming storm?
- What will you do when all turns to fires?
- What will you be when all else expires?



## S J MANNION

### Plathic Ode To An Ex

He was smug as a new shoe,  
at home in himself, like a shit in a portalo.

He was crusty as a scab,  
and as sore, he was an old bore.  
Tired and grumpy as an old hound dog,  
growly, grizzly, and grey muzzled too.

He was horny as a goat, a cloven hooved heaver, a  
heavy breather.  
A well-stocked man, the weight of his cock, like a  
good book in my hand.

I remember that ...

He was a badly done son, that one,  
a ripped page, a torn sheet, stained with my blood on!

And I'm glad to miss him now he's gone.

### Matryoshka

I am not like my mother.  
But I am so **unlike** her  
it is almost the same.  
**Unlike** being also **like** like.  
Absence also presence.  
My 'I' formed in opposition.  
As she did I did not.  
As she was I was not.  
We were always and all ways  
**in conversation.**  
She is gone now.  
The measure of myself.

## BRENT CANTWELL

### cleaning up

At 9:17 pm the paramedics zip you into a bag  
and stretcher you up into the back.  
When the ambulance leaves – no siren or light now –

I take your place in the after-blare –  
no first-responder red-and-panic now –  
no teeth-grind-wheel-screech-then-out, or you –

just me working, working in an amber circle,  
on this occasion between the pine rows connecting  
Tamborine Mountain with Reserve Road where you *were* –

the coffee cup and the set of keys thrown  
from the wreck of you leaving  
is sprayed into a white circle then bagged up –

I place a yellow plastic triangle with a number on it –  
I fill in the report –  
there's a space for each item, but not for you –

you *removed* yourself from the driver's seat,  
through the windscreen –  
the first responder *traced* the last shape of you,

*placed* your number, but the clean-up goes on –  
in the going, at least, you're not yet gone –

**the Caroline**

in 1836 – some say –  
the Caroline haunted a sheltered bay,  
a Sydney barque emerging out of the mizzling –  
out of this other prison –  
out of the mizzle-misted other-world of the sea:

the sodden creak of joints and dead-tree wood –  
the bark-crack of no-one speaking –  
all watching,  
watching the sea-dog lick of a surface –  
the grey-green under or beyond –

hungry for the dry bread of a sack –  
as hungry as the sea  
nibbling at the singing shingles,  
the old red shed almost making sense  
and the *come-ashore* of a clay-yellow cliff –

what hope was there of a port-taut rope?  
no one remembers these half-men whole,  
these men ashore –  
they haunted a sheltered bay  
in 1836 – some say –  
calving an end on the end of a harpoon hook –

## JANET WAINSCOTT

### Senescence

is the face  
you don't recognise,  
the ache  
that can't be fixed.  
It's the glory  
of a second flush  
of roses  
that persists  
until the frosts.  
It's realising spring  
flowers were never meant  
to last. It's autumn feasting  
on the summer harvest  
in the face of winter  
yet to come.



*For the food we eat by Lesley Evans*

## CRAIG McLANACHAN

### Picture Show

Read the library dry  
no books left to try  
to assimilate  
into my storehouse  
of philosophy  
the nuts and bolts  
and poetry  
of photographs  
and their purpose.

This gentle brutal  
agent of emotions  
an occupation  
for some an art  
a devotion for those  
who would communicate  
as if life itself  
hung in the balance  
and love would perish  
if someone cancelled  
the picture show.



## First Book Feature

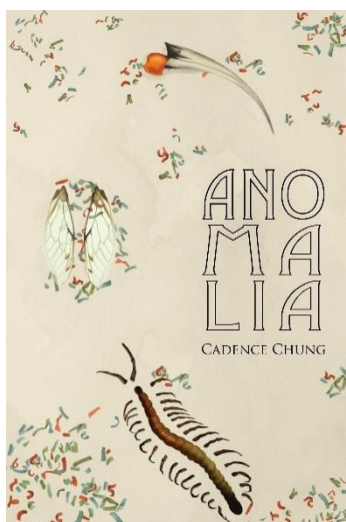
### CADENCE CHUNG

#### *anomalía*, a homunculus of little experiences

*A young poet talks about the inspirations and processes behind her first chapbook collection*

#### *anomalía – Cadence Chung*

(Wellington: We Are Babies Press, 2022)  
ISBN 9780473623043. RRP \$25.00.



Whenever people ask what my writing process is, I honestly have no idea what to say to them. For me, a poem isn't something to craft, but something that emerges fully formed in my head, screaming to get out until I manage to open up the Notes app. When I get inspired, especially if it's for a longer project like *anomalía*, it all comes in little bursts of chaotic energy. I wrote *anomalía* at the start of my last year of high school, and it took just under a month.

Because my work often comes all at once, it's only after I've finished writing that I can stand back and figure out what any of it really means. Even though a lot of it seems to come out of

nowhere, it always ends up being inspired by things I'd been consuming at the time. I like to think that my poems are homunculi of little experiences – listening to a new song, going to an exhibition, talking to a friend.

*anomalía*, being written shortly after the school holidays, has all of the heady, sticky stupidity of high school summers. I found myself suddenly free to go to museums, write stupid poetry, and weep over art, while the summer cicadas rained down their wings and butterflies swept across the city centre. With this grand tour of all of the museums in town, I took an analytical eye over everything. Each tiny piece of beauty seemed fit to cradle in a case. To trap behind glass, beautiful forever. To analyse, examine, dissect. In a way, all poetry seeks to attain such a goal: to cut up an ugly human feeling and make it into a digestible spectacle for onlookers.

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**In a way, all poetry seeks to attain such a goal: to cut up an ugly human feeling and make it into a digestible spectacle for onlookers.**

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All of the poems in the book have this eager scientist's gaze, combined with a sleuth of antique-store junk and dead poets. They were written on the cable car, on the bus ride home, at midnight on my phone, in a silly high school love letter. Because they were all written at the same time, the scientific journal theme came out naturally as I continued on my way through colonial paintings and old anatomical drawings. Especially as a queer, autistic Asian person, I have often felt dissected: my feelings made into

symptoms or spectacles, my existence seen as a fad. Though I didn't explicitly think this at the time, *anomalía* was a way to reclaim this aesthetic for myself – place myself under the hot dissection light in all my messy high-schooler glory.

It feels like it's been so long since I wrote it, especially now that I'm halfway through my first year at university. But it's sweet in a way, having a little poetic snapshot of who I was at

that time, and what I wanted to preserve for others to read. It sounds trite and saccharine, but it honestly is unbelievable to me that others are reading these words and connecting with them. When I wrote this little book, it never occurred to me that anyone would read them. In the moment of writing a poem, all I'm thinking about is that the words need to get on the page. But to be lifted up gently from under my rock, for my words to be dissected and analysed and understood – it's all any specimen could ask for.

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## CADENCE CHUNG

### what i want

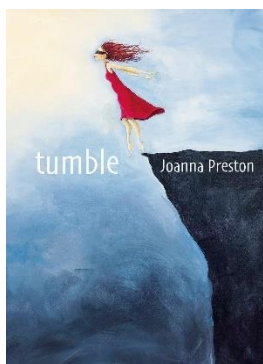
give me cicada husks dry enough to snap give me  
butterfly wings choked with orange powder give me  
the royal blue of a bloated fly's body give me  
the crispness of its glittery wings give me  
dangling stamens ripe with desire give me  
fermenting fruit with maggots suckling give me  
a puff of daisy a sprig of poison hemlock give me  
ivy curling round a building like veins give me  
the soft release of the moon at night give me  
effortless glitter and intrigue and rouge like her give me  
veins through my skin so i see that i bleed give me  
freckles so i see that i have touched the sun give me  
wax wings so i can feel what it's like to fall give me  
ten fat stuffed birds with glass eyes give me  
the taxidermies while hiding the fact that they lived give me  
the spicy nectar of nasturtium flowers give me  
uncut nails and split ends in my hair give me  
the swirling rows of cells in a leaf give me  
the perfect painting on a moth's wings give me  
all the beautiful things that come from ugliness give me  
give me the means give me the end give me  
give me in my grabbing hands gimme gimme gimme

from *anomalía*

S J MANNION

*tumble – Joanna Preston*

(Otago: Otago University Press, 2021)  
ISBN 9781990048197. RRP \$27.50. 88pp.



*tumble* is Joanna Preston's second collection and is a potent yet subtle brew of poems and flash fiction. The cover is aptly chosen, it has a whiff of whimsy but any trivial connotations are rescued

by the colours of sea and sky and slate, and that bold streaming splash of scarlet which shows she means business. (And she does.)

While it is an undoubtedly learned read, it wears its erudition lightly as a feathered cloak, a *kahu kiwi* perhaps, there is certainly a combination of writerly authority, integrity, power and prestige in these pieces.

To my mind, "Lijessenthoek" – 'He said he felt the grip of the other man's / hand tighten briefly, and then let go. (p. 37), "Census at Bethlehem" – 'Her sin, / her single *yes* – she bloomed with it, / she drank the rise sun.' (p. 46), and "Matadora" – 'Fetish, kneel at my feet. / You are vessel, you are chair / for me to straddle, yes / you are drum. / *Now come.*' (p. 65), show a

complete mastery of the craft; there is restraint and risk here, they are richly emotive yet erudite and intellectual. They are utterly quietly beautiful too.

That's another thing about this collection, there is not the merest hint of pretension. This is a poet who does not over work the work. She does not seem to be trying, or to be reaching, the words are well within her grasp. They fly to her, and they land and then sit on the page without stretch or strain.

Take this,

I lose my hands. Break concentration  
and they're not where I expect them to  
be.

Stupid. It takes all my skill to hold onto  
a knife, say, and a conversation.  
Nerveless fingers, white with pressure.

("The disembodied woman")

as perfect a description of disembodiment as any I've read. The next verse, a tell, a confirmation of whom she spoke, (I knew it in my body) and the whole piece, a fitting tribute to the troubled and tragic triumph that was Marilyn.

And then there's,

... Her embrace  
does not bear thinking of –  
it will crush you.  
Darling.'

("Margaret of Finchley")

It's that 'Darling.' that does it for me. Sheer genius. Again, I knew of whom she spoke, long before the 'Notes' section at back; the skill of story being so evident.

This skill is also marked in "Chronicle of the year 793". Who doesn't recognise the fear of hunger and darkness told here, that collective memory echoes in us all, beneath language even.

What we have to share, we give,  
but so many are hungry.'

... a great flock of birds blackened the sky.

... And now again! Strange, how their wingbeats sound like oars.'

The image here is both visual and aural, reading this a fully sensory experience.

As is the almost avian sense of movement to the sequence of these works. A feeling of flight from past to present to future, from this world to that, under and over and above and beyond. A bright strangeness to them,

But still more like a city astir at night,  
lights blazing  
from every door – and no traveller,  
crossing  
the darkness could be certain if these  
were beacons of welcome,  
or a city preparing for war.'

("Astonishment")

The book is split into three parts, a true trinity in which each part is both individual and integral to the whole. In a nice complete touch, the collection is both hailed and farewelled by a small 'simple' piece. One opens with

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**'This is a poet who does not over work the work... the words are well within her grasp. They fly to her, and they land and then sit on the page without stretch or strain.'**

---

'The things we prize. Innocence, / the sleeping fire that speaks.' ("Female, nude")

and the other closes

'... the tumble and the weight of it.' ("Nightfall")

the traverse.

This device of sorts works for this collection, similar to the way that spoon in "The Messenger" does,

its haft slips into your hand  
gladly, like mine,  
returns the faint warmth  
of fingers and thumb

helpful as a wife.

Yes, if you're that sort of wife. This is good work, indeed. Read it and reap.

To review books for *a fine line*,  
please contact Erica Stretton,  
[reviews@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:reviews@poetrysociety.org.nz)

## Members' Haiku

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We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Windrift Haiku Group. Their generous donation to the NZPS will support ongoing haiku projects, such as this haiku feature in *a fine line*.

### JULIE ADAMSON

high tide  
on the shortest day –  
sand on the pavement

a quick spray  
of perfume  
before a Zoom meeting

---



*Yellow by Mercedes Webb-Pullman*

### HEATHER LURIE

fejoas signal  
the end of summer  
not always sweet

they hightail it  
across the frozen yard  
the hares

slide  
on the ice  
open arms wait

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### CRAIG McLANACHAN

only here  
to say sorry –  
the class bully

in our village  
if someone does well –  
everyone eats

**SUE COURTNEY**

late autumn –  
all day long the song thrush sings  
all day long

wintry night  
a Milky Way arcs  
from my neighbour's chimney

---

**DEBBIE STRANGE**

northern lights  
the blur of scarves  
as skaters pass

Zatsuei Haiku of Merit, 2019 R.H. Blyth Award

longer days . . .  
I knight my sister  
with an icicle

5th Honourable Mention, 2018 Robert Spiess Memorial Haiku Competition

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**ANNE CURRAN**

driving home  
through countryside –  
our shared grief

he shines shoes  
on bended knee –  
a boy's patter

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**NOLA BORRELL**

island sanctuary a serenade of korimako

sitar  
soaring  
above

commuter clatter

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**JANE GRAHAM GEORGE**

heavy March snowstorm  
snowflakes in a silver mane  
ice melting downstream

“Gray Horse Haiku 2” first appeared in *Library Land* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2008)

Paekākāriki  
periscope of a submarine  
– cormorant surfacing

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**SALLY KENDALL**

shags and shearwaters  
a dressmaker’s scissors  
slicing estuary silk

a velvet ribbon  
flows over the bridge  
white ducks going home

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**PETER FREE**

border opening  
homemade cider pops  
its cork

time to let go  
new sky  
in godwit voices

**Julie Adamson** lives in Wellington overlooking the sea. Nature in all its forms and life in these strange times inspires her haiku. Her work has appeared in *Kokako*, NZPS Anthology 2020 and *Island Writer Magazine* (Canada).

**Elizabeth Ayrey** is 17 from Christchurch. Her poetry has been published in the *ReDraft*, *Given Words*, and NZPS anthologies. She was a 2021 winner of the NZPS international competition.

**Nola Borrell** writes haiku, tanka and haibun in particular. Her work is widely published here and overseas.

**Gillian Candler** is a nature writer, tramper and citizen scientist.

**Brent Cantwell** is a New Zealand writer from Timaru, who lives with his family in Queensland, Australia. He teaches high school English and has been writing for pleasure for 24 years. He has recently been published in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Poetry NZ*, *Landfall*, *takahē* and *Foam:e*.

**Cadence Chung** is a poet, student, and musician from Wellington, currently studying Classical Performance at the New Zealand School of Music. She draws inspiration from Tumblr posts, antique stores, and dead poets. Her debut chapbook *anomalía* (We Are Babies Press) was published in 2022.

**Sue Courtney** lives by the estuary in Orewa. She takes inspiration for her haiku from the world around her.

**Anne Curran** lives in Hamilton. She enjoys writing haiku and tanka verses as any dreaming time allows. She remains grateful to those companions who continue to encourage her along this path.

**Jeni Curtis** is a Ōtautahi/Christchurch writer who has had short stories and poetry published in various publications including *takahē*, NZPS anthologies, JAAM, *Atlanta Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *The London Grip*, and the *Poetry NZ Yearbook*. She was runner-up in the John O'Connor poetry competition 2022.

**Piers Davies** is a long time poet, widely published in Aotearoa and overseas, co-ordinator of Titirangi Poets, co-editor of Titirangi Poets Ezines, and writer of feature films including 'Skin Deep' and 'the Cars that ate Paris'.

**Lesley Evans** loves the rough and tumble of painting just for fun. She has been showing her work at the local library for a decade, and enjoys the support of a local critique group.



*Giggles by Lesley Evans*

**Peter Free** is a Maths teacher from Wellington. Born in Nigeria, Peter has spent many years travelling and working in Asia. He writes haiku to relax.

**Jane Graham George** is the author of *Library Land* and *A Year on the Kapiti Line* (Red Dragonfly Press). Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Australia* and *Manifesto Aotearoa: 101 Political Poems*.

Last year, **Michael Gould** (Wellington) was awarded by the New Zealand Society of Authors as an “emerging poet”. It is his hope to restore humour and rhyme to a literate readership.

**Rebecca Hawkes** is poet and artist. Her visual art reflects the terrible beauty of the natural world, monstrosities and the occult, sumptuous banquets and feminine queerness. Her debut collection *Meat Lovers* (AUP) was published in 2022.

**Lincoln Jaques** holds a Master of Creative Writing. His poetry, fiction and travel writing has appeared in Aotearoa, Australia, the US, Asia and Ireland. He lives in Tāmaki Makaurau.

**Pippi Jean** is nineteen and has published her poetry in some places. Most importantly, her friend just made her a playlist of sea shanties. Her life is now complete.

**Sally Kendall** lives on the Kāpiti Coast. Writing haiku is her way of taking snapshots. Like most amateur photographers, she is always striving for that elusive perfect shot.

**Heather Lurie** is a 16 year resident of New Zealand, who grew up in New England, USA. She stumbled into haiku and found that it suited her.

**S J Mannion** is a proud Irish woman and citizen of Aotearoa/New Zealand. When she can she writes, when she can't she reads. In between she ukuleles.

**Rachel McAlpine**'s latest collection of poems is *How To Be Old* (Cuba Press, 2020). She performs often and usually has several writing projects on the go.

**Craig McLanachan** is a haiku enthusiast and writer of many years, both age and years of interest. He loves the way haiku captures the moment, becomes a form of diary for life's events. He constantly hones and refines them as part of the learning process.

**Debbie Strange** is an internationally published short-form poet and haiga artist whose creative passions connect her more closely to the world and to herself. Please visit her archive: [debbiemstrange.blogspot.com](http://debbiemstrange.blogspot.com)

**Mercedes Webb-Pullman**: IIML Victoria University MA in Creative Writing 2011. Published extensively in various journals and anthologies worldwide, she lives in Otaki New Zealand.

**Janet Wainscott** lives near Ōtautahi / Christchurch and writes poetry and essays. Her writing has been published in various magazines including *takahē*, *Catalyst*, *Poetry NZ Yearbooks*, *Landfall*.

## NZPS President's Address June 2022

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I would like to begin by acknowledging the continuing support of our patrons, **Dame Fiona Kidman and Vincent O'Sullivan**. A heartfelt thank you.

COVID-19 has continued to affect Aotearoa and the New Zealand poetry community in varying ways. It has challenged us to take advantage of online opportunities to reach out and connect as well as streamline costs. We successfully launched our 2021 Anthology *Kissing a Ghost* via Zoom with judges and poets joining from New Zealand and overseas. Our Committee meets monthly via Zoom and this AGM is our second being conducted entirely online.

There have been quite a few exciting changes over the past year, which I will now talk through.

**Our quarterly magazine.** Firstly, our magazine *a fine line* expanded to 32 pages to include visually stunning artwork and illustrations from members and guest artists. Many of the artists are poets, too, such as Jan Fitzgerald, Claire Beynon, Aine Whelan-Kopa, and Edna Heled. Established New Zealand artists, such as Donna Demente, Isobel Te-Aho White and Terence Fitzgibbon have contributed to what is now a flagship magazine, representative of the high standard of New Zealand poetry.

Our Editorial Assistant, Lily Holloway, was instrumental in making sure the layout is visually attractive. Although Lily will be leaving us in August to further her studies, we welcome Erica Stretton as our new Editorial Assistant.

Under our editor Gail Ingram's wonderful direction, the new-look magazine has received extremely positive feedback. We also instituted paying our contributors a fair industry rate to attract quality content and artwork and to also reflect our belief that good work is worth a fair reward.

Thank you to all the artists and poets who have contributed to *a fine line*, helping us to deliver a poetry magazine New Zealand can be proud of.

**Our committee.** We welcomed Georgia Wearing as our social media coordinator, and over the last year, we have focused on increasing our social media engagement. NZPS is now on TikTok so we can reach young poets. We have seen a 55% increase in engagement on our Facebook page, our Instagram page has attracted 150 new followers (+53%) and one of our TikTok videos went viral and attracted over 1,000 views.

We said goodbye to our treasurer, Katharine Allard, and welcomed Marina Lathouraki as our new financial officer. RikTheMost did a sterling job hosting the online launch of our 2021 anthology, and Sherry Grant, our Community Outreach officer, made connections with national and international poetry groups. Gary Bradshaw, our Secretary, left due to work commitments, and we welcomed Julianne Exton, an NZPS member with a wealth of experience working with not-for-profits.

The ongoing challenge of COVID-19 meant that we did not run the face-to-face workshops we had planned, but the Committee is now looking at producing or partnering online modules and short workshops to provide our members with education and inspiration.

I am pleased to say we have a strong Committee with diverse talent and experience, and Committee members either write poetry or have a strong interest in poetry.

**Our website.** We decided the time was right to retire our website and design a new one that would better support our membership and be easier to navigate. Work is underway with the transfer or archiving of content and our new website will be up and running by the end of 2022. We thank you for your patience during this transition.

**Our anthology and international competition.** Since 1990, our well-loved and anticipated yearly anthology has attracted a high standard of poetry. The 2021 anthology was edited by Tim Jones (who will also edit the 2022 anthology), and I'd like to thank the 2021 competition judges for their hard work in selecting winners: Lynley Edmeades, Chris Tse, Marco Fraticelli, and Simon Hanson.

The winning poems and those selected by Tim Jones for the anthology ensured that *Kissing a Ghost*, with its visually stunning cover, was yet another successful publication for NZPS. I'd also like to thank Anne Harre, who assisted Tim with the layout of the anthology.

Our 2022 international competition closed on May 31, and I'd like to thank the judges who are now busy reading all the poems and deciding on winners: Nicola Easthope, Ken Arkind, an'ya, and Sarah-Kate Simons. We are very grateful for their time and input.

For the 2021 anthology sales, we successfully trialled the Stripe online payment system, cutting down on administrative costs and filling out of forms by purchasers. We will be using Stripe again for our 2022 anthology sales.

**Our membership.** We welcomed 134 new members in 2021-2022 – more than double the 60 new members we welcomed in 2020-2021. Our new look *a fine line*, our focus on engaging with youth via social media, the dedication and tireless work of our Committee members and the enthusiasm of our members, who have recommended joining NZPS, has resulted in our expanding membership.

As always, we would love to hear from our members with ideas around how to improve services to the poetry community. NZPS is, after all, your society and whatever we can do to deliver value-added services is first and foremost our goal.

Let me finish by welcoming our guest poet at tonight's AGM: Chris Tse, whose poetry reflects on important and challenging themes such as cultural identity and representation.

It has been an exciting year for NZPS, and despite COVID and its many challenges, we have sought new ways to engage with the poets of New Zealand. We are confident 2022-2023 will be even better.

Sincerely,  
*Shane Hollands*  
President, NZPS