

a fine line

New Zealand Poetry Society Magazine

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

Spotlight on Student Poetry

Winter 2021



Featured Student Poet Tessa Keenan **Cover Art** JA Thea

Shortlisted Poems

Note from the Editor

Welcome to this new winter addition to *a fine line*'s web-page, a "Spotlight on Student Poetry". This is intended as a complementary online copy to our winter issue of *a fine line*. In 2019, we introduced the Student Featured Poet to our pages and sought submissions from poets studying at either a secondary school or a tertiary institution to feature alongside our members' poems. The featured student poet wins an annual student membership to NZPS, alongside other great prizes, this year including a student annual membership to NZSA and new poetry books. Because we received so many quality student submissions, it just wouldn't have been fair to keep them to ourselves. This is our shortlist.

A huge congratulations to **Tessa Keenan**, our 2021 Featured Student Poet winner. Our winter issue features a selection of her poems, and you are able to read one of them here: "Tataraimaka Pā". While this poem seems simple on the surface, through clever juxtapositions of imagery, the ache of grief for past wrongdoings tugs at the present, asks us to re-examine the casualty of our everyday existence in new light. Beautiful work.

Also beautiful – and intricate and compelling – please enjoy our cover art by Ōtepoti Dunedin Year 12 student **JA Thea**.

"A Poem for my Grandfather" by **Ava Rose Strother** meanders into Bruce-Springsteen memory, while "Inquisitor" burns in the fierce voice of **Molly Crighton**'s speaker. Travel from the performing arts block to an ominous rose garden, from the harbour lights of Wellington to the graveyard of Yorick to the buffet room at the Heritage Hotel, Aoraki. The wide-ranging subject matter is heartening in its search for meaning through word and experience, and especially so, coming from the hearts and minds of New Zealand's bright young adults in such uncertain times as these. I hope you enjoy this writing as much as I did. To quote **Sarah Lawrence** in "Hide & Seek", '*come find me, come find me, come find me, come—*'.

— Gail Ingram

List of Contributors

Tessa Keenan
Ava Rose Strother
Molly Crighton
Pippi Jean
Amelia Kirkness
Sarah-Kate Simons
Loredana Kint
Molly Laurence
Sarah Lawrence
JA Thea (art)

a fine line affirms and upholds the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and acknowledges Māori as the tangata whenua and kaitiaki of Aotearoa.

Tessa Keenan

(Te Ātiawa) is 20, raised in Taranaki and now lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. She is studying Law and English Literature at Victoria University. She has previously been published in *Starling* magazine.

Tataraimaka Pā

I take the sandwich
from the wrap
and eat the currants.
You stand, back against the pā,
where our tūpuna rot
with flu.

It reminds me of forgetting.
Or missing a dentist appointment.

This could pass
for a dreary picnic.
I can barely see the pā,
the flush in your cheeks
and the black shroud on the mountain.

Your Honda parked by the sea
looks like an aggressor.

The gravel mutters.
Muskets and headless bodies mutter.
Last night the TV muttered
“southerlies”.

We are clutching at food
and crying because we know
we are the only ones that know.

Ava Rose Strother

is a just graduated homeschooler, originally from the USA, and raised in the Canterbury port hills. She is currently practicing being a poet, and studying for future university.

A Poem for My Grandfather

I'll fall asleep,
Listening to Springsteen.
It reminds me of my grandfather,
Like pickup trucks and small government.
My memory is fuzzy.
I was too young to know,
What I would want to remember most.
I'm from the midwest I suppose,
I don't remember those wide open spaces,
I don't recall those long roads.

Flower

I'm growing roses,
White one by the fence
Is called Racy Lady.
The man who sold it
Had a laugh
As he gave it to me.
Coquettish, I assume,
When it first blooms.
It must be a tease of a flower,
White, but for the pink at its centre.
I named her Helen,
After the Greek heroine,
Or a suburban grandmother.
A lady for men to fight for,
Or a woman to shame girls,
Who wore the skirts too short
In nineteen sixty six
When modesty was a commodity,
And she was rich.

Molly Crighton

is an English student at the University of Otago. Her work can be found in *Starling*, *takahē*, *a fine line*, *The Cormorant*, and *Re-Draft*.

Inquisitor

For the love of God, stop screaming.
I am sending you to Heaven.

Through a cobweb of Italian rain,
fine and white as lace, you will go unto the King

in raiments of black and gold, ember and sizzling.
You will be cleansed of sin and hair and flesh —

you will be valley-bone dry, ligaments knitting
like a cat's cradle. In the sky-less Heaven
 you will praise my name.

I do not need an explicable God. I only need a God
who looks like you — bright vertical,

fat-sparking saint, beard alight, a thousand hairs
crawling, Heaven-bright, back to your skin.

Tonight, blooded between my red sheets,
I will think of you. I will still smell you —

your oily residue will clench in my throat,
touch me like a spirit-crucible
 and I will burn.

Pippi Jean

is an eighteen-year-old poet currently studying at Victoria University in Wellington. You can find her most recent works in *Landfall*, *takahē*, *Starling*, *Oscen*, *Mayhem*, and *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook*.

5.45 pm

the performing arts block is so muted
i can taste my own heartbeat in the upstairs corridor

the onset of summer
cakes the corridor in shadows
of temperate behaviour

but i see you in the window
bittersweet as an old widow

light, you look at me
like you remember everything

i am leaving a piece of me
with my choir pack
at a corridor's end
in the silence

Amelia Kirkness

is a Christchurch student and writer who has been published in *ReDraft* and *Catalyst* anthologies. She enjoys Finnish pop music and ornate teaware. She is trying her best.

Augury

It is midnight and the rose garden
is filled with crows. Black with them.
So full, in fact, that a lonely
late night flower-sniffer would
scarcely be able to stumble
over the manicured paving stones
without stepping on or being
pecked, angrily, by a corvid.
They line the fountain's rim,
dip their beaks in the water.
The ornate statuette of a nymph
at the centre serenely pouring, forever,
from her jug has become decorated
with bird shit, nearly clogging her spout,
maintenance is required, but
the crows don't like the sound, who
would the groundskeepers be to disagree?
Maybe the birds will make better
use of this courtyard than we ever did,
perhaps this fact in itself is an omen. Their caws
call out warnings: the Anthropocene era
will end in pesticide-coated flower petals
buried under the defecation
of anything left alive.

- *first published in Catalyst 17*

Sarah-Kate Simons

is a Year 12 student currently enrolled in the School of Life — aka home schooled. She enjoys writing poetry and fiction with a mug of hot chocolate.

Alas, Poor Yorick

there are too many coffins
he stands there in the rain
with a bunch of wilted flowers in one hand
sweets to the sweet, a rose by another name
his long-lost lover
in the other hand a skull that no longer knows the world
with its empty eye sockets as he juggles it up, down, up, down
the angels cover their faces and hide their stone cold
tears in the shadows of their palms and prayer books
oh, if only he'd known, he would have come sooner
he can see her there, hands full of dandelions and the yellow
tulips that she loved so dear, cornflowers in her hair
rosemary for remembrance, my darling
now that golden hair and quick smile will drown in the earth
with all the others, no more, no less
will the tears come? no, this nameless stranger has none
the skull looks back, no tongue, no thought to offer
a joke to cheer the masses as he once did, for he is gone now
in other places, the darkest pits or some heavenly haven
knowing either greatest joy or most terrible sorrow but which
it is no one can tell anymore...
perhaps the stranger will stay amongst the graveyard and the
weeping angels on the edges of the crypt but no
he has places to be, revenge to seek
clarity that came too late to save his sweetheart
both flowers and skull dropped on the raw, bloodied wound
in the earth where she'll sleep from now on till the stars fall
from their far-off orbits, and alas,
poor Yorick,
time doesn't run backward.

Loredana Kint

is a medical student, bookworm, musician, and poet. She sees poems in everything, if only she had the time to write them down. Loredana self-published an anthology, *Reflections*, in 2018.

Harbour Lights

The glittering promises of a city unexplored,
Seen from a not-so-distant shore,
Reflect on glossy indigo hulls
And the glinting eyes of the gluttonous gulls,
The sparks of the city are everywhere,
They catch in our lashes, and snag on our hair,
Bounce off ferry windows, finger-marked,
And lip-smacking waves as you disembark,
Casting their spell on the people who scroll,
And those with their beacon-eyed scooters, who roll,
Heedless of being the city lights' messenger,
Just as the ferry's starry-eyed passenger
Gapes at the city's galactic tattoo,
And feels like a spark in this bold jigsaw, too.

Molly Laurence

is a year 10 at Lincoln High, Canterbury, enjoys reading, debating and writing. She competes with her possessive cat over the fireside in winter, and struggles to write to word limits!

Buffet Breakfast at Mt Cook

Scrambled eggs
those complicated
orbiting galaxies
seen last night

the planetarium
doomed universe
spinning
in those complex chains of sugars
carbohydrates
proteins

the white porcelain plate
industrially cleaned
chaos

in the beginning there was darkness
soap whiteness

and all that is,
was,
spun out of sizzling oil

and while Aoraki holds up the universe
staff serve up the breakfast

and all the other galaxies
in that stop motion of spiralling
plates and guests

served on a silver platter
and
discarded at the end of the morning

Sarah Lawrence

is a confused law student. She is Pōneke based and Ōtautahi raised. You can find her work in *Landfall* and *Starling*.

Hide & Seek

this morning i cracked the shell before you told me
that you ran out of gas & the egg lolled on the frypan
in a stagnant pool. we glared all hungry. there are things

you can't take back. you are growing a sunflower on
our patio & now it is taller than both of us
but we are still growing too. i said i was scared, mostly

that you would grow tired of me &
you said i was always making things too complicated.
if you could write our tombstone it would read:

sometimes we were happy and sometimes we weren't.
remember before i knew you how we used to go walking just to brush hands
& stutter & make freckles & we were walking once

when i was halted dead by the elastic band of
the reflection of the clouds in a gutter puddle
& i stood teetering like a bowling pin daring you to

say something & you did. that night you wrote a song to
the rattling of my shoulderblades as i opened my eyes to the world and
cried *come find me, come find me, come find me, come—*