

# a fine line

New Zealand Poetry Society Magazine  
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa



Spotlight on Student Poetry  
WINTER 2022

**FEATURED POET • ELIZABETH AYREY**

**COVER ART • REBECCA HAWKES**

## Note from the Editor

### GAIL INGRAM

Welcome to *a fine line* “Spotlight on Student Poetry 2022”, a complementary online addition to our winter issue to share and enjoy. Every winter, *a fine line* invites submissions from poets who are studying at a secondary or tertiary institution to send a selection of their poems to be considered for our Featured Poet slot. The chosen poet features alongside our member poems in *a fine line* and wins an annual membership to NZPS, payment of \$100 in book vouchers, plus, thanks to NZSA, one of their annual student memberships. Because we received so many quality student submissions, it just wouldn’t have been fair to keep them to ourselves. “Spotlight on Student Poetry” is the result.

Congratulations to our Featured Student Poet winner for 2022, **Elizabeth Ayrey** from Ōtautahi. One of her winning poems, “Marakihau” is featured here, and like Elizabeth’s other poems, captures a yearning for something larger than oneself, something mythological even. The imagery of this watery *Ars Poetica* poem is glorious – “Ideas flicker like whitebait /until the river banks are bursting with them.”

If you are a member, you can read Elizabeth’s full poetry feature in the winter edition of *a fine line*. For just \$20 a year, a student membership to NZPS gives you subscription to *a fine line* and allows you to submit to our four seasonal editions, you will also get discounts on the annual [NZPS International Youth Poetry Competition](#) entry fees and the NZPS anthology. You can [join or renew your student membership here](#).

In “Spotlight 2022” you will find our young writers are not just wordsmiths but thinkers. I believe you will be impressed by the range of topics and their urge to experiment with form. Close observation is important (see “sirens in vacuums” by **Oshadha Perera**), relationships are important (See **Harriet Salmon**’s “My Little Brother/ Twice My Size”), politics are important (See **Molly Laurence**’s “ukraine”) as well as inspiration from literature (“after the death of repose” by **Sarah-Kate Simons**).

I’m also delighted to introduce our cover artist, the brilliant young poet **Rebecca Hawkes**. “Cowboys are frequently secretly fond of each other” is a feast of fantasy, heat and imagination.

Phillip Levine once said “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.” If our future is in the hands of these poets, I’m hopeful.

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#### Cover Art

‘Cowboys are secretly fond of one another’ - Rebecca Hawkes

## ELIZABETH AYREY

is seventeen 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.

### 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.

## MOLLY LAURENCE

is a 15-year-old poet, student, and debater in rural Canterbury. Spot her in *Write On, Redraft, a fine line* and in the paddock with her pekin ducks. She is not great at working to a word limit.

### Commuter

She collects a shot of adrenaline  
every morning with her coffee,  
feels it surge  
through her veins and smiles  
at the cute barista

she  
shellacks her bangs to the side of her face,  
wonders what  
her family are doing back  
home

reminds herself that  
love is a construct,  
like time  
in her books

She carries regret in a satchel  
it's heavy  
brass buckles strained,  
brown leather stained  
with her mistakes

She stores her anxieties in  
the lining of her mouth, where she worries  
at them  
they come loose and  
she swallows  
them with toothpaste

no time to spit

they sink  
mildly to her stomach and sit  
she has indigestion  
as she commutes  
to work

**ukraine**

i don't put mascara on my bottom lashes I'll cry  
over ashes

and dust

red revenge like cupidstwin and santasson what happens  
to the heart once the arrow is pulled out gone Eros can't  
stem the blood

god is a shirtless russian he's smiting  
the sinners go to hell  
for your crimes  
of nationality

birthright

is a matter of geography it figures  
he'd be the one

## OSHADHA PERERA

is a student from Southland Boys' High School. He enjoys reading and writing poems.

### sirens in vacuums

yay, you yelled when i started pedalling on my own, the studded wheels of my tricycle souveniring the muddy path.

yay, i breathed as my heart thrust all my blood to the feet, to the pedals, to go up, down, up, down.

yay, mum whispered through video call as she saw me flying through the bushes, like i had the perfect formula to beat the sound barrier.

yay, i thought, looking at the road ten feet away, a road that went on forever, forever, forever. yay, the words died in your mouth as your lips twisted, eyes trying to break free of your brain. yay, the words suffocated in your windpipe, trying to close the gate before the blackness of the road absorbed me.

yay, the words hit you in the gut, the flashing lights of the car, the worn off tires, the speedometer that jangled on its own.

yay, you tried to find the definition of 'yay' in the dictionary but got lost among the letters.

beep, the automated machine said to the guy in the lab coat who connected insulated wires to your chest.

beep, it said to the chest that tangled itself, to the white bedsheets that were empty, empty, empty.

b e e p.

First published in *Kissing a Ghost* (NZPS Anthology 2021)

### Summer and Winter

You'll be planting the seeds,  
and I'll be watering them.

You'll be talking to the leaves,  
and I'll be laughing with them.

You'll be talking to fiery sunsets,  
and I'll be counting shooting stars.

You'll be harvesting the crops,  
and I'll be cooking with them.

You'll be learning to video call,  
and I'll be learning to drive.

You'll be waving at me,  
and I'll be waving back.

## AMELIA KIRKNESS

is an Ōtautahi-born writer, winged eyeliner aficionado, and student of English Literature at Victoria University. Her work can be found in publications like *Catalyst*, *Starling*, and *ReDraft*.

### P'appel du vide

my lighthouse is cold tonight.  
the breeze is salty, rough.  
my lips are chapped.  
i am alone.

in dreams, bald, hopeless cliffs  
and a whole empty sky.

the rocks and the shallows sit below, dark, indistinct.  
the beam revolves, casting moments of shadow and light  
across black fathoms of water.  
i think i see a figure there, in the shallows,  
knee-deep in mist.

each enveloping night the dark says she is waiting for me.  
i am pointedly ignoring her against  
my own protests and morbid curiosity.  
i can't see her well, can't visualise her face,  
mortal as my own, flesh covered with sea-pruned skin?  
or something more diaphanous?

in those moments she is illuminated,  
i know what it is to feel longing that defies sense,  
for what is beyond what should be serenity,  
and my so-meagre human warmth.  
i want to join her down below,  
in the blue and the cold.  
it's our routine as we gaze at each other  
and she summons me,  
until i fall into a shivering sleep,  
and always awaken feeling as though  
i have lost something.

still i am here.

maybe, one morning, i will find  
myself immaterial,  
with nothing left to lose,  
a sleepwalker into the dark.

all I can do is keep the lighthouse  
running, softly glowing to ships in the night  
and trying to stay on this side of the edge.

### **Cloud Watching**

On the hillside at the school field green against grey  
we were wrapped in the harsh steel wool of the clouds,  
the headachy cold wind and the thirsty drops of rain  
marking the tennis courts with freckles.  
The after-school sports programme we both hated  
finished just in time for the sky to open up.

We were hungering for a thunderstorm,  
little girls baying for something loud and furious,  
like catharsis on our behalf from the atmosphere  
because Sam kicked me in the shins that week  
and we didn't get invited to a birthday party.  
Her mum let her come home with me, the intent  
to stay for dinner and no later because this was  
a Monday, alright.  
Clouds roiled purple blue black,  
a thin suspension of rain, like her princess bed canopy,  
over the plains driving up the hill to my house.

And we lined my stuffed animals up on the sofa behind,  
put Barbie and the Diamond Castle in the DVD player  
and she was blonder than me so she was Barbie and I was  
obligatory brunette best friend when we sang along,  
but we spent more time peering past the TV through the curtains,  
out the window into the darkened garden where the water  
simply poured and we got a good view of the lightning.  
Only a few strikes, though.

When it got too dark to watch the rain we started to  
lose our patience for each other, the movie ended,  
she picked up the couch cushion, white and stained  
from pancake mornings in the past, and we pillow-fought  
but that petered out too. Untalkative over pasta for dinner,  
her mum came to pick her up and we didn't  
pester her to linger for coffee.  
But the rain pounded at the roof all night.

First published in *Starling 12*

## MAIA ARMISTEAD

is a second year law student at Victoria University. She has been published in *Mayhem*, *Milly*, *Rejection Letters*, and *the Spinoff*.

### big balloon

i would love to be big balloon, satin, corseted,  
bursting to the fill with something. or a sleek  
sleek diver with a body full of water and fish  
swimming around in it. i would like  
to be big enough to take a space and not  
give it up, knocked down knelt in the sawdust,  
torn all the way up. i would like to be  
ripped open and seen pink and prickling, and  
for the blood to smooth out like paint. and  
gasp over. nothing so red and ripe as me.  
i would love to spill it all everywhere, and for  
people to laugh at me. sticky sticky drink on  
the floor, and looked at on the street. for a feather  
boa to be a casual dress-up choice. i'd like  
my face to suit me one day, and to swell  
into full form, my head bobbing above me  
like a super moon. my face looming largely,  
watching it all head-on, and smiling.

## HARRIET SALMON

is a full-time student at Te Herenga Waka, but also works and writes like mad. Previously published in *Starling* and *takahē*.

### Little Brother, Twice My Size

barely awake, I read to you / the bunyip of berkeley's creek  
you sound out every word at the end of the page  
barely a hum, I fall asleep in your bunk / I used to sleep here, tattle-tale bite marks in the wood

barely awake, I hold your entire hand in mine

whipped milk for hair, curled up in bassinets, fingers like goosebumps  
you look me in the eyes / pulverized concrete, teal and gray  
I am driving and the road splits open and I am gulped down into it / when I come back up for air,  
I am a much gentler person

you are awake when I get home / you teach me to cook the meals we ate as kids / rockmelon  
lengthways in grins  
I tell you it is chopping the red onion that is making me cry

on a still morning in August  
you will pat me on the back while I howl into the echoey pipes of our navy blue house  
for a second you will be the older one, but only for that second

mum gives you an opportunity, hollowed out like a bucket /  
I fill it up with the garden hose and sit in it cold until I go numb  
when it's finally your turn, the water is lukewarm

still, you give out a small shiver of solidarity

### **People Watching**

teal skirt against the calves, bell top against the wrists. hairdo'ed. teeth out smile. didn't wear red lipstick  
cause what if there's a kiss...? brilliant, bright, quite literally unafraid of anything yet.

whole. wearing the plum slip, wearing the flyaways against the head done with a toothbrush, wearing the  
eyebrows right on the curve, wearing the tuck, necklace a chunky tambourine.

getting off the shift getting on the bus getting out the joint getting mild high in bed getting invested in the  
HBO series getting pissed at neighbours getting it on through thin walls.

left out on the deck with the other rockers. left out on the deck with replica dad's mate. left out on the deck  
talking about a degree done three years of and somehow not getting a word in.

having asked, turning a hardened face windward. eyes molasses. mothy. a baby tight against a chest that  
won't stop coughing, except the baby's plastic, and homelessness is a huge sadness.

the boy that lingered in the womb that spills the jug of tui on the white shirt riot breasts spread like swollen  
ankles, that one night will turn your best friend's lights out, without permission.

sometimes you love it like a body and other times it frightens you to puke. doesn't it irk you, this potty city?

## HANNAH MARSHALL

is a writer from Wellington. She was the Otago Regional Poetry Slam champion in 2021. You can also find her work in *Salient* and *Starling*.

### post-grief

I started running new routes to avoid  
you, and the memory of you. I moved on,  
eventually, when I heard you had, and once  
I knew there was officially no hope left.  
I read online a quote that said  
grief is the price we pay for love, but  
the words didn't make it any easier.

it got better. I learned to check facebook  
normally again without stalking all your  
friends' profiles, searching for your face.  
but sometimes I'd still be dumbstruck  
in the middle of a run, frozen by a creek,  
and the shock of remembering how you left  
would punch me in the stomach, fresh.  
I'd get up and run again, but not before I'd  
been still for so long that the sandflies had  
licked the sweat off my skin, and my bones  
had gone so cold they ached.

## AINE WHELAN-KOPA

is completing a Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and is a student of rongoa. Poetry and art are staples at her home in Tāmaki Makaurau.

### Paradise Cloud

The mornings are colder  
and slower without you  
as Summer passes  
under a Tongan cloud  
of smoke and ashes  
Cislunar lips a leafy green  
kiss the moon and the earth  
like the edges of mussels  
we've picked from rockpools  
before the volcano erupted  
the wind shook the plums to the ground  
the air smelled like hāngī  
but I can't remember the sounds  
Maybe a helicopter  
or an ambulance siren  
the constant sound of a place  
far removed  
from the beaches of that tiny paradise  
It's autumn in five weeks  
when tāmure bite biggest  
the mornings will be colder  
and I'll be fishing without you

## SARAH KATE SIMONS

is a seventeen year old home-schooled poet and writer from rural Canterbury. She has placed in various competitions, and is often in trouble for daydreaming up her next story when she ought to be doing her school assignments.

### **After the death of repose:**

in metamorphosis  
the days turn sour

and dreams so light as cotton buds

wither and flake  
peach white and  
*falling*  
like ashes

perhaps the shell of it will break open  
someday  
and you'll breathe again.

### **Hospital**

Life plays hide and seek in these shroud white corridors,  
skydiving through the fingers of the men and women in scrubs

They diagnose its mood on sight as it travels past in  
a blur like scenery through a rainy car window

Sometimes life is in and out, like a  
hungry family arriving at the drive through

Sometimes life vacillates, wandering the wards and  
posing like The Thinker

And sometimes life is water through a sieve  
only stopping by on its way to a better world.