



this gender  
is a million  
things  
that we are  
more than

poetry from takatāpui/genderqueer/trans  
writers from across Aotearoa

Edited by essa may ranapiri

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*We are more than just a gender. But we can celebrate it here.*

*I hope one day we can celebrate it everywhere in the world.*

## **POETRY IN MANY FORMS**

# Hana Pera Aoake

## ***Water flows into water***

I dreamt a dam exploded near a leaky house I was living in. I started to drown, but then suddenly I had gills and was able to swim away. I thought about Wairaka surfing across the north island. A tagged photo of you gave me heart palpitations. Lungs flooding. My astrology app tells me to “Keep your eyes open, your heart open, and your mind open today.” I think about different parts of your body that probably feel like silk. Your hair follicles stand up like I rubbed a balloon on your head. I dream of my fingernails lightly circling around your belly button. Scorpion talons.

## ***Eight year crush***

I swirl my fork through a runny egg. When I was a child my imagination ran wild. As an adult I prefer to meet people on the internet rather than in real life. Press my body into yours. Maui running wild, sliding down our breasts. In and out of discombobulated sleep, shy hellos and photo replies. Images of your body via Instagram stories. I imagine you smoking a cigarette and flicking it into his eyes. Maui turns into a worm. Thelma and Louise type of scenario. I’m Geena, you are Susan. Crushing men between our thighs.

# Emma Barnes

## Signature

Everyone is tired of hearing about everything. You don't know me well enough to touch me like that but you do. I think maybe you'll kiss me then you don't. I watch your teeth carefully looking for signs. I've been interpreting them since I could feel other people's feelings on my skin. You are imagining my thighs pressing against you going by the tilt of your head and the hand you gripped me with. We switch back to something else. Write a book about it. You can promote your way to everything. I am hidden inside an invisible shell like it's a joke but it's not a joke. Did I tell you any jokes? Switch back. It's a street with a hard u bend. You turn alongside me like we're a pair of figure skaters. Let's take it to the mattresses but not in the way that usually means. You don't know what that means but the meat of your bottom lip calls out my name just to look at you. I haven't fallen in love for years and I miss it. Break my heart with your teeth. Break my heart with the bad tattoos all over your

body. Just break my heart with a hammer. But  
just say my name once, first.

## **The heel of your palm**

The eyes in your face reach out of you across the room to me. The rows your fingers make through each other press back, hard into me. The heel of your palm pushing against the breastbone of my imagination. I am the glare of the sun too closely looked at. You stand beside me and enjoy the experience. You can see inside my body from that point of view but never look. I understand what people mean when they say they can't find me. It's such a calm feeling your eyes on my face to lips to eyes only. You find a different me in a completely different location and tell no one about it. What is it to be respected so completely it feels like disappearing. My arms are rubbed out by a comically large eraser then it moves down my body to my chest and half my torso disappears. As this scene plays out your hand cradles my occipital bone and you fold in half to take your lips to mine. It is the lightest touch that's possible to still feel. I accidentally fantasise about your fingers inside me. The heel of your palm against the pubic bone of my imagination. I've never thought this about anyone else. Your hands wrapped around mine to slow my

conversational momentum and I am stuck on it.  
Slowed permanently by the shape of your nail  
beds and what it is like to be wrapped up in  
another body leading you out of yourself and  
back to yourself. The outside can't find me. I  
can't find me, here.

## **I invite myself inside**

You have not kissed me. I have not been kissed. The night approaches with the sound of starlings finding roost. And you have still not kissed me. I kissed myself in the mirror of myself to find the thread that connected me to the place where I knew what it meant to be someone after their own heart. Or hearts in the same shape. The shape of a heart is the fist. Gender is a cloud where no one exists as a real thing. We are all just the skin that covers our bodies underneath the clothes that cover us up. I've told you since I was eighteen that I'm not the same person I looked like I would be when my clothes aren't there. I've told you that the outside and the inside are not the same place even in a human body. You don't have to say my name. I don't have to know anything about you. Just say some of those words out loud and out loud and out loud. The horizon pretends to be flat because we can't believe the shape. My shape shifts as it is perceived. I'm perceived through several different moments in time at the same time. You know how to freeze-frame I know how to say abracadabra forwards and backwards and into

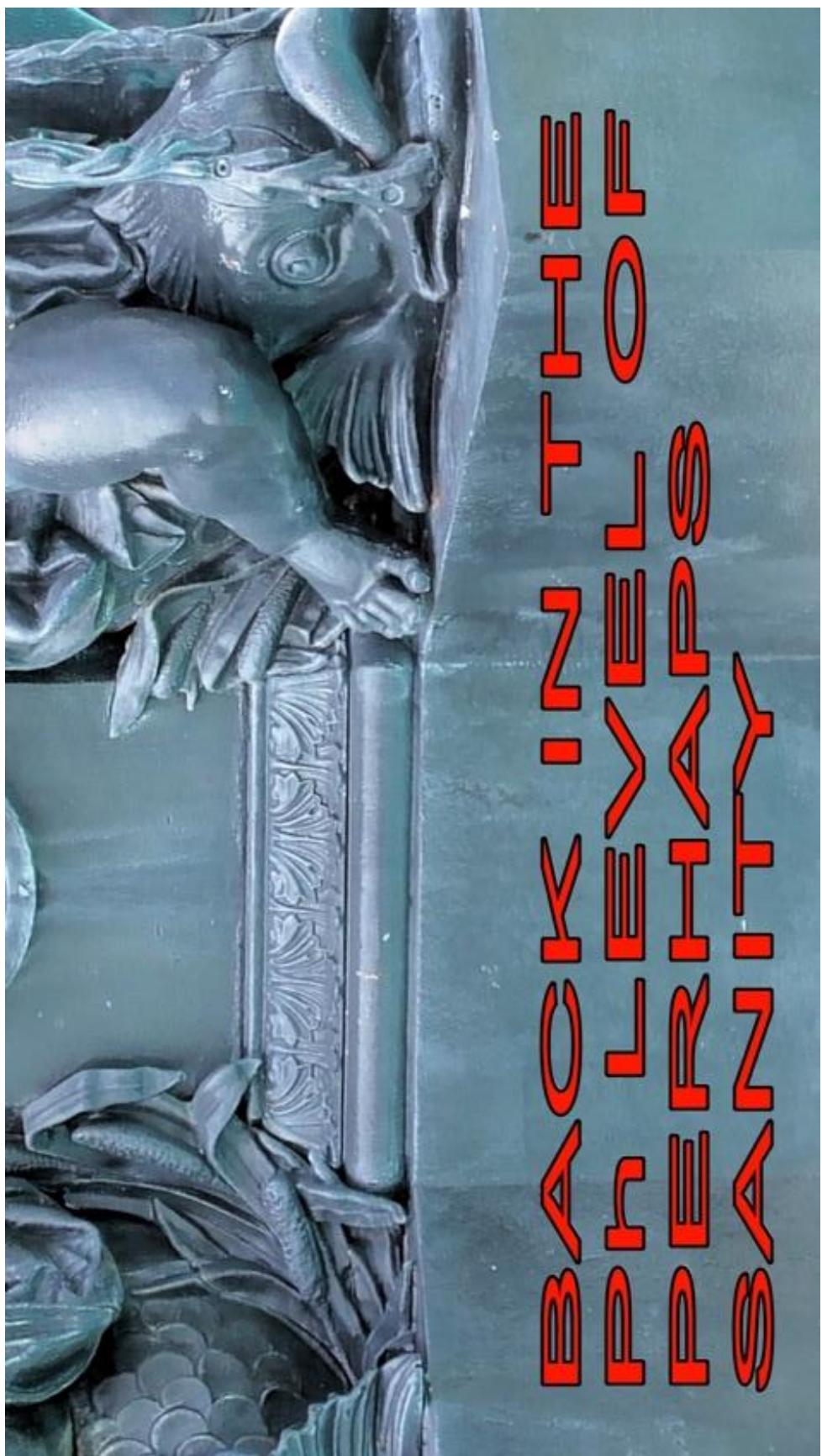
the space above your head. Your head above me is hard to look at. Like everything that I've ever looked at I forget it only to remember it later. In the secret mythology of a self I write down everything. It rolls through me like the barrel of a zoetrope spinning and spinning and the horse moves inside me. And I am the horse. And the horse rolls its eyes right out of its head. I have kissed you but I don't remember. I have kissed you and I remember each dizzying moment. I have not kissed you and looking at your mouth in the dim light of dusk is invitation enough. I invite myself inside.

Jordana Bragg

**Architectural Blue**

*three images*





EVERYONE HAS TO  
ANSWER TO ME  
EVENTUALLY



# Elijah Dawson

## *I'm Home*

Night falls  
And I'm home  
And I'm reflective  
And I'm frustration  
Embodied in cardigans  
And I light incense  
And reflect on the light of my lamp  
I use to live here  
Now its a place to dump things  
I leave clothes strewn around  
Books I doubt I'll touch  
In the corner collecting dust  
Hating the sentimental value  
That I place on things  
That I never wanted  
And yet here we are  
And I hate being home  
And I hate facing this shit  
  
Too gentrified  
6 dollar coffee in Rittenhouse

Fearful of the homeless man screaming  
Because I see myself in him  
And I know that one drink too many and there's a chance I'll be him  
I'm not afraid to die when I look at lime trees  
But goddamn it it's a different story  
Suburban station I missed my train  
I give a man 5 bucks so he can buy a cheesesteak  
He promises to share with another homeless person  
Back in Rittenhouse  
You see I hear high heels on sidewalk  
And the city owns my love for activism  
Turned it from a casual hobby  
To an honest desperate outcry

And I stand in a busy street  
As people brush past me  
Annoyed by my inability to move  
My arms outstretched  
I am crucified to this moment  
I open my mouth  
And the words I shout  
Tremble within in my body  
“I'm so tired of wishing I was dead”  
The shadow of my train climbs walls

As I reflect on your laughter when I call  
You're voice gathers my spirit  
I can see your smile and it's divine

## *Contradictions*

My legs ache to walk for ages  
My chest is filled with cyanide  
And my eyes just want me to sleep  
I can't sleep, not right now  
Stay awake a little longer  
There's so much more to think about right now  
My head is at an end game  
My thoughts are never silent  
Feet in white ankle socks  
I pulled the elastic out  
Because my hands needed something to do  
School bus rides head down  
But not to far down otherwise you might become sick  
Don't close your eyes you little freak  
Stay aware that at any moment they'll crumble  
I am young man  
Trying to figure out this world  
My body twists and angles  
In ways a young mans body shouldn't  
And yet here we are  
Yelling out windows  
Go tell the neighbours you have a son now

And he's a giant fag

Can I use the word fag?

I'm a gay male

But I'm not a traditional gay male

But from behind that one night

That guy thought I was

So he shouted to me

“Hey fag, you trying to suck my dick?”

And I didn't turn around

Because if I turned around he'd see

A body that shouldn't be shaped

He'd take back what he said

And that would kill me even more

*Zoe*

Met a friend today

Wingspan cut

Bleeding fingers

Like meeting some hero

Awkward glances over smoothies

I'm tired I'm tired I'm tired

Ze showed me

I explored steps ahead

I don't know this town

And yet I learned so fast

When ze hugged me

Spikes from zir vest

Dug into me

And yet it felt great

Was it hot or cold

ze unraveled next to me

After being asked what was next

# Eliana Gray

## In Which You Eat My Entire Ass / Friendship is Intimacy

We let each other get away with shit  
Things we'd never do  
*Shall we leave the oven on?*  
*How about we keep things*  
*Tinder-dry?*

Our first date  
(we're not dating)  
Fingering the darkness  
Between us in the park  
Heavy hour after hour  
Sinking like bugs in the dirt

*This isn't what we intended*  
We say at the end of the line  
Who put us on this planet screaming  
*The house is on fire and we'll all be eaten alive!*

Yesterday we talked about cannibalism  
What it would feel like in your mouth  
You said *velvet, chicken*  
*The beauty in becoming someone else*  
I laughed and touched my skin, thinking

Of what I've already been given  
Of what I've left to take

## Long-term

*Let's do something bad, baby*

You and I and the dotted line like the

*tick, tick, tick* of the clock or the pen and

*Why are we even at the clerk's office?*

Filling out a form for adventure

*Isn't an adventure something you just have?*

Like how when you get malaria, it lives forever  
at the bottom of your spine

So you could say it never really leaves you  
Becomes apart of you, like all the things

We're not supposed to do

Spit gum in my hair

Have ice cream for breakfast

Kiss me unhurriedly while the world is falling apart

I can never tell if it's you or me who's hurting?

Don't know the difference in shades

Between your language and mine

And why should I? When I've known you all my life

I got rid of all your baby pictures because

*I know you better than that, baby*

Repeat your life story like a prayer before bedtime

Edit you into my life like a contraction

I sign my name for you, again

*Tick, tick, tick* on the dotted line

This is why we never talk

People can say I love you and then just die

Which seems unfair  
And probably is

But the big guy doesn't care, buddy  
What's so special that you deserve another second

To wipe your bloodied hands over her face and scream how you'd like her to stay?

She's already dead, buddy  
Don't you get that?

That we don't come from back this?  
That the hours we've logged on this earth count for absolutely dick and the dirt we rub on our fingers as self-care in the garden is just crumbled up bodies and that's what we call the circle of life?

Don't you understand that death is not like social suicide? No one gets to climb the mortal ladder. The rungs snap under your feet if you try. Bleeding splinters blasting through wood like a slapstick sketch of the woman who climbs the ladder that always breaks.

Which is the name of my memoirs  
To be published after my death

Inscribed with care post-humor

Love, me.

## Our thanks to H for the use of her home

*Hundun was rationalised as the void was rationalised as a  
lack was rationalised as a kindness was rationalised  
& cannibalised by girls with pierced ears and roiling eyes  
stone-faced strobe-paced  
moon-chasers and dune-traders  
decadent defectors  
from shame – oh, shame!  
to be found wanting! –*

recall, how,  
when you were born  
the outside world  
was at once  
inviting and invading  
and then, how,  
by the cold, cold sun  
they came  
and set their hands upon you.

it was  
no torrid affair  
simply a courtesy  
and a pity  
though that does not mean  
there was no love

in the chiselling  
sliver by sliver  
first, an eye  
double-lidded and lush  
with which to watch the world arrive  
day after day after day

fourth, an ear  
labyrinthine and soft  
with which to hear the seas dream  
night after night after night  
they worked  
to repay goodness  
with beauty – see,  
these men  
they are artists.

Do you remember your first face?  
How it pulsed and blazed  
marigold scab-slag  
lipless kisses blistering blue  
Other days, the brilliant burst  
of the first star  
to die. Other nights  
the rippling ridges  
of the scallop – that silken gaze  
glazed ultra-violet:  
the only appropriate hue

in which to shroud you

on the seventh day  
they made you a mouth

# Jackson Nieuwland

1. My body has a lack of skin.
2. The structure is made of glass.
3. Every morning I paint a face on my head.
4. Every night I wipe it off.
5. The glass of my skull is gradually growing thinner.
6. Eventually it will shatter like a lightbulb.
7. I will lie on my bed in the dark.
8. The pulsing glass of my brain exposed.
9. In the morning I will paint a face on my brain.
10. In the night I will paint a flower on my ass.

1. I am growing stronger by touching myself.
2. There are parts of myself that I have never touched before.
3. My vagina is hidden beneath a layer of flesh.
4. My heart is hidden beneath a layer of ice.
5. When I close my eyes and reach into my chest, I have no idea what I will pull out.
6. Like turning a bottomless pit inside out.
7. I turn myself inside out and look exactly the same.
8. I put my hand down my pants in a nonsexual way.
9. I am growing new parts of myself to touch.
10. A garden from my face, scars on my hands, a black box in my chest.

1. I pull parts of myself out of myself and swallow them to become more myself.
2. It is not enough.
3. I dig deeper.
4. Instead of pulling snot from my nose, I pull globules of brain matter.
5. Instead of using the existing orifices I cut new openings to mine.
6. I only swallow the parts of myself which I recognise as myself.
7. I don't swallow cysts or testes.
8. I pull the dark object out of my chest and feast on it.
9. It stains my face, slides down my throat, and fits itself back into my chest.
10. I pull it out again and again and again.

# Robyn Maree Pickens

## *Malaysian love story*

The first woman said this is a love story

The second woman said I want to engage in a spectacular mass spawning event with you

Both were arrested in April 2018 and caned six times for kissing

The first woman said /

The second woman said /

Abdul Rahim Sinwan said they were brought in through different doors and they were taken out through different doors, as the purpose was not to humiliate the person

The first woman thought this is an architecture of compression

The second woman thought I am the veins of a lotus leaf hung out to dry

# harold coutts

## farewell to a gender i never loved

first i from the closet, then it from me  
it deserves the grandeur of release as i do the absence  
doth it kiss me before we part  
or does its rejoice overtake the parting of the ways

the miasma curdles in me before i let it out  
sour in the frenzy of my skin  
it unfurls like the hand of a lover  
that i've been to lazy to break it off with

the tide at whakariki beach tells me i am doing the right thing  
my soul burns on the silver sand at my approach  
a manicured hand reaches inside and plucks my gender like one does a  
grape  
and i leave it behind in all that beauty

without me it bounds down the dunes  
flourishing in the low light of mourning  
no shape to hold it rigid allows oneness with the breeze  
never so bedazzled in my husk, now it shines

## my gender

my gender is a prince guitar solo

my gender is the shrill HA joanna newsom makes in *colleen*

my gender is karen o screaming 'stress' over and over again at the end of  
the yeah yeah    yeahs' *mysteries*

i bide my time and bite my thumb and bind my boredom to myself  
in the depths i ask questions:

can i sell my gender on trademe

can i use my gender to kill god

can i slow-cook my gender and feed it to my friends

i get no answers

with my gender i have a card house comfort

with my gender i am cavernous

with my gender i learn to curdle in the funhouse mirror

john milton wrote my gender as a poem that i memorised at birth  
having been read it every day by a caring parent  
and then i attend university to be taught it by fellow poets  
eyes burned out at 9AM from behind the podium  
while i doodle my freedom on the refill

i bide my thumb and bite my boredom and bind my time to myself  
foolishly, i'm asking more questions:

can i leave my gender with a grindr hookup

can i reupholster my gender into a swivel chair

can i enchant my gender to make it more powerful against undead  
creatures

i know i won't get answers

with my gender i am a beast of flux

with my gender i am a mediocre poet at best

with my gender i am caught in the headlight

i'd much rather read any other poem by john milton

which isn't saying a lot because i quite like *paradise lost* and i fucking loathe my gender

consider me always just slipping out the door  
gone for a quiet moment or returning to bed—  
whenever you wonder which bathroom i piss in  
know the answer is: not a public one

the limitations of my body are throttling me

i want to be cut careful into twenty pieces  
and fed to sharks purely because i think they're beautiful  
i want to scream, "why am i so sad all the time" from a mountain top  
only to have god call down, "check your birth-chart, dipshit"  
i want to play the harp at my own funeral  
so i suppose i'll have to suck off a necromancer and get some lessons

imagine a new life coiled inside me  
suckled to my nutrients  
a symbiotic growth i will cherish in the dusks and dawns  
i feel the kick and twist as it sleeps  
i feel its heartbeat and humming twixt my singing  
i feel it grow and we are dancing accumulative

on a tide it comes, and i hold my child  
i hold my child and it is all i know  
have you ever looked at a fantasy and become obsolete to the world?  
i have seen my motherhood and cried at its distance  
i am touring this desire in all moments, visa clutched tight  
said goodbye to my loved ones at the airport and never looked back

it's not that i hate my penis it's just that i wish it were detachable  
i would transmute my body in the bathroom mirror  
and the earth's spin is concurrent still  
on a whim i could reattach  
& either way i am whole  
in this world my scars return to the bedrock

i am but a haunted house without the luxury of terror  
cemented in closure and a lack of landscape  
in the half-light i wish i was glowing to fruition  
but the leds are phasing out the harder i plead  
bring me a jackhammer and a high-vis vest  
would you come force my hand?

the sharks in the wine-dark sea haven't surfaced

jaws open for my pieces  
lay my purple on the mountain top in rudeness  
so god knows i don't care what they have to say  
i twist the phone-cord around fingers in eager desperation  
waiting for a call that won't alleviate at all

# Dr Tāwhanga Nopera

## ***submission***

Yayday payday making me queenly in my kingdom. Don the fanfare fashion and bare witness, the whiteness is just a wash and although awash through my thoroughfares, I am thorough enough to apply colour where necessary.

I'm on the other side of submission and it feels pretty fairy. Glissandos of generous abundance...

Dance, it always makes me feel better.

## ***huka can haka***

At night the ocean calls me in singing “huka huka, can you haka?”

Can I candy?

Eye candy I am green eggs and spam spattering in the fry pan’s grease.

Peace, I never knew it - I never found its island shore.

What a bore floating slack, as the silent tide changes tune.

I want to swoon and feel my heart beat fast, feel the lips of another lover’s empty past, another mask carved out of mud and thatch.

I want to smile and mihi to the moon, tint my skin with glitter, then we two can match.

## ***highlife***

A million miles in the sky, the stars, my ancestors, they talk story with me, cradling my existence into a blissful mourning.

Morning is near, this night has lasted half a day, amongst the clouds.

Severed from the Earth below by a reflected sea, it's me and my dreams.

In the sky I am nowhere, and yet everywhere...

## ***hideaway to runaway***

huka was brave on the inside, but from the outside ... well things were a lot different.

His form confused life.

His skin was brown and even though he looked like a man, he liked to wear makeup, nail polish, and sometimes he wore impossible platform stilettos as well. They made his legs look extra special.

When huka was a young child he said to his mother, “people don’t like brown people, especially strange ones like me. I am an alien.”

The masses were zombies, the landscape was cement, the mountains were holes, and the water boiled like acid blood.

The country was a mess.

One day, huka went to see his aunty because she knew difference and defiance. She was brown and different when brown was undesirable shade.

“Aunty, I need an escape so that I can blend in ... I need to make myself normal.”

huka’s aunty shook her head and told him to stop having such low aspirations.

She grasped her moko kauae and sharply wrenched her chin so as to remove her lower jaw from her mouth ...

“This is so you can see all the words you speak before you say them aloud. Now go talk-story and watch what you say.”

The only words that used to come from huka's mouth were swear-words, but now, the words were different.

Speaking them ,huka brought shit up from the depths.

“Wow” huka thought to himself … “my aunty must have smoked some good weed with this jawbone.”

emer lyons

*i have become accustomed to*

interruption

learnt every time i speak someone else is silenced

so i try to

change

woke in the morning

mantra my way into the day



listen to music on mute

i should be able to imagine sound

not even talk to myself

like when i was a  
child

crying before any occasion

if my hair didn't look right

rage by my own hand  
possessions against the wall

heaved every one of my

in those moments of calm after  
decide on tomorrow's outfit  
her

i would put everything back in its place  
wake my mother in the night

tell

*i'm not wearing that //*

she always answered

# Zach Sealey-Payne

don't bother to verify  
a symptom or suspicion  
treat myself right  
every cheat day  
kick off my shoes  
without untying the laces  
///  
into old cupboards and drawers  
i threw my functioning  
locks with keys i've tied  
into ornate knots  
snap under  
the slightest twist  
///  
tell myself abstain  
and drink myself sober  
maybe pass  
out in the ambiguity  
between define and defy  
i'm not as comfortable  
in all things so uncertain

# Gem Wilder

## Denial

It's Ash Wednesday  
and my forehead  
is bare  
but for a new pimple  
or rather  
the remains of such  
I can't keep my hands away  
from what they shouldn't  
be touching.

Like when I sit  
next to you  
and position myself  
just so  
so that the hairs of my arm  
touch the hairs of your arm  
I live in a world of want.  
I won't be giving you up  
for Lent.

# Dani Yourkova

## Peer-review my orgasm so I know I'm alive

Fuck me like the man you think I could be  
In thigh high socks and a royal beret  
He tastes of moderate depressive tendencies  
The smell of sex in a faux-fur jacket

“There’s nothing sexier than liminal spaces”  
I breathe,  
with the mounting desperation  
of someone who lives on the threshold of  
existing.  
I had to become an intellectual just  
So I could come occasionally.  
Don’t worry - it isn’t working.

Pull my hair daddy,  
Hypothetically this time, so I can feel it.  
Write the arch of my spine in binary,  
Just like that. I need it.  
You know it turns me on when you  
Part my thighs with skepticism.  
Please  
Lick my pussy with your  
sense of scientific inquiry.  
Make me beg for it.  
Bend my gender  
across the knee  
of your supple body.  
Yes  
Harder  
She’s been a very naughty boy.

Originally published in volume 6 of *Aotearotica*

## Catholicism

I was a Catholic between the ages of six and ten because I was an overachieving little bastard and Jesus was a foundational part of the school curriculum and at any moment he could pop out of a lecture on the water cycle, with his sad eyes and rock hard abs and you would have to try and remember what it was that he did with the goats or the lepers or the leprous goats, but from what I could tell you were mostly alright as long as you didn't hit anyone or indulge in lesbianism, which became more challenging in Miss Lewis' biology class because she was so pretty with her long dark hair and I had never met a vegan before but I thought it probably wasn't anything because I wasn't a boy, and that was okay because I was between six and ten and she only wanted to teach me biology. Did you know that male and female reproductive systems are composed of external and internal organs? Please locate and name at least five parts of each of the male and female reproductive systems because each month the female reproductive system prepares for a possible pregnancy by releasing a mature egg. The uterus is a hollow feeling. A muscular organ which expands during pregnancy and looks like an abstract of a sheep's skull in diagrams filled with empty spaces. The uterine walls build up and break down during the ovulation cycle causing blood and also blood. When a sperm cell and an egg unite, cell division begins until eventually it ends. There will be more blood. If an ovum is fertilised it will implant in the wall of the uterus, starting the first stages of pregnancy there is always more blood.

**BIOS**

**Hana Pera Aoake** (Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Raukawa, Pākehā) is an artist and writer based in Lisbon, Portugal. Hana is a mozzie bogan with a heart of gold, currently trying to be a skuxx in the land of João, while eating tremoços and watching old Portuguese men drink Sagres and try and fight each other playing chess. Hana wants hot girl summer to last forever.

**Emma Barnes** (they/them) is a pākehā writer from Ōtautahi. Currently they live in Aro Valley, in Te Whanganui ā Tara. They are one of the founding editors of Cats and Spaghetti Press, a press that aims to publish poems not books. They are into poetry, powerlifting and pashing.

**Jordana Bragg** is a multi-disciplinary artist currently based in Melbourne Australia, undertaking a Master of Fine Arts (Research) through Monash University. Bragg's practice spans writing, live performance, still and moving image. Concentrating on the metaphysics of love and loss, informed by wider research concerning issues of identity and gender fluidity.

**harold coutts** (they/them) is a poet and author from nelson who calls wellington home. they have poems in re-draft, poetry new zealand yearbook, starling, and several hundred fools, as well as a self-published collection called fissures in flowers. they spend a lot of their time reading and working on what they hope to be their debut novel.

**Elijah Dawson** is a twenty year old genderfluid trans male, and a Screen and Media Studies students at the University of Waikato. They was born in Auckland, but lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania most of his life. They now live in Hamilton, and spend their free time explaining their identity to cis people.

**Eliana Gray** is an award winning poet who lives mostly in Ōtepoti. Their debut collection *Eager To Break* (Girls On Key Press, 2019) is pretty cool and in 2020 they get to go write in Finland. They can be found on the internet and sometimes in real life.

**Jiaqiao (Jay) Liu** is a Chinese nonbinary poet living in Auckland/Tāmaki-makaurau. Their work has been included in *brief*, *Atlanta Review*, *blackmail press*, *Takahē* and *Best New Zealand Poems*.

**emer lyons** is a creative/critical PhD candidate in the English department at the University of Otago and originally from Cork. Her poetry, fiction and reviews have appeared in journals such as *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Tangerine*, *Headland*, *Turbine*, *Mimicry*, *takahē*, *Southword*, *The Cardiff Review*, *London Grip*, and *Queen Mob's Tea House*.

**Jackson Nieuwland** is a genderqueer writer born and based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. They are working their ass off.

**Dr Tāwhanga Nopera** is a researcher and artist who investigates ways to empower people. In the processes Tāwhanga employs to create both art and research, a vision of hope is always crucial. In any trauma experienced through change, there is always a dream at the end to behold.

**Robyn Maree Pickens** is a PhD candidate in ecological aesthetics at the University of Otago, Aotearoa. Her poetry has appeared in Peach Mag, SAND Berlin, Cordite, Plumwood Mountain, Matador Review, Jacket 2, and at ARTSPACE, Auckland. Her poetry criticism has appeared in Rain Taxi and Jacket 2. She was a finalist of the 2018 Sarah Broom Poetry Prize judged by Eileen Myles, winner of the takahe Monica Taylor Poetry Prize 2018, and finalist of the Brotherton Poetry Prize (U.K) 2019. <https://robynmareepickens.com/>

**Zachary Sealey-Payne** (they/them) is a person who sometimes does things. Grew up in Ngaruawahia, living in Kirikiriroa.

**Gem Wilder** is a Wellington writer of Scottish, Irish, Samoan and Fijian heritage. She writes about family, religion, and the Pacific diaspora. Gem's work has been published or performed in Sport, Turbine, The Spinoff, The Sapling, Enjoy Gallery, The Dowse, and LitCrawl, among others.

**Dani Yourukova** is a queer Wellington-based creative, currently working on their honours qualification in English Literature at Victoria University. They realised that poetry exists after an embarrassingly belated discovery in 2018, and have been writing and performing ever since. They have some work in *Mayhem*, *Aotearotica* and in *Takahē*.

