

Ockhams Sampler

Extracts from
the finalist books in the
Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry
at the 2022 Ockham New Zealand
Book Awards

 OCKHAM



Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry

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The Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards considers both selections and collections of poetry, from one or more authors. The winning book receives \$10,000.

Judging the poetry award in 2022 are author, poet, reviewer and teacher Saradha Koirala (convenor); internationally published and award-winning poet, playwright, short story writer and novelist Apirana Taylor (Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau ā Apanui, Ngāti Ruanui, Te Āti Awa); and writer, editor and bookseller Jane Arthur.

The judging panel says the four 2022 poetry finalists have pushed their craft to new limits, giving us outstanding examples of how our literary voices have evolved. "In a time of global instability, Aotearoa poets have reconnected to their sense of self, exploring identity and challenging our collective history."

This Ockhams Sampler gives you a taste of the craft at play in each of this year's shortlisted poetry collections. You can read the judges' comments about each finalist in pink at the start of that title's extract.

Look out for samplers of the finalists in the other three categories in the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards. As they are rolled out in the coming weeks, you will find them here:

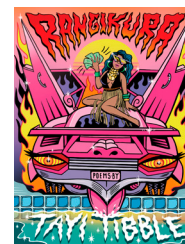
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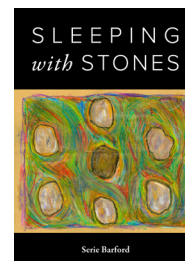


RANGIKURA

Tayi Tibble

Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press

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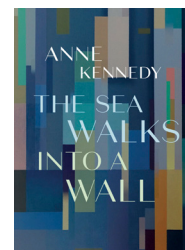


SLEEPING WITH STONES

Serie Barford

Published by Anahera Press

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THE SEA WALKS INTO A WALL

Anne Kennedy

Published by Auckland University Press

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TUMBLE

Joanna Preston

Published by Otago University Press

Rangikura



Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press

JUDGES' COMMENTS

In *Rangikura*, Tayi Tibble further enhances her deserved reputation as a poet who writes with vibrant energy and talent. She has vision, and here sets out to combine vernacular with refined poetics, giving a voice to urban Māori. The result is dense and rich with life and language. These poems pay tribute to Millennial culture and use the power of humour, sexuality and friendship to create a collection that encapsulates this generation of Aotearoa.

Poem overleaf

Yum Yum Noodles (Beef Flavour)

If you want beef then you should know
that we eat a lot of red meat
where I'm from in the stale-yellow
steakhouse with the stepdad with
the short-man complex
who could play anything on anything
& would laugh & call us little bitches
but the laughter was never musical.

Yeah I was raised up with the mongrels (ruh)
but I'd imagine them
in monogrammed Louis Vuitton
like Tinkerbell, & this made me feel
like an heiress whenever I had one
puppyish & in their bag
buying me whatever I want
from the dollar-bags at the dairy.
Stealing *Creme & Dolly* magazines
beneath their hoodies for their lil baddie.

Ascot Park Avenue Princess.
That's my 12-year-old trap name.
At school we'd chant *AC Eurrah*
until the blood
in our cheeks turned blue.

& the quad was a mutherfukn zoo.
If you made eyes you better be able to throw down. Haka could be
heard from the other side of town.

We'd pull up with our pride to the train station
& stamp maroon uniforms into the concrete.
One day a kid showed up with a meat cleaver
& we were all like aye wtf boi?
But then we were all like hey give us a turn too
oi and yeah
he was from Tūhoe,
had that hearty-dark
Scorpio thing about him
but I'm not traumatised. I'm tender.

Yeah everyone wanted to be hard
but the worst thing you could be
was a blender.
No blenders,
we'd repeat like parlay,
like pirate law,
keen to make each other
outlaws,
mean girls,
you can't sit with us
& watch with
crackling Coca-Cola laughs
as the lames limped away dragging their
big broken tails
across the schoolyard.

But it wasn't all hard.
There were parts I loved
like sharing headphones
on the bus listening

to Lil' Kim.
 Then all of us
 the whole bus
 suddenly busting out with
 Keep it G,
 look out for my peeps!
 & knowing it was true
 & we would always do our best
 to spread luv and feed each other
 keep coming thru
 with the hookups.

Hungover at the markets
 a packet of 10 wet
 meat kebabs & panikeke
 to share. Chop suey
 & chow mein
 thick in the air.
 The understanding
 that everything
 tastes better
 wrapped in a leaf
 & you better enjoy it,
 because we all knew
 eating good like this
 is rare.

Cos where I come from
 we know
 scabbing
 1-dollar chips

Nesian 101
 if you don't walk it off
 it goes straight to your hips
 & I can still wobble
 with that p-town swagger
 & I still can feel
 that anger & that hunger
 & I'm not making
 any more metaphors here but

don't you worry about me
 because I'm good sis I'm full &
 I don't want no beef but

if you bring it to my table
 everybody gonna eat.

SLEEPING *with* STONES



Serie Barford

Published by **Anahera Press**

Sleeping with Stones

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Through a kind of verse novel, Serie Barford builds the story of a person, a loss and a life that continues on despite it all. *Sleeping with Stones* is a skillfully structured collection in which each poem accumulates and moves through time. Barford's gift is her ability to use simple eloquence to write about complex matters. This collection does what poetry should do: give words to the things for which there are no words.

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Poems overleaf

Piula blue

I want to return to Piula

swim through the lava tunnel
where we first met

make garlands from laughter
siva with the sun

I want to intercept history
paint DO NOT DISTURB
across your forehead

banish spiteful ghosts
inciting you over the edge

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relocate your final standing place
undo your death wish

come my love

follow me down the mountain

through the desert

across the ocean to Piula

fish will lomilomi our tears
into crystalline water

I will kiss you better

siva (Samoan) dance

lomilomi (Samoan) type of massage

The dark side of the moon

grief is a fist of whirling mussel shells
slicing
scraping
shredding what remains

a white pigeon heard you'd flown the coop
took me gently under his wing

Filemu Filemu Filemu I crooned
offered water
seeds
leftovers

he ate everything except cooked carrots

was a peaceful presence in my dismantled world

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one morning Filemu was gone
waning Masina rested instead
on the guano-splattered roof

I ached to patch her incomplete beauty

I am fully present Masina chided. *Heal yourself*
Instead of tinkering with my perfection.

I closed my eyes

saw the dark side of the moon

white feathers falling like rain

Filemu (Samoan) peace, quiet, stillness. Also a reference to Black Saturday in 1929, when independence leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, dressed in white, called out 'Filemu, filemu, peace, peace', but was fatally shot by New Zealand police.

Masina (Samoan) Moon, personification of the moon.
When lowercase, also means 'month'

The midwife and the cello

I was perched amongst pīngao
contemplating a paragliding instruction

Don't look at what you want to miss

when a woman sat beside me

pointed at the lagoon's mouth
breaking into hazardous surf

crooned I'm a midwife
sing and play cello

I observed her eloquent hands
iron sand burying sprawling feet
lines networking a benevolent smile
dreads tied with frayed strips of cotton

remembered you returning home
buoyant with the miracle of birth

the baby with omniscient eyes
you eased into this world

how she lay within your arms

didn't cry

pīngao (Māori) golden sedge, once common on sand dunes
throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, used by weavers for
patterning highlights

If you were a tiputa

if you were a tiputa
I'd steal you from the museum

treat and preserve you

lift soil from your shoulders
with low pressure suction

divert the landslide
that swept you away

swab you with blotting paper
parcelled in acid-free tissues

bathe you like a delicate artefact

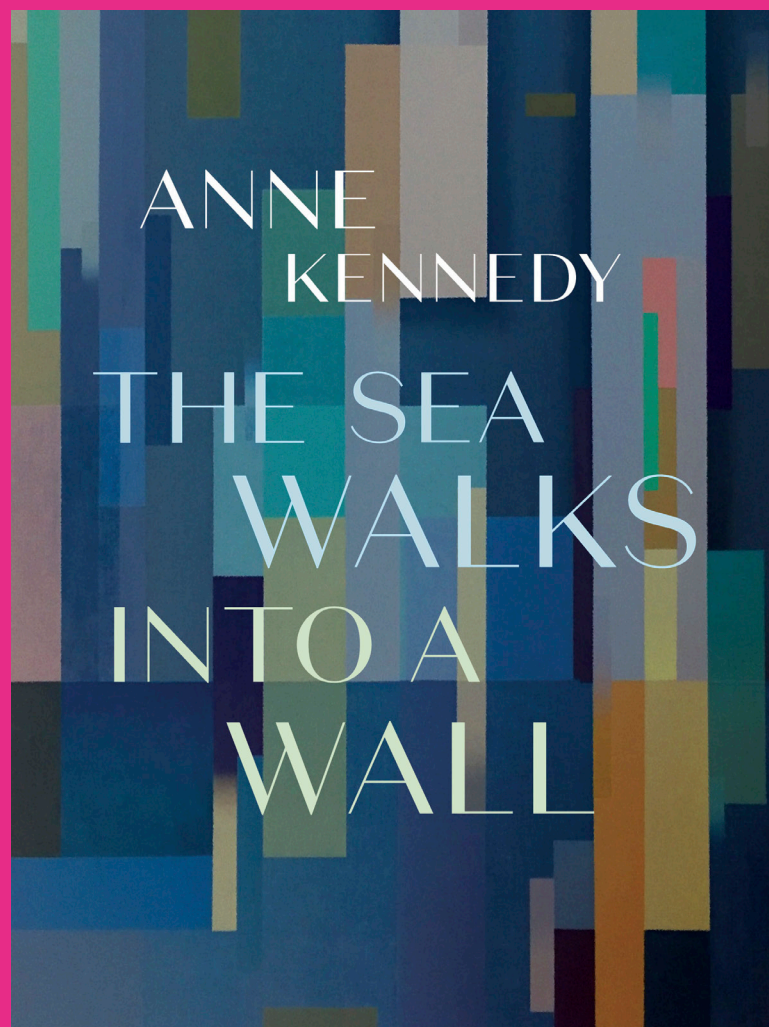
tenderly lacquer your frayed edges
patch gaping wounds with kozo

drape you over my shoulders
slumber within your barkcloth folds

press you against my heart

tiputa poncho-like garments made from barkcloth. The processes
described in the poem are from the 2017 paper 'Re-evaluating
student treatments of barkcloth artefacts from the Economic
Botany Collection, Roay Botanic Gardens, Kew', by
Mark Nesbitt, Misa Tamura and Frances Lennard.

kozo (Japanese) paper made from the paper mulberry bush,
commonly used in conservation and repair work



Published by **Auckland University Press**

The Sea Walks into a Wall

JUDGES' COMMENTS

An up-to-the-minute contemporary collection that tests the very limits of what poetry can do. With her playful intellect and supreme confidence, Anne Kennedy creates poems that are consistently engaged with issues of the anthropocene, beneath which a constant, powerful tide flows and pulls. Worldly, and deeply in the world, *The Sea Walks into a Wall* bears witness to the grit and gravity of contemporary life.

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Poems overleaf

Two Waters

All winter the rain blubs on the shoulder of Ihumātao.
The main drag splutters under people's gumboots.

Children squeal and catch raindrops on their tongues
in the place where the cat got the tongue of their ancestors.

Everything is going on. Laugh and cry and yin and yang,
kapu tī and singing in the white plastic whare.

On the perimeter people hold hands in a tukutuku pattern.

The plans of the developers hologram over the lush grass.

Day and night, police cars cluster like Union Jacks –
red white and blue, and oblique, and birds fly up.

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A hikoi carries the wairua across the grey city.
Auckland Council can take a hike. It's the wettest winter.

The signatures of the petition sprout from the two waters.

The sky falls into the earth, the earth opens its memory.

An Hour

The person of the hour remembers a model of an atom

The person of the hour learned Japanese at school

The person of the hour used to grow peppers

The person of the hour sees that it is 8 o'clock

The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.

The person of the hour notices leaves turning at odd angles

The person of the hour's hands are veined with carbon

The person of the hour read an article about bees

The person of the hour sees that it is 9 o'clock

The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.

The person of the hour thinks about herd immunity

The person of the hour knows hospital corners

The person of the hour has a yellow jacket

The person of the hour sees that it is 10 o'clock

The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.

The person of the hour likes wool and weaving

The person of the hour cleans the staff bathrooms

The person of the hour has a mother who doesn't remember them

The person of the hour sees that it is 11 o'clock

The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.

The person of the hour bear-hugs their son at bedtime

The person of the hour's ironed sheet is a blank page

The person of the hour has blistered heels

The person of the hour sees that it is noon

The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.

The person of the hour thinks the new motorway is a disaster

The person of the hour plays cat and mouse with the sun

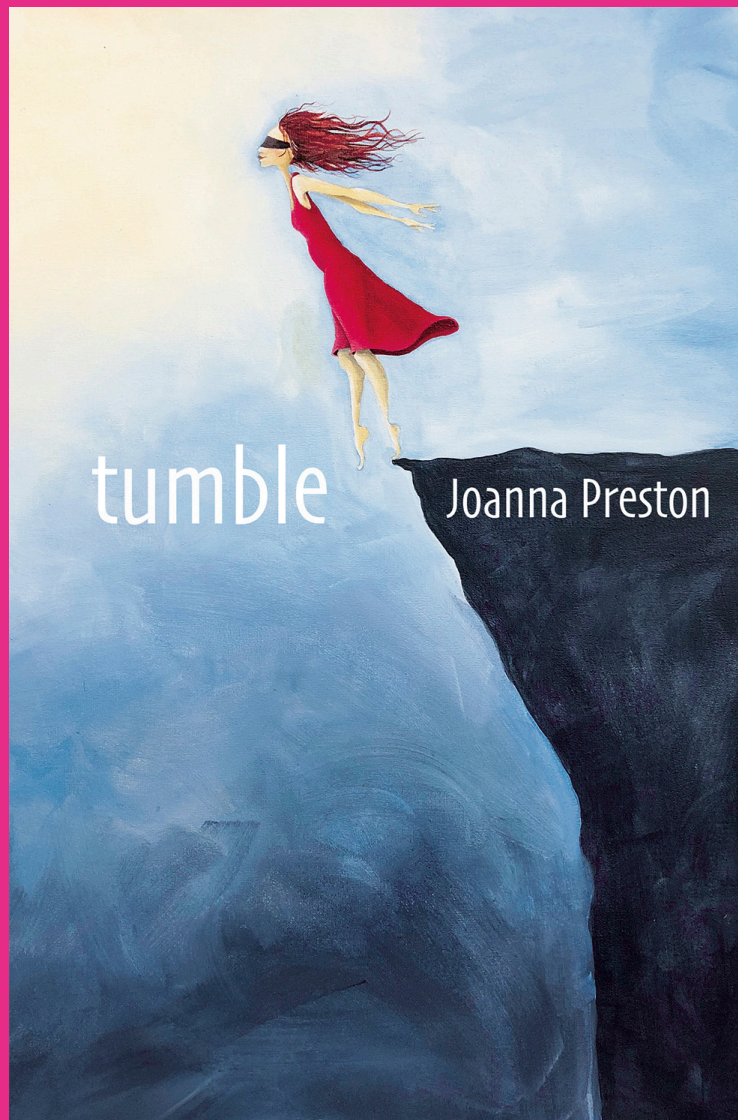
The person of the hour makes dresses at Xmas

The person of the hour sees that it is 1 o'clock

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The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour is not entirely happy with the local school
 The person of the hour has a few last plastic bags
 The person of the hour puts their back out falling
 The person of the hour sees that it is 2 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour diagnoses smells on the bus
 The person of the hour makes a hundred sandwiches
 The person of the hour is a third of the way through their degree
 The person of the hour sees that it is 3 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour loves the smell of a child's head
 The person of the hour puts the alarm clock on the other side of the room
 The person of the hour mops up other people's vomit
 The person of the hour sees that it is 4 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour reads novels about love and no-love
 The person of the hour likes the feel of the road while driving
 The person of the hour is acquainted with the bleats of a child's asthma
 The person of the hour sees that it is 5 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour likes the comedy festival
 The person of the hour was rostered to work New Year's Day
 The person of the hour voted for a ticket in the council elections
 The person of the hour sees that it is 6 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour likes baking bread
 The person of the hour feels nervous in the building after dark
 The person of the hour is worried about kids' uniforms
 The person of the hour sees that it is 7 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour star-gazes while emptying the bins

The person of the hour is going to a wedding in March
 The person of the hour is being evicted from their house
 The person of the hour sees that it is 8 o'clock
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour hopes their kid is in bed
 The person of the hour remembers a hit song from 2006
 The person of the hour drives to their other job
 The person of the hour unlocks for the night shift
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.
 The person of the hour just earned the minimum wage less tax.



Published by **Otago University Press**

Tumble

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Each poem in *Tumble* is a glimpse into a different world, and no two poems inhabit the same reality. Drawing from lines of art, history, contemporary journalism and fellow poets, the collection confidently shifts perspectives and registers, points of view and tone, while being held together by Joanna Preston's light touch. Her pristine imagery and fine ear for rhythm and beat means every poem – and the book itself – is a celebration of poetry.

Poems overleaf

Woman in the water

You came unlooked-for,
and unlocked their faces. Rival.
Intruder. A flaxen stranger
from my family's past –
I fiercely wished you back there.

But you stayed. Borrowed
my mother's swimsuit
and they sent me to show you the way
to the swimming hole,

 dark, and
 so deep
where the current
carves into the bend.

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The only sounds made
were whispers – your fingers
unplaiting your rope of hair,
the rocks' angry tongues to my feet.

 Half lost,

half won, I asked did you want me
to stay, to – No. *Thank you.*
 You turned away

and dived in, swam out, hair trailing
across the surface, a gleaming arc,

light through the crack of a doorway
to one trapped inside, in the dark.

Silks

She straddled the ridge-cap. Against her legs
the day's warmth, trapped in the roof tiles, felt
comforting, almost alive. Nearby, someone
was burning leaves – a sweet smell, like toffee.
Across the fences, the trees were in autumn's silks –
russet and gold, chestnut and bay. She gripped lightly
with her knees, as she'd been taught. She didn't want
wings. She wanted to fly on the thunder of hooves,
feel muscles surging beneath her. The word
in her head, matching stride – *free-ee-dom*,
free-ee-dom, *free-ee-dom* – as she bent low
over the withers, pressing her cheek
against the finial's neck, her own hair
a mane, streaming wild in the wind.

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The dollhouse

Through the window, with its wimple of lace
into a room where no clock ever strikes,
no book ever rustles its pages. The painting
on the wall is mathematically straight,
and the two armchairs face each other
slant, like lawyers.

Further in, and a girl
in frilled socks, her hair in neat plaits
is dressing her dolls before breakfast.
Here is the mother: here is her apron.
Here is the father: here are his trousers,
painted on. Here is his shirt, freshly pressed.
Here is his briefcase, his necktie, his car keys.
Here are the mother's blood-red stilettos.
Here is the mother's short skirt.

And here
is the kitchen table, the three chairs,
three plates. Here are the three spoons
that catch the light, and the two adults
who will not catch each other's eyes, no matter
how their daughter contorts them.

Atalanta

She is running,
leaves underfoot, great drifts
as though she were running
through the soft husks of summer.

She is spreading the wings
of her lungs, running
away from them, businessmen
queued at the traffic lights
thinking of home.

In dreams it feels like this –
effortless. Stride and breath flowing
like sunlight through half-bare trees.

At the end of the path she will stop,
catch her breath, her day
stealing back with the flush
on her face.

But for now she is running. The tingle
of sweat meeting cold air,
the exhilaration,

as though she could outrun her life.



Tayi Tibble
Rangikura



Serie Barford
Sleeping with Stones



Anne Kennedy
The Sea Walks into a Wall



Joanna Preston
Tumble

We congratulate all the authors whose work has been recognised and honoured in this year's Ockham New Zealand Book Awards. We encourage you to seek out their titles in bookstores and libraries countrywide, and to join us when we announce the ultimate winners on Wednesday 11 May. To find out more follow NewZealandBookAwards or #theockhams on Facebook and Instagram.



The Ockhams Samplers were compiled with the assistance of the Academy of New Zealand Literature.

Look out for the other category samplers at:



ANZL Academy of New Zealand Literature
Te Whare Matātūhi o Aotearoa