

Ref: DCDL-0039110



The Potential Wasteland

A Tribute to Kendrick Lamar

I woke up one morning and figured I'd send you a text,
My mind is distorted from the mourning of another
brother, it's perplexed. I was thinking about your country.
I'd be lying if I said you couldn't find a better place,
trying to find greater for the human race is just a waste
of your time, but newly, the news be keeping me up,
I know your mind's conflicted from the things that's brought up.
See back in the States our eyes are on the race whether
it's Presidential or just the eventual decay
of our psyches, yesterday I saw a bullet go stray, just
another day in the streets of a kid going mad. It's sad,
but in the end, that's what you get when you only see colour
and pride – when I see you watch the TV, I see innocence
leave your eyes, you're teased by the arguments of Fox
and CNN on the box. New Zealand too young to be fantasised
by the endless bright lights and quick sights of fast food
and fake news. It's sad to see the freeways lined up with
hope in the shape of a burger, fries or sundaes instead of
locals selling their best raise. When Sundays come, I pray
your den don't fall victim to the pain my nation feels at
10 in the evening, another school trapped in the cycle of
gun violence spiralling into a back-and-forth on the
Twitter feed. And while reds and blues like to argue
on the news, it doesn't stop Pirus beefin' with Crips or the
Police shooting at six. I just fear more guns in the streets
won't let you be at peace, even if they are in the hands of
the so-called 'keepers'. And speaking of streets, I fear
the growing population of homeless lost upon your city, it's silly I
must say it reminds me of LA not the Aotearoa I love to stay. For
American is not united, but instead a manifestation of the worst
things Westerners can drum up, a political wasteland where your
dissatisfaction with the left means you lean to the right.

A war-ridden wasteland where if you aren't expected to give blood and toil to a greedy war on Afghan or Iraqi soil, you're an enemy; and a divided wasteland that lacks stability and unity. And if I am doomed, I hope my words spoken from my newly-formed wounds will bless you and your country for many moons. For America is a mirror, a reflection of my own inner conflicts, my own anger with the establishment and my own pain with my environment. And I hope, with all my heart, that what is happening over here does not start in NZ, for this is not New Zealand.

HUNTER HAYNES

Westlake Boys High School, Y11-13

Winner, 2020

Ref: AWC-0380-F



Kauri Gum Corpse

I watch from the window as the summer passes—a mass exodus of days.

What are they fleeing? I think to myself.

I, the only resident of a relentless grey of winter, travel the long road between the kitchen and my window. Each time I grab a slice of fairy bread from the large china plate my mother keeps on the kitchen table.

There is no noise in the house but the ticking of the wall clock and the equally rhythmic drone of cicadas. We sit still. The house and I. The air inside seemed to carry no movement, no stir of life. *Perhaps we have been here a thousand years*, I think to myself pensively rolling a sprinkle between my teeth. *Perfectly preserved like a body in peat and kauri gum. Perhaps we will be here a thousand more years.*

Is this what they feel like? Those Kauri gum bodies? Slow and still beneath the surface? The world outside my window is lousy with colour. It drips from the flowers a technicolour movie. The sheer volume of life that strange universe holds rattles the panes of my prison. Threatening to break through the glass and seize me in its fiery embrace. I would smell sickly sweet of the flowers, dig my bony fingers into the dry dirt. Let the world surround me and be seen in colour myself. I could move with the quickness of the skinks in the grass. I could burst, coughing, onto the scene. Clearing the bog and gum from my lungs.

The lucidity of the dream made me bone tired. Slumping forward in my chair I knocked a glass of tea off the desk, the golden spill, the colour of amber—the colour of Kauri gum. As the puddle thins and the tea runs into the grout on the floor, it turns to channels of bile. There is no use in hoping to one day be sprung from my boggy prison. It is not the pressure of a thousand years and the earth that holds me here, but my own mind's shortcomings. Not Kauri gum in my lungs, but exhaustion. God is heedless and inequitable in his division of health.

I carry my fatigue around my neck like an invisible albatross.

A sea bird... I haven't seen the sea in years.

Such is the way of the world.

I take one last look at my garden universe and pick up the broken cup.

Sighing, I return to the kitchen, retreating further into the soft oblivion of my Kauri gum corpse.

JULIA LOCKERD

Wellington Girls' College, Y11-13

Runner-up, 2020

Ref: 33mm-102507-F



Friction

Rubber rolls against asphalt.
Concentration straight till infinity,
Roaring sounds of the engine,
Thunderstruck every person around.

Eyes still strong in soreness,
Lips concrete as the ground underneath,
Hands clutch sweat desperately as
Rubber rolls against asphalt.

Water splashes from puddles,
Motor groans in pain, yet
Continues in its ol'-fashioned way.
Thunderstruck every person around.

A breeze soon turns into wind.
Gravel, terrorised, runs around.
Motor's velocity, however, still continues as
Rubber rolls against asphalt.

Thunder strikes a car around,
Every life begins to hide, yet
Someone continues with pride.
Thunderstruck every person around.

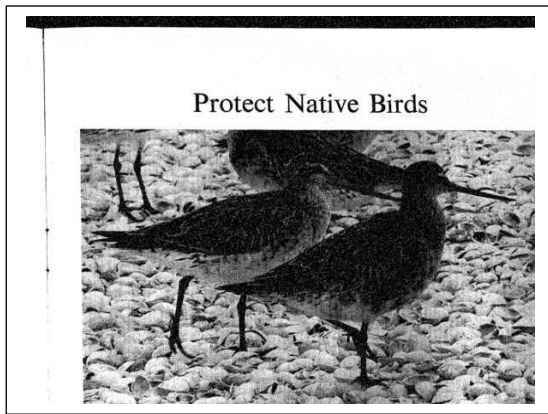
Rubber rolls against asphalt.
Sparks ignite as a piston
Moves against a cylinder with
Force invisible to the eye.
Thunderstruck every person around.

RAISA CHUGH

Epsom Girls Grammar School, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020

Ref: Godwit, Te Ao Hou-33-1960



Wandering Soul

Susie Ji's entry is an illustrated graphic story, with a separate link to it listed on the 2020 Competition Results page.

SUSIE JI

Takapuna Grammar School, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020

Ref: PADL-000106

Half-half

Buses rush past and her
hair drifts wild,
mouth forms a circle,
eyes wide and bright.

Shocked by many things in life
this Little Girl
will not encounter the road of
racial prejudice.
Too Chinese to be Kiwi,
Too Kiwi to be Chinese.

Knee-high socks,
the colour of her soul: white
innocent,
pure,
and delicate.

Wrapped around her fur coat,
she indulges in its loneliness
of split cultures,
for she will seek her identity
her whole life.
Its wanted poster will remain.

Droplets of rain
stain the brittle concrete –
the sky is crying.
A traitor of both sides is inevitable
as she is known to be a
double-edged sword by society.

And so for now, Papatūānuku,
please protect her,
engulf her when danger spikes,
build mountains around her,
slaughter predators with raging lightning.

Dear Little Girl,
stitch the two together:
Kiwi and Chinese.
They are not water and oil.



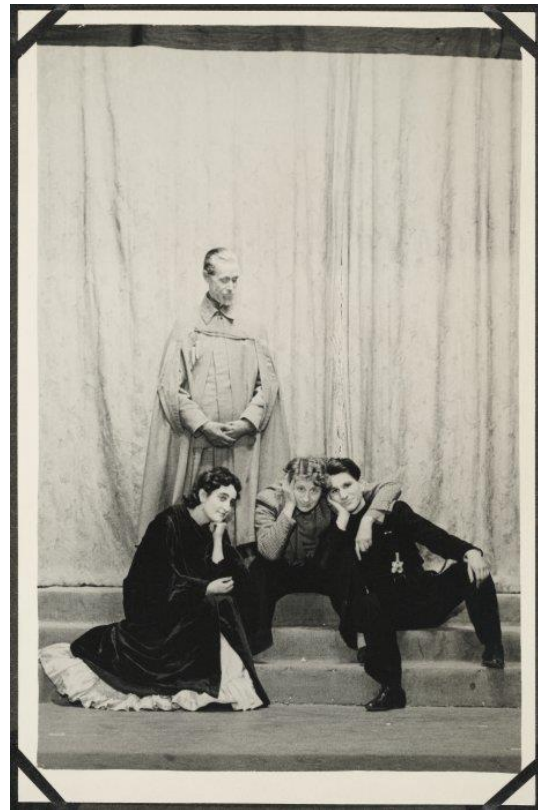
JENNIFER LAU

Epsom Girls Grammar School, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020

Ref: PA1-q-173-33

HAMLET REVISED

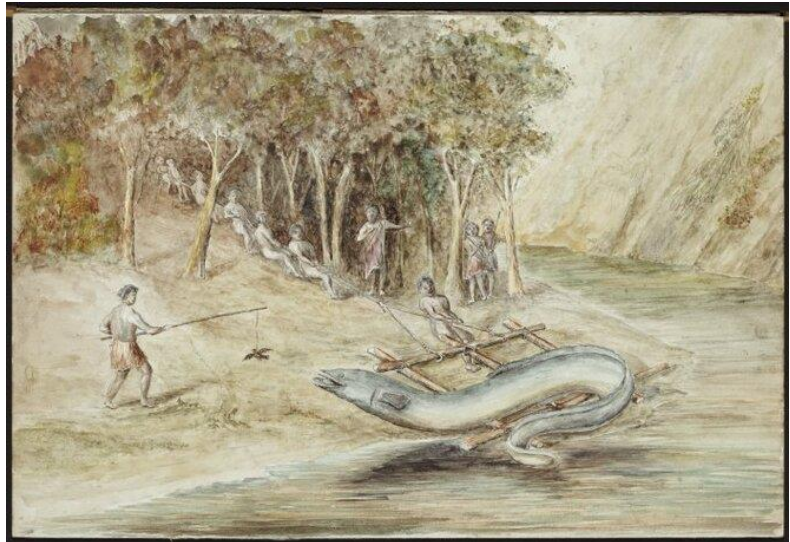


Kowhai Mokaraka's entry is an illustrated graphic story, with a separate link to it listed on the 2020 Competition Results page.

KOWHAI MOKARAKA

Avondale College, Auckland, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020



Tuna Roa and the tīrou

My feet fell lightly on the tepid ground underfoot, as I pranced along the sloping bank of the Great Tangahoe River, whose waters curl like the curves of a great sea serpent. My tīrou felt steady in my hands, seemingly an extension of my body. A subtle breeze echoed through the ravine and caressed the dawn-dappled leaves of the Ngaio trees. The breeze fluttered through my piupiu and cloaked itself around me, filling me with courage. The sounds of the forest filled the air, with the gurgling of Tangahoe as he trickled through the imperious ravine, and the soft rustling of the leaves, as if the trees themselves were whispering to me, almost as if to warn me. The glare from the newly awoken sun was a sight to behold as it lit the water like the titiwai. To my side stood my whānau, my father, my brothers and sisters, and their sons and daughters. Many gathered, for the mighty Tuna Roa dwelt in these waters, he who feasts on those who wander too far. He who hides in the dark depths of Tangahoe, denying us of providing for our families. The men stood ready, holding tight on a taukaea that led into the lazy yet powerful Tangahoe. Fastening a plump bird to the end of my tīrou, I tentatively dabbed it into the edge of Tangahoe, covering my eyes to break the glare. As my breathing quickened and my senses heightened, I could feel a rumble below, shaking the ground beneath my feet, and a small ripple appeared on Tangahoe's surface.

I dabbed my tīrou into the water again, this time springing back. Time stood still. All that could be heard was the pounding of our manawa in our chests. All that could be felt was the sturdy tīrou, balanced and steady in my palms. In seconds, a great wave of glistening cool light heaved into the bank, shattering the deafening silence. There, in the dazzling morning light, sat Tuna Roa, whose sleek skin shimmered like that of Tahu-nui-a-rangi. He was the length of four men and as wide as the tall Kahikatea. His head looked like that of a monstrous Taniwha, teeth as sharp as a Pouakai's talons, eyes little more than slits. A look of contempt was evident as he glared, having been awoken from his long slumber. Slithering through the sunlit stream he edged ever closer to the bank, his slits of eyes never ceasing to break his gaze, as if he was staring deep into my wairua. I could feel his presence searching, shifting through my thoughts, my feelings. But I resisted. I stood my ground and resisted the darkness which threatened to poison my mind. A hiss escaped his gaping jaws, likely savouring the meal to come and he turned his gaze to the plump bird tied to the end of my tīrou. I dangled it now, tantalisingly close to the river's edge, taunting him.

Quick as a mokomoko, Tuna Roa suddenly surged forwards, clamping my tīrou in his jaws. The water retreated tentatively, anxious of what was to come. The wind swirled around me, screaming in a flurry of rage. The trees ached and groaned, whispering in despair. I cried out to my whanau, and they heaved the taukaea, pulling out of the water a wooden frame which dragged Tuna Roa with it. But as I taunted the Great Tuna Roa, and my brothers and cousins surrounded the magnificent beast, I froze. I froze in realisation, in admiration, that this great being was far more powerful and coherent with nature. There was an agreement between the forces of the earth, water and wind and great eel, which was far greater than I. It was far greater than any man or woman. Tuna Roa looked at me with those slits of eyes. The contempt remained, although there was a glimpse of understanding, so fleeting that I could hardly believe it happened at all. My brothers and cousins had also frozen expectantly, waiting for my command. But it did not come, and so the Great Tuna Roa slithered gracefully back into Tangahoe and with a flick of his tail, he was gone.

MATT SELLWOOD

Wellington College, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020

Ref: DCDL-0039110

TRANSPARENCY

Woolly sheep,
On luscious green hills,
Herds of bobbing heads,
Acres they fill,
The essence of idealism,
Captured on TV,
Painting two blobs of land engulfed by sea,
So untouched,
So safe,
So perfect.

But look
behind the screen,
You will soon reach a point
where grass isn't green.
So step away from illusion,
To capture raw Aotearoa,
No false conclusions.

See money-hungry entrepreneurs,
Contracts signed,
Launching another fast food chain,
Mmmm, so divine,
Burger King, KFC, McDonalds,
Which one could be next?
Destination?
Dirty South Auckland no context,
Plus-sized bodies,
Clogged arteries,
Yeah, no fuss,
Because obesity defeated us,
again.

Thirty years from now,
I will be displaced,
Alongside 300,000 other Kiwis
needing to relocate,
Because vanishing coastlines are what remains,
Crystallizing door crevices,
And broken glass panes.
Harsh tides unleash,
To cleanse my blood-stained tapestry,
As fine thread unravels into the ocean,
My beach home, abandoned –
so casually.



Relocation, what a blast!
don't you agree?
House prices exceeding millions,
I want mine for free,
Because gambling is my paycheck,
And all I dream is unfeasible,
So I dwell in a shed,
Damp, mouldy and unbreathable.

Like Rodeo Drive,
Auckland's Queen Street,
Outside Gucci,
A homeless man sleeps,
Alone in the brisk cold,
A cup sits right before his eyes,
Holding onto spare change needed to survive.

This is
Aotearoa,
unfiltered.

HELEN THAI

Aorere College, Papatoetoe, Y11-13

Highly Commended, 2020