Ockhams Sampler

Extracts from
the finalist books in the
Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction
at the 2022 Ockham New Zealand
Book Awards

OCKHAM
NEW ZEALAND
BOOK
AWARDS

Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction

Jann Medlicott Acorn **Prize for Fiction** Finalist
OCKHAM NEW ZEALAND BOOK AWARDS

The Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards is the country's richest literary prize, with $60,000 to be won in 2022. It recognises both novels and short story collections by a single author.

This year's fiction judging panel says the four finalists in this category refuse to be pinned down by genre. "These novels are packed with life in an array of ordinary and extraordinary forms; they all swell with vitality."

The 2022 fiction judges are Otago Daily Times journalist and books editor Rob Kidd (convenor); Booksellers Aotearoa's programme coordinator and avid reader Gemma Browne; and award-winning writer and freelance oral historian/researcher Kelly Ana Morey (Ngāti Kurī, Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri). They are joined in deciding the ultimate winner from their shortlist of four by American writer, editor and literary critic John Freeman.

This Ockhams Sampler gives you a taste of the craft at play in each of this year's shortlisted novels. 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:

www.issuu.com/nzbookawards
www.anzliterature.com
https://www.nzbookawards.nz/new-zealand-book-awards/resources/

Contents

Published by **Text Publishing**

A Good Winter

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Word by word, inch by inch, Gigi Fenster immerses us in the increasingly unsettling psyche of her narrator. Olga lends a hand with her friend's daughter, who has recently given birth, but the helpful old woman gradually takes on a more sinister role. It is an unnerving and absorbing reading experience as the darkness gradually closes in. Fenster creates an unforgettable voice, which at first seems so light and benign as—impeccably paced—the psychological tumult builds to a truly mesmerising crescendo.

Extract from Chapter 1

It was a good winter. I'm not ashamed to say it. For me it was a good winter. And for Lara even. I don't care what anyone says. The facts spoke for themselves.

The baby, Michael, grew healthy and strong. Strong enough to be difficult. Strong enough to have tantrums. Strong enough to build a fort—if certain people are to be believed. And it wasn't so bad for the baby's mother either. Lara's daughter, Sophie. It wasn't so bad for her.

How bad can it be when you're lazing about in bed all day? When you're waited on hand and foot? People bringing you warm drinks and asking how you're feeling. Friends bringing flowers and soup, and everyone feeling sorry for you. Lara especially, feeling sorry for her daughter. Fussing over her. Preparing her bath for her. How bad can it be when your mother is running your bath and your baby is being looked after by his granny? His granny, Lara. And me. And all you have to do is sit up every now and then so someone can fuss over you? How bad can that be?

For all Sophie's weeping and moping, that winter wasn't half-bad for her. I don't care what anyone says. Her home was warm and tidy. Her mother was close. Her baby was bonny. There was routine. A time for feeding. A time for bath. A time for bed. It was good for Michael having that routine. It was good for Sophie having that routine. It was a good winter.

Michael was a happy baby. We were good for him, Lara and I. We just about lived there that winter, after Michael was born and Sophie didn't want to leave the house.

Not that we didn't respect Sophie's privacy.

Not that I'd ever overstay my welcome. But they both needed looking after—both mother and baby, Sophie and Michael. Even though there was Nancy to cook and clean. And all those friends bringing flowers and food. They needed looking after.

Lara couldn't be expected to do it on her own. She was a grandmother. Not a young woman. Neither of us were. It was tiring for Lara, fussing over Sophie and looking after Michael.

Lara needed me that winter. Because what none of them saw, not Sophie in her bed or Nancy with her cleaning, or those friends with their soup and their flowers. What none of them saw was that Lara also needed looking after.

I saw it.

I looked after Lara. We both looked after Sophie and her baby. We had to. It's not like Sophie was going to look after that baby herself. All she was interested in was weeping for her dead husband. She was so busy weeping for her dead husband that she paid scant attention to his baby, who was right in front of her.

Who does that? Who takes to her bed when she's got a baby?

Who takes more than nine months to mourn a dead husband?

That's how long he'd been dead for. He died more than six months before Michael was even born. Yet there his widow was. In her bed. Weeping. While the grandmother is left to look after her baby.

Lara had to take Michael to Sophie when it was time to put him on the breast. Sophie would be crying and dripping tears. With her nose all red. Used tissues scattered all over the bed. Crying and dripping tears all over the baby.

It couldn't have been good for him. Trying to suckle while his mother's tears dripped all over his head.

They should have put him on the bottle. Then I could have fed him. Or his grandmother, Lara, could have fed him. At any rate, someone who wasn't dripping tears all over his head.

I tried to broach the subject with Lara. I said someone had told me a baby could get depressed through the mother's milk, if the mother was depressed.

It made sense. Mothers pass all sorts of things to their children. I told Lara that Sophie could pass her depression on to Michael. I also mentioned the dirty tissues—how unhygienic

it was for him to be feeding in a bed of snotty tissues.

Lara didn't get what I was saying. She didn't understand that it was Michael I was worrying about. She said, Oh Olga. Olga. In an exasperated voice. And she said, Honestly, I've seen maybe one tissue on the bed. Two at most. She said it was good for Sophie to be breastfeeding.

I was upset by that exasperated tone. Those *Oh Olgas* upset me. I mean, it was the baby I was thinking about. Only the baby.

Lara went on a bit about the dirty tissues, in that exasperated, you-don't-know-what-you're-talking-about tone. Honestly, Olga, there was at most one tissue on the bed. Honestly, Olga.

That made me angry. I mean there were at least three tissues on the bed. We could have gone, right then, and counted them. I was about to say that. But then Lara started crying, and I saw she was looking tired, and I realised she didn't mean that exasperated tone. She was tired, and who could blame her? Sophie had been weeping away like nobody's business all morning. She'd even had the doctor in to give her something for her headaches. That's why Lara was exasperated. That's why I'd mentioned the breastfeeding in the first place. But I shouldn't have mentioned the tissues. She'd thought I was criticising her. She'd thought I was accusing *her* of being dirty and unhygienic.

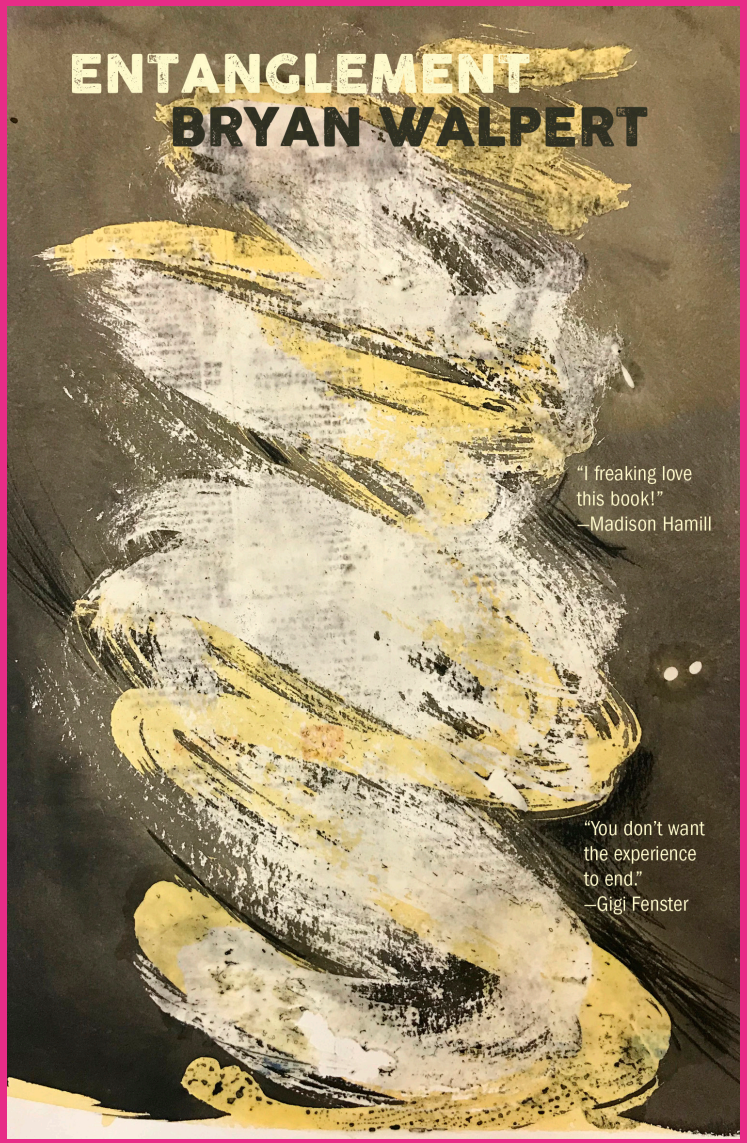
You can imagine how awful it made me feel to see her crying. To know that I had caused it. No one wants to make someone they love cry—everybody knows that.

I bet no one had ever made Lara cry before. She's someone who'd been adored from the moment she was born. Been loved by a husband for decades and decades. Been loved by her parents and her children and her friends. Someone who is

beautiful and proud and surrounded by friends.

Lara really is surrounded by friends. Wherever she goes, they're there with their worries and their problems and their insistence that she listen to their silly stories.

And yet I, little old me, could make her cry.



Published by **Mākaro Press**

Entanglement

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Dazzlingly intelligent and ambitious in scope, *Entanglement* spans decades and continents, explores the essence of time and delves into topics as complex as quantum physics. But at the heart of Bryan Walpert's novel is the human psyche and all its intricacies. A writer plagued by two tragedies in his past reflects on where it all went wrong, and his desperation leads him back to Baltimore in 1977. A novel unafraid to ask difficult questions, and a novelist unwilling to patronise his readers.

Extract from a chapter: 'Lake Lyndon Writers Retreat 2019'

Write a scene in which a routine outing (shopping, a dentist's visit, a café) becomes metaphor. He thought of it as progress, taking a trip together to the mall. A short trip, small progress. It had been a long time since they'd done anything together, any domestic task. Every errand had been his or hers, you go, no I'll go, fine you go. When she said she was going to the mall, he said, okay. She said, do you need anything, which surprised him, and he listed several items. She interrupted him, said, why don't you just come, then. It wasn't a gracious invitation, but he knew she couldn't be

gracious. Possibly even this invitation, dismissive as it seemed—as though annoyed he had responded to her question at all—was the best she could muster. He took it. He took it as the first sign of a kind of glasnost between them. It felt almost familiar, the gestures and sounds of two people leaving the house at the same time. He washed a few dishes while she pulled together the list—a bulb for the lamp, a pair of new running shoes for her, an extension cord to replace one that was fraying, some wallpaper glue to reattach a piece lifting in the main bathroom; it was, he thought, an errand of many repairs. While they put on their coats, she said she would drive, which was unusual, and if it signalled a need for control, he didn't care. He left the house first, walked straight to the car, which he'd parked on the driveway, heard her shut the front door. It was a cold day, but bright, crisp. Across the street, one of the neighbours, an older man named Ted, wearing torn pants, a flannel shirt and a wool cap, was raking leaves. Ted's wife, nearer the house, crouched on her knees in front of the flower garden. He waved to Ted, who waved back, and seeing himself and his wife through the neighbour's eyes, as a couple on a routine domestic errand that paralleled in some way Ted and his wife's joint efforts at their house, he felt in that facsimile of normalcy not peace, exactly, but the faint memory of what peace was like, a brief wave of sensation to remind him that the tension of his life was not the way he had always lived, was not the only way to live, a sensation akin to tasting a food one had not eaten in many years and remembering suddenly both the pleasure in and the forgetting of it. The car was locked, so while waiting for her to come with her keys, he leaned against it. It felt wrong. The front left tyre was lower than the others, clearly leaking. He put his ear to it and thought he could hear the hiss, but he wasn't sure. What's the problem, she said,

coming to stand beside him, seeing him now on one knee beside the car, then saw the tyre, the way the car pitched a bit in that direction. Crap, she said. I'll get the spare, he said, we can make it to the garage on that, then see if they can repair it. Probably a nail they can pull out and patch. It's no problem. We'll still be able to get to the mall. Okay, she said. They stood there a moment. What are you waiting for, she said. I need you to unlock the trunk, he said, so I can get the jack and the spare. You have the key, she said. No, you said you would drive. No, I said you should drive. So you don't have the key. No, I assumed you would bring it since you were driving. He went back to the front door then realised, of course, even as his hand reached the knob that he had no front door key. Can you unlock this, he called back over his shoulder, so I can grab my car keys. She said, you know I keep my car keys on the same ring as my house keys. So did he. He glanced back at Ted, raking his leaves. He wished he had given the neighbours an extra set of house keys, had long planned to do so, but that required actually getting to know them, a chain of interactions—saying hello more frequently, offering his rake or mower or some baked goods or just extra tomatoes from the vegetable garden—in order for the exchange of keys not to seem a rude imposition. It just hadn't happened. Sometimes he left open the upstairs bathroom window after his shower to get out the steam—the fan was largely ineffective—and forgot to close it. He went around back to check, but he couldn't tell from there. He pulled himself up onto the ledge over the back deck by climbing up the lattice, snapping a piece of the crosshatching. From there he was able to see the bathroom window. It was closed. He let himself back down more carefully, walked around the house, checking each window—the kitchen, the living room—though he knew they'd be closed; there

was no reason to open them on a cold day like this. He checked the back door, the French doors. He always insisted that they lock the doors, always triple-checked them at night. Mildly obsessive compulsive, probably. He went down the back stairs to rattle the basement door, then worked his way around to the front where his wife was sitting on the stoop, chin in her hand, looking at the car leaning to the left. How long had it been—ten, fifteen minutes, since they'd left the house? He looked through the front window, the vertical one beside the front door, into the foyer. The window was ridged and translucent to avoid prying eyes, but he could still with some effort see the blur of his keys, dangling from the hook by the coat closet. Farther back lay the fraying cord, the burnt-out bulb. Their lives nearly visible, nearly reachable behind glass as his wife listened to the tyre giving out its last breaths.

Reinvigorate the cliché that love is blind. He thought surely there are degrees of blindness, as there are gradations of darkness, degrees of blindness the necessary corollaries of such gradations, like the growing darkness of a room at dusk, one's limbs entangled with those of another, or the easing dark just before dawn and its requirement that such two separate, or, say, the dark of the Waitomo Caves she took him to see on their one trip together to New Zealand, where the dark is necessary to see the multitude of glow-worms, the stalactites and stalagmites reaching towards one another over time. He and she used the partial darkness to hold on to one another as they stepped into the small boat that took them through the caves, where it was difficult to see, particularly on first entering, until eyes grew accustomed to the dark and it became possible to begin, if one were to inhabit such a place for an extended time, to think of it as light, to imagine this to be sight, however partial, like the cave Plato writes about—she would appreciate the turn to the philosopher, surely—where the inhabitants mistake the shadows cast by firelight onto the wall as real, as truth, because they have grown accustomed to darkness, are chained in fact to their seats, unable to turn away, as he was for what seemed a long time blinded by his proximity to what he thought he was seeing as clearly as anyone sees anything: her gaze, the small cracks in the ceiling over her bed, the fireworks over the harbour through the remarkable windowed walls of her flat as she played Stravinsky's *Feu d'artifice*, the photographs she showed him of her childhood in New Zealand—summers at Lake Taupō, her on a kayak with her father at Abel Tasman, the cello held between her legs. He'd been blinded as surely as she must have been, blinded by the silk of skin, the touch and retouch of lips, the softness of body, the breath, the breathy ***yes***, the languorous liquidity, the return of desire to desire so that it multiplies like a reflection in two facing mirrors. He had been blinded by what somehow seems in the moment nearly too bright to look at, though it is revealed eventually to be a shadow cast by firelight. He was as unable, or so it felt until it did not, to turn away as someone in chains, as unable to shift direction as the stalactites and stalagmites that over time grow ineluctably towards one another. It is only upon emerging from the near-darkness, blinking into the sunshine in the full heat of the summer's day, can one realise that what had been taken for sight was in fact partial blindness, what had been taken for the world mere shadow, though such awareness, coming as and when it does, is also in its own way blinding, such that one must in emerging from the mouth of the cave into daylight close one's eyes to shut out the strike of pain which is the form truth often inhabits, hence, he thought, why we are so often loath to have it set us free.

Published by **Te Herenga Waka University Press**

Greta & Valdin

JUDGES' COMMENTS

From the very first page, this novel has readers laughing out loud at the daily trials of these two Māori-Russian-Catalonian siblings. The titular characters navigate Auckland while dealing with heartbreak, OCD, family secrets, the costs of living, Tinder, public transport and more, and they do it all with massive amounts of heart. *Greta & Valdin* is gloriously queer, hilarious and relatable. Rebecca K Reilly's debut novel is a modern classic.

Extract from Façade

V

The houses in this suburb are too big, too grand, and the trees are too tall and imported. People have gates with keypads to protect themselves from each other. Expensive dogs yap through the black iron bars as you walk by, letting you know you aren't supposed to be there. I always walk a bit more hastily than I usually do here, just in case the police come and take me away. Māori male, approx. thirty years, thin build, seen enjoying the shade of a colonial tree. Witnesses include a $3000 Pomeranian and ten high-tech home security systems. I run my hand along

the green and white of the azaleas as I walk up Thony's driveway. Thony and Giuseppe don't have a gate. Their house is much more modern than the nineties mini-mansions and restored villas neighbouring it. It's a raised concrete slab with lots of windows, split-level with polished wooden floors and glass balustrades. I ring the doorbell. Thony is surprised when he opens the door.

'V, what are you doing here?'

Maybe the dogs were right, and I'm not supposed to be here after all.

'You asked me to come over, you said your laptop and your phone weren't syncing properly. When we were having dinner with my dad.'

'Oh, I'm sorry, I don't remember that at all. But, uh, come in.' He opens the door properly and I go inside, partially feeling like I shouldn't. 'I would have got more dressed up.'

He's wearing a grey cashmere sweater despite it being February, and tan linen trousers and those felt clogs that people in Ikea catalogues have. The house is much classier than houses in Ikea catalogues. There's real art hanging from the off-white walls, which just stop in places like walls in an art gallery. The painting that Thony most wants is not here, though. Geneviève painted it and she wanted to gift it to him, but when she called her agent it had been sold to someone else. It's of women swimming together in Greece, their hands joining them together in a circle in a deep blue sea. A sea much bluer than ours here, which is mostly grey and sometimes green.

'Where's Gep?' I ask.

'Ah, he went to Jakarta.' He rubs the back of his head, where he still has a surgical scar.

'Are you okay?'

'Yeah, I'm fine.' He stops and looks at me. 'V, you don't want any weed, do you?'

'Uh, no, I can't smoke. Because of my lungs.'

'Right, right, of course. I'll get you an Aperol Spritz.' I don't argue, despite this not really feeling like the right time for a fruity spritzer. I notice that there are three records and an ashtray lying in the middle of the living-room floor. All the windows and doors to the deck are open. I sit on the brown leather couch, glad I'm not wearing shorts so I don't get stuck to it. I want to know why Gep's gone to Indonesia all of a sudden, but I feel unsure about asking.

Thony comes in and puts the lurid orange Aperol Spritz carefully on a coaster on the coffee table in front of me and inspects his records on the floor.

'Do you want to listen to Laura Branigan, Whitney Houston, or Gloria Estefan?'

'Uh, I'm not sure.'

He waves his hand at me. 'I know you only listen to sad men prancing around in singlets. Did you know wearing singlets used to be for people who liked having fun? Being gay used to be fun. And illegal and dangerous. Now it's just about being romantic and sad.'

He puts one of the records on and sits down on the other couch, his hands resting on his knees like he's in a school sports photo.

'Did you ever have a dream, Valdin? Of what your life would turn out like?'

I look at the coffee table. There's a photo journal on it, but it's not the kind that would publish the photos Thony would take. He takes photos of actors sharing their homes for the first time, embracing their bodies, perfume ads, that kind of thing.

'I think I just try and take each day as it comes.'

'That's because your generation knows better than to have dreams. When I was fifteen my dreams were to go to

the West and attend a beach hop.'

'What's a beach hop?'

'I saw one in a movie, all these attractive young Americans dancing on a beach and drinking out of coconuts. We didn't have many good movies in our town, we just watched whatever someone found somewhere in a basement under the library. Have you been in love before? Did you love Xabi?' At this point he lies down on the couch, which he seems to be the exact same length as.

'Ah, yeah. I guess so.' I poke at the jute rug on the floor with my sneaker. I don't want to recall a montage of times I told Xabi I loved him, but I do anyway.

He nods. 'I know how it feels. Do you miss him?'

'Yeah.' My voice doesn't quite come out how I want it to, but Thony is oblivious.

'Gep misses him a lot, too.' He sighs. 'And he's always worrying about Cosmo.'

'What's going on with Cosmo?'

'Something happened and he left Paris, but we don't know where he went or what happened. He hardly replies and when he does, he says he's fine and don't worry, but Gep worries anyway. He had an argument with Geneviève about it, her thoughts are if he says he's fine, he's fine. But Gep used to disappear like that when something was wrong, so he knows he's not fine. I feel like a spare part. I love Cosmo, but I'm always aware I'm his extra parent. The two he has are already enough to deal with. One of my other dreams was to have my own baby.'

'Why didn't you, was it too complicated?'

'I can't. Because of the drugs they had me on when I was sick. Things were more difficult then, and we already had Cosmo half the time anyway. It wasn't something that mattered to anyone except me. It's okay. I have many other fortunate things in my life. It's not

environmentally conscious anyway, to go around reproducing.'

I look over at him. He's still lying flat on the couch looking up at the ceiling. 'I'm sorry Thony, I didn't know about that.'

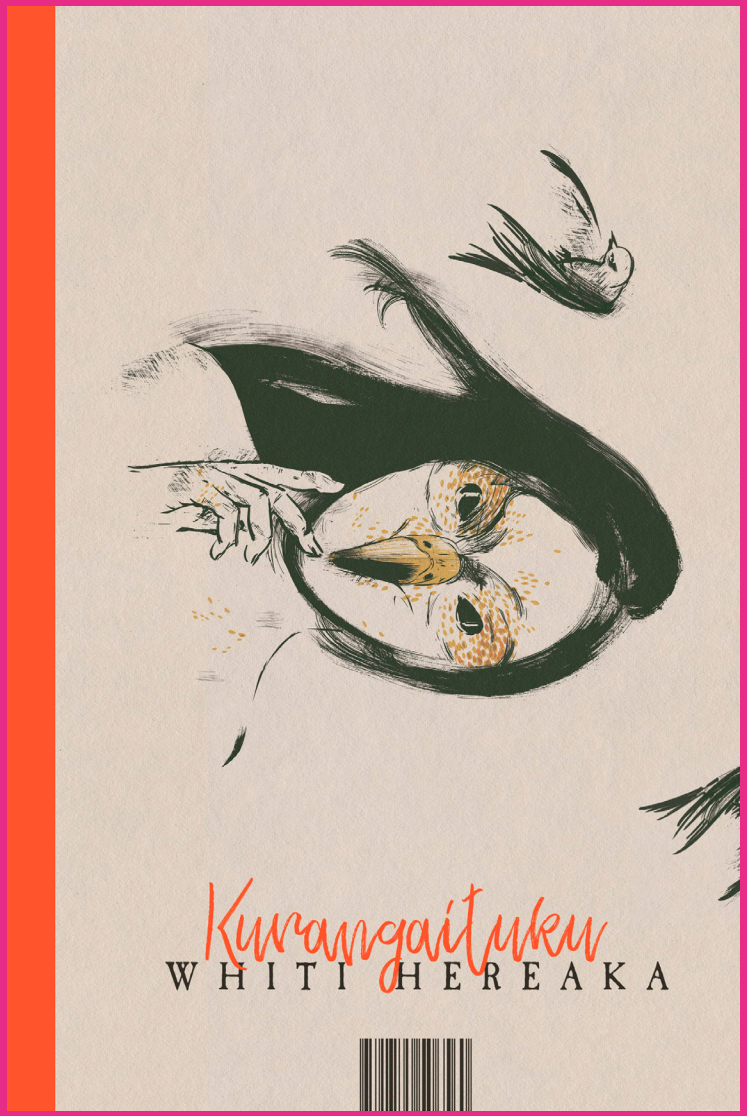
'I don't know if I told anyone else before. Some things we talk about all the time and some things we never talk about. Sometimes your dream comes true and it doesn't feel like you thought it would. I was so afraid.'

'When you were sick?' I pick up the Aperol Spritz and drink some of it because I feel like I should.

'No, when I found out that we were coming to the West. When I was fifteen. Linsh was fourteen. I thought that if we ever got to leave, it would be because whoever in Moscow said that we could, Brezhnev would have made a deal for us to go on holiday for being such good Soviets. Maybe it would be deemed good for international friendship. And we could take a trip to London or Berlin and buy jeans and eat burgers and then we'd come back. I didn't think we were going to be defectors. My life is so comfortable now that when I hear about people leaving North Korea, I feel so sorry for them and their struggle, and then I remember we did that. Even though we don't talk about it, we did that too.'

'What are you talking about?'

It's only at this point in my life that I realise that my imagined reconstruction of my dad's coming to New Zealand is completely illogical. The scenes of my grandfather Vlad going to a travel agent and buying the plane tickets, the feeling of the new visa arriving in the mail, the nostalgic packing up of the house in the small Moldovan town, the smiles and tears at the goodbye party—these are all things I made up. No one told me any of these things, I just assumed this is how it must have happened. But none of it would have been possible.



Published by **Huia Publishers**

Kurangaituku

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Ten years ago, Whiti Hereaka decided to begin the task of rescuing Kurangaituku, the birdwoman ogress from the Māori myth, Hatupatu and the Bird-Woman. In this extraordinary and richly imagined novel, Hereaka gives voice and form to Kurangaituku, allowing her to tell us not only her side of the story but also everything she knows about the newly made Māori world and after-life. Told in a way that embraces Māori oral traditions, *Kurangaituku* is poetic, intense, clever, and sexy as hell.

Extract from Te Kore

Kurangaituku

My story, my name, me.
My name tells a story.
Perhaps a story familiar to you.

I have waited so long for you to return to me. I mourned the loss of you for a while, convinced that you would not return. Had I imagined our connection? Did you not feel the same pull on your wairua when we were separated? You had forgotten me, forsaken me. The memory of you haunted me. I doubted my mind, my heart, my reality. How could I have been so wrong?

I sent miromiro to find you. Whisper a charm to the miromiro and he will sing to your errant lover—

Tihi-ori-ori-ori.
Bring her home. She is lost to me.

The sweet call of the miromiro winding the intentions of love into your heart.

Miromiro, a conduit for messages between lovers separated by the forest, by lands far away. The thoughts of your lover whispered from the shadows of the forest—you cannot see your lover, but you know that they are thinking of you, calling you back to their arms.

I whispered my love for you to the small bird and sent him to find you—across the forest, across mountains, across time. Did you hear my yearning for you in his melody? Did you think of me?

Tihi-ori-ori-ori.
A hum of recognition.

And you are here. Perhaps you thought we had been apart too long, that our bond had been severed. But we are entwined, aho twists over and under whenu. We are the fabric of each other—our lives must intersect. I have missed you, and I welcome you back with love.

I have a gift for you—a black sphere, almost perfectly round. I place it in your hand; it sits in your palm, your fingers must cradle it so it does not fall. It is lighter than you expect; it is not a dense mass of stone but something else, something yielding. The sphere feels warm in your hand; it is wet to the touch like a pebble pulled from a river—glossy obsidian, with flecks of white.

It seems like the entire night sky has been captured within it. Hold it to your eyes. Through it you see everything—the black, the dark, the nothingness. Open your mouth, and place it on your tongue—it is too large for you to close your mouth, and I can see the panic in your eyes. Surrender to the feeling. The sphere changes—no longer round, the mass in flux, pooling on your tongue—it spreads out from your open mouth over your face. A scream enveloped by darkness. The dark invades your body through your eyes, your nose, your open mouth. It is the air in your lungs, the blood in your veins, the marrow in your bones. Let it invade you, colonise you, assimilate to it, until your body is no longer anything—it is part of the darkness. There is something in the dark, unseen, but known. Every instinct whispers *monster*. It is not the monster that is frightening—it is the dark.

I am dead.
Am I dead?

The world is dark and all that is left is darkness, a black void blankness. Let it be blank. Listen to the blank, the black, the dark. Blank is different from nothing. Nothing suggests, well, nothing. No. Thing. But blank is possibility—it may be filled, it may change, or it may remain. Blank.

Te Kore,
endless Te Kore, the void that stretches forever because there are no boundaries, no time. There is just Te Kore.

Te Kore,
endless Te Kore, the void that has no substance. There is nothing to perceive. There is nothing, just Te Kore.

Te Kore,
endless Te Kore, the beginning and the end. All the things that have been and will be, but cannot manifest in—

Te Kore,
endless Te Kore.

Everything, every possible thing, is enfolded together so very tightly that enormous heat is generated. It is the heat of creation, the blank feeling
its potential.

And in the infinite void of Te Kore there is a hum, a hum of recognition, a prediction of change. We have started something. It is a beginning and in less than a second everything expands into—

Te Pō.
The darkness at last a presence, there is no longer an empty void. There is the night that stretches on.

Te Pō.

And in the darkness, the hum grows stronger. It is the hum of many voices, of infinite voices. It is all that has been, that will be, finding its form. Finding its will to be.

Particles combine and divide—the ripples of their coupling and divorce spread out and become great waves. Everything has changed.

Te Pō.
The darkness envelops. It invades. It is you and me and we are darkness.

Te Pō.
The darkness is complete, oppressive. It defines and shapes our form. It pushes down, and we push back.

Te Pō.
The darkness is our comfort, yet we continue to repulse it. The darkness that had defined our form has been replaced with space.

Te Pō.
The darkness is now an absence of light. We have perceived this. Our eyes have opened.

Te Pō.
And in the darkness, we listen for the hum. It is both within us and without us.

Te Pō.
The darkness is a womb—it has nurtured us, but we cannot stay within its confines forever.

Te Pō.
And in the darkness we realise that we are not alone. We are many who dwell in the darkness of—

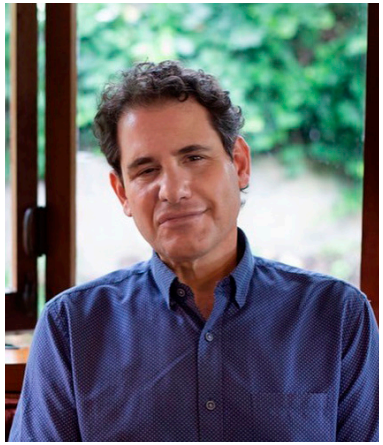
Te Pō.
The darkness, o the darkness that has nurtured us, that has oppressed us and defined us. The darkness that is us must inevitably arc into light.

Ki te whaiao, ki te ao mārama.

Rebecca K Reilly
Greta & Valdin

Whiti Hereaka
Kurangaituku

Gigi Fenster
A Good Winter



Bryan Walpert
Entanglement

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.

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