

Embargoed until Friday 27 July 2012 (National Poetry Day)

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## **Talented teenager wins national poetry award**

Talented teenager Haro Lee has won the National Schools Poetry Award for 2012 with a poem that explores the emotional complexity of sibling relationships.

The Year 12 student at Auckland's St Cuthbert's College, has won the award with her poem 'Passive Aggressive' (printed below), written about her sister leaving for college in the United States.

"'Passive Aggressive' was written about the impact my sister leaving for college would have on my mother, because it's generally the parents who have difficulty letting go of their children. But it's also a bit selfish because I'm thinking of myself and our own relationship when she leaves," says Haro.

Haro was one of 10 finalists in the poetry competition for Year 12 and 13 secondary school students, organised by New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious creative writing programme, Victoria University's International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML).

Judge and current New Zealand Poet Laureate, Ian Wedde, says the poem's language and voice are uncomplicated but full of character.

"What's noticeable about 'Passive Aggressive' is the way its simple arrangement of lines scores the rhythms of speech with occasional well-judged breaks or emphases. They are signs of the poet's unobtrusive but effective attention to what poems can do as scores."

Entries for the Award came from senior secondary students all over New Zealand. Wedde says it was a wonderful experience reading nearly 300 poems from "the energy cauldron of young poets hell-bent on tackling everything." It was the diversity of the poems that made their collective impact so powerful, he said.

Haro will receive \$500 cash, as well as \$500 for her school library—and her poem will be displayed on posters throughout New Zealand. In addition, Haro and the nine other finalists will attend a poetry masterclass at the International Institute of Modern Letters, with accommodation courtesy of the Bolton Hotel. The masterclass is led by some of New Zealand's most inspirational younger poets, Hinemoana Baker, James Brown and Louise Wallace.

All 10 finalists will also receive a package of literary prizes and subscriptions from the New Zealand Book Council, New Zealand Society of Authors, Victoria University Press, New Zealand literary journals *Sport* and *Landfall*, and Booksellers New Zealand.

The other finalists are Beth Rust, Karamu High School; Ruby Solly, Tauhara College; Maria Ji, St Cuthbert's College; Catherine Marshall, Rangi Ruru College; Olivia Whyte, St Andrew's College; Sam Spekrijse, Wellington College; Annie Stevenson, St Andrew's College; Arie Bates-Hermans, Wellington High School; and Jade Trim, Taradale High School.

The National Schools Poetry Award has been providing a forum for young writers since 2003. Creative New Zealand has provided major support for the Award for 2012.

## PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE

for our mother  
you are still the androgynous three-year-old  
dangling on the arms of a  
faded Diana caricature  
but in one month two weeks five days  
she'll ship you off to Pennsylvania  
I've seen the nights crossed off in her diary  
(though she only reveals this  
burden after I have fetched the wine)

I won't feign my liberation  
from your one-sided vendettas on Marxism  
or was it Wall Street  
because of this need of yours  
to play devil's advocate  
your genesis into the real world  
is bittersweet

tell your roommate, your  
professors, that man  
standing behind you in the checkout queue  
of our morning car rides as you  
scribble last minute philosophies  
and yell at me to turn the Oldies off  
recall our mother's  
tear-stained pillowcase  
can you trace us from this place,  
trace me?

when our time zones intervene  
put on Etta James and  
write me cheap postcards  
on Saturday evenings

—Haro Lee  
*St Cuthbert's College*

All the shortlisted poems and the judge's report are attached to this email, or can be read at <http://schoolspoetryaward.co.nz/> available Friday morning.

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