

The domestic assistant

She is Duchamp's nude, descending a staircase,
but in uniform, with a vacuum cleaner hose round her neck,

trips halfway down, hits her shins, bangs into door jambs;
she is a staccato fiddle in the legato violins,

sweeps and dusts in tantalising silence,
leaves her mauri in every room,

vacuums into corners, stumbles on the black spine
of *Hākuī*, takes and reads about her kin,

speaks with eyes wide as an owl's, declaims
with a kuia's tongue: *I am a Ngāi Tahu woman.*