

An epic ode about New Zealand's Brush Tail Possum and why it must die and become yarn.

Possum Poem

Here in the Northern Hemisphere
we add an O to make it clear,
that although kin, they're not the same.
Opossum's really aren't to blame.

In New Zealand's early white man past
the new guys wanted a fur hunt fast.
They brought some possums cross the bay.
They let them go and walked away.

I do not have a possum pelt,
but one of them might make a belt
or fuzzy collar for the throat;
but lots would die to make a coat.

And only hearty pints of ale
weds fashion to that bushy tail.
The fur trade fizzled; just too much work
to skin and tan without much perk.

For a century and a half they filled their pots
on lazy hunts with easy shots.
I've heard they make a tasty stew.
That test I shall leave up to you.

Since nothing else would eat them too,
the possum families grew and grew.
There seemed no problem with them there.
They didn't think and didn't care.

The possums ate the plants and bugs,
they crunched the snails and slurped the slugs,
consuming tender vegetation,
and eating birds that lacked migration.

They found the nests of birds so rare
and gobbled eggs without a care.
It's hard to keep from being found
when you're nesting right there on the ground.

It didn't take so very long
to notice something really wrong.
Soon people saw what many feared
the rarest birds had disappeared.

With bellies full and no real foes
the possums number grows and grows.
Some native species go extinct.
Save what's left! The people think.

Fearing silent forests and barren skies
the Kiwis saw their need to rise.
They had the meetings, made the call
there wasn't mercy, none at all.

To get the pesky varmints out
by any means. Without a doubt.
There weren't any tears to cry.
All the possums have to die.

In an effort not to waste,
and maybe tired of the taste.
They use the long hair from the tail
and turn it into goods for sale.

One third possum, two thirds sheep
is recipe for yarn to keep.
When blended with merino wool
it makes a fiber soft and full,

and Oh so warm it leaves you yearning
for cold clear nights and fires burning.
The yarn a treasure to the touch,
woven into works so lush.

Alive invader to be scorned.
It's mere existence to be mourned,
but now as yarn I do detect
the possum finally earns respect.

For skeins of possum from afar
I didn't need to move my car.
It came to me from my friend Carol,
who thought it would make nice apparel.

VJP 7/2016

