



The New Zealand Poetry Society

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

With the Assistance of Creative NZ
Arts Council of New Zealand *Toi Aotearoa*

New Zealand Poetry Society
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WELLINGTON

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☞ This Month's Meeting ☜

Vivienne Plumb
&
Owen Bullock

Turnbull House 8 p.m.

Death On A Long Weekend: Poetry As Rant

In the first Front Page essay, Bernard Gadd said poetry can confirm what we are, and our ideas and feelings. Indeed! At the time of reading uppermost in my mind was the personal experience of a close friend, an experience that confirms, at least to me, a growing and unwelcome knowledge that unconscionable neglect of the elderly has become acceptable practice in some quarters.

Who among us, having heard other similar stories, would not feel like a good rant?

Over the last long weekend, in a local nursing home, lay a woman in her 90s whose legs, said to be 'just bruised' were obviously badly fractured, even to a lay person - in this case the woman who drew this appalling situation to the attention of the authorities. From Friday night until Monday afternoon that elderly woman had been obliged to lie in pain. The long weekend was one excuse tendered for what this frail woman was left to endure, yet robust rugby players with lesser injuries are routinely and rapidly rushed 24/7 to A&E.

Wiser individuals may avoid rant. For my money a good rant, especially in a good cause, has a significant place in poetry. The glory of being able to harness the adrenalin rush and turn anger and frustration into articulate expression may well be the preliminary to descending into submissive old age but wait - remember the words of Dylan Thomas:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

By choosing causes carefully we can avoid the trap of ranting at each and every frustration and injustice, a risk which can increase with growing older and the attendant loss of power this can often bring. A good rant is not the province alone of the mature poet. If one listens carefully to the words in the popular youth rap culture, the lyrics are sometimes excellent examples of the rant. For generations popular protest has relied upon the rant.

In the 1950s Alan Ginsberg, one of the 'Beat Poets', used rant effectively in HOWL. His description of the exploits of his friend, a mental patient, reads to me as the powerful description of the dilemma mental illness can pose, and as an emphatic accusation, to all who might listen, of man's injustice toward man. It speaks too of the powerlessness we often feel in the face of any bureaucracy of which we may have expectations. The last few lines of Ginsberg's very long rant leaves little doubt of a sense of helplessness in the face of the undeniable:

The madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown,
yet putting down here what might be left to say in time
come after death,
and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz
in the goldhorn shadow
of the band and blew the suffering of America's
naked mind for love
into an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani* saxophone cry
that shivered
the cities down to the last radio
with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered
out of their own
bodies good enough to eat a thousand years.

(* *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*)

Meg, the woman known to me, died a few days after her fall due to the impact of surgery to stabilise the broken bones she suffered in what was an avoidable accident.

Poetry and rant can deliver powerfully such messages about the problems facing our aging society, and the experiences frail individuals are increasingly exposed to.



Another bonus of the rant is that it can add powerfully to community debate on significant issues. Euthanasia is currently being debated in this country. The poems that follow have produced useful feedback on that debate.

First, a poem by Kate O'Neill about another elderly death on a long weekend. Statistics show that long weekends contribute to increases in the already high incidence of medical error and not just for the elderly. This poem is ample evidence, among other things, that the elderly have individuality, passion and intelligence of which society could well make better use. And, in the time honoured way of Sam Hunt *et al* I am going to quit the explanation here and let the poetry speak for itself.

Death On A Long Weekend

where are the serried ranks
of angels singing
god effulgent seated on a cloud
the swaying crowd agog
and the Dove
poised
& still
in a sky alive with holy noise
and where the Lamb
garlanded
prinking to the occasion
its tiny feet on velvet grass?
my beloved died quite otherwise
a-septic
machine monitored
alone

Heaven is fled
it could not stay
the soul of humankind
is dead.
oh that I might hurl down boulders
on a mean and calculating world
and in reverberating roar of trumpets
hoist heavenward her rich barbaric soul
to exultation with all the thronging saints!

Kate O'Neill

And this from Gloria B. Yates that also speaks for itself:

To a Critic

Do I offend you?
of course I offend you
of course my coarse emotions and the shape
of my slovenly breasts my jowlish jaws
offend you my mundane melodramas
offend you I am too fat I take up too much space
you are delicate-minded
a sprig of simile here
a bouquet of mixed metaphors there
exquisitely arranged to
catch the eye
as poetry
then I come along
bellowing pain and anger

or leering round eyed at your lust
been there done that
you' re young I being older
can look longer feel louder remember more
including the day before yesterday
and the night before that
so
stay offended
but
I wouldn' t change what you are
your boyish head and curls
your sensitive eyes that flinch at the sight of me
may one day - that' ll be the day - stop flinching
open wide now
and you' ll see me for what I am
a small woman
tired of fighting but
too old to run away.

Gloria B. Yates

And finally I offer this, written in response to public displays of ageism. Just one sample of the numerous indignities that I have witnessed inflicted upon the frail and less inarticulate members of our communities.

Banking On It

at the village mall
the habit-hurried aged
wrestle change
rail or not in shops

bank officers stretch patience
into semblance of service
stifle eagerness to
resume staff prattle

and renew assurance
that age is a distant country
to which they will never
buy a ticket

Rosemary Purse

So if you feel something needs as much passion as light, address it with a rant. Your response might be about the treatment of prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay or the idiocy of New Zealand politicians capitalising on all too common ignorance regarding the legality of Treaty issues. Or maybe you're fed up with cunning pay increases for the rich while the poor need several jobs to survive. Conceivably you might research or inspire just how these aficionados of higher and higher salaries contrive to justify such obscenely self-congratulatory excesses. This is interesting territory and a rant may be just the device you need to launch attack.

On the other hand you could do a delightful rant about how you feel on first becoming a parent, winning something, or having the house to yourselves now the last child has gone flattening. Do try: it can be great fun and rewarding responses await you.

Front Page Essay by Rosemary Purse

☯ From the Committee ☯

Do you regularly attend our Wellington meetings at Turnbull House? We're looking for volunteers to provide a short review of guest poets for the Newsletter. We can't promise fame and fortune, but we'll give you a byline and a chance to hone your literary skills. Please contact Nola Borrell or Robin Fry at the meeting if you are interested.

☯ From the Editor ☯

Isn't it time we started a pro-active membership drive to encourage writers and readers of poetry throughout New Zealand to stand up and be counted? In other words, to join the NZPS.

I'd like to see every school, college and university subscribing to the Newsletter and displaying posters all about the NZPS in libraries, classrooms and corridors. Maybe our next competition should be to design such a poster in eye-catching colour. Perhaps we should be printing prize-winning poems not only in the anthology but also as decorated classroom resources complete with teachers' notes on the reverse.

I've come up with 12 good reasons why people should join the NZPS. Please send me your revisions of these or any additions you'd like to put forward. Thank you.

- ✓ to support New Zealand poetry in general
- ✓ to learn about New Zealand poets & poems in particular
- ✓ to get an informative monthly newsletter to which you can contribute
- ✓ to network simply & easily with other poetry groups & societies
- ✓ to get information on poetry events – local, regional & national
- ✓ to contribute information on your own poetry events
- ✓ to get information & reviews on poetry publications
- ✓ to contribute information & reviews on your own poetry publications
- ✓ to get information on poetry competitions, prizes & awards
- ✓ to contribute information on your own poetry competitions, prizes & awards
- ✓ to ask questions about poetry & get a helpful reply
- ✓ to get access to a fine website, regularly updated & linked to other poetry sites

☯ Subscription Reminder ☯

Grateful thanks to those who renewed promptly and a gentle reminder to the rest of you. May will be the final Newsletter for those who don't renew – think what you'll be missing out on! And what the NZPS will lose without your vital contribution.

Thank you. We appreciate your support and need each and every one of you.



NZPS Poetry Competition: judges announced

The NZPS is pleased to announce the judges for our 2004 International Poetry Competition, which closes 30th April 2004. They are **Elizabeth Smither** (Open section), **James Brown** (Open Junior section), and **Richard von Sturmer** (Haiku and Haiku Junior sections). Judges' bios as well as entry forms are available on our website www.poetrysociety.org.nz on the Competition & Anthology page.

Elizabeth Smither was the 2002 Te Mata Poet Laureate and is an award-winning poet, novelist and short story writer.

Her thirteen collections of poetry span several decades and include *Here Come the Clouds* (1975); *You're Very Seductive William Carlos Williams* (1978); *Casanova's Ankle* (1981); *Gorilla/ Guerilla* (1986); *A Cortège of Daughters* (1993); and most recently *The Lark Quartet* (1999). *The Lark Quartet* won the Poetry category of the 2000 Montana New Zealand Book Awards.

Elizabeth has also written two novels, *First Blood* (1983) and *Brother-love Sister-love* (1986); three collections of short stories, *Nights at the Embassy* (1990); *Mr Fish* (1994); and *The Mathematics of Jane Austen* (1997); a book for children, *Tug Brothers* (1983); and an edition of her journals, *The Journal Box* (1996).

Welcome back James Brown, award-winning poet, short story writer, and 2004 Victoria University/Creative New Zealand Writer in Residence.

His first collection of poetry, *Go Round Power Please* (1995) was shortlisted for the Montana New Zealand Book Awards and won the Best First Book of Poetry in 1996. His second collection *Lemon* was published in 1999 followed by *Favourite Monsters* in 2002, the same year he published *Instructions for Poetry Readings* (under the pseudonym Dr Ernest M. Bluespire).

His awards include the NZ Society of Authors/Reader's Digest Stout Research Centre writing fellowship and a Buddle Finlay Sargeson Writers Fellowship in 2000. He was named 2001 Canterbury University Writer in Residence.

James' latest poetical work is running his new online poetry course at Whitiriria Polytechnic.

Richard von Sturmer is a New Zealand writer and has published two books: *We Xerox Your Zebras* (Modern House, 1988) and *A Network of Dissolving Threads* (Auckland University Press, 1991).

From 1993 to 2003 Richard lived and worked at the Rochester Zen Center, a Buddhist community in upstate New York. During that time his haiku appeared regularly in haiku journals and anthologies.

He has now returned to live in New Zealand. A new collection of his writing, *Suchness: Zen Poetry and Prose*, has recently been completed.

Quotation of the Month

Poetry is a language pared down to its essentials.

Ezra Pound

☞ Upcoming Events ☜

AUCKLAND

Writing at Auckland Uni

The University of Auckland Continuing education has four exciting writing courses coming up.

Well -Versed: Developing & Enhancing your Poetry: 1st April – 6th May 6 – 8 p.m. with Siobhan Harvey.

The Nuts & Bolts of Writing 16th & 23rd April 9.30 a.m. – 4 p.m. with Joan Rosier- Jones.

Leapfrog: Creative Short Fiction 20th April – 11th May 6.30 - 8.30 p.m. with Tina Shaw.

Tightening the Nuts & Bolts 22nd & 23rd May 9.30 a.m. – 4 p.m. with Joan Rosier-Jones.

To enrol or for further information phone Continuing Education (ph 09 3737599 x87831 or 87832) or e-mail je.davies@auckland.ac.nz.

Auckland Poetry Nights

Launching on Monday 5th April comes a welcome new addition to the Auckland poetry scene. 6 p.m. at Baxter & Mansfield's Bookshop, 54 Wellesley Street West, on the first Monday of every month. You can bring your own work, or choose to read someone else's for sharing and response. All are welcome, whether Bloomsburys, Beatniks, punks or post-Modernists. For further information, phone 09 307 7889, or e-mail books5@hardtofind.co.nz.

TAURANGA

Poetry Out There! 7th – 9th May 2004

A weekend for poetry-lovers in the Bay of Plenty when the Northern Lights Tour reaches Tauranga City. Poets James Norcliffe, Emma Neale & Nick Ascroft will add lustre to the Prize-Winners Awards Ceremony on Friday May 7th at 6 p.m. when triumphant Bravado Poetry Competition entrants will receive their prizes from Mayor Jan Beange.

Jan is known locally as a poetry-lover and will share her own favourite poem with the audience. The Ceremony is to be held in the Washington Room, Hotel Armitage, Willow Street. Afterwards, prizewinners can join us, if they wish (and at their own expense) for dinner and discussion with our visiting Celebrity Poets in the Gallery Restaurant.

On Saturday 8th May from 12 noon to 2 p.m. there is Poetry in the Park at Yatton Park, Greerton, and the first public reading from our celebrity poets. Interlude music will be provided throughout from Tauranga Music Club's local musicians and songwriters.

There's going to be a visit from the Word-Wizard who will help children write animal poems for the Poet-Tree – and face painters Andria and Kerri on hand so they can be that animal, if they wish!

Belly Hoo, the performance troupe of Art of Movement's Eastern dance group, will interpret *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam* in sinuous rhythms from ancient Persia. Belly Hoo were the Bay's 'Buskers of the Year' last year and recently appeared at Tauranga's annual Ethnic Festival. The Portable Art Gallery will exhibit miniature paintings on Ocean, Spirit, Earth – the theme of the Bravado Poetry Competition – and the Nine Muses will direct you round all this and more on offer. If you prefer, bring your own picnic to share with family of friends, or sample Italian coffee, the sausage sizzle or ice-cream on sale.

In the evening, a Celebrity Reading will be held with James Norcliffe, Emma Neale & Nick Ascroft at the University of Waikato in Tauranga at 6.30 p.m. \$5. On Sunday our visiting luminaries depart for Whakatane and home. Further details from Bravado Editorial Collective, ph 07 576 3040, or e-mail info.bravado@xtra.co.nz

WELLINGTON

NZPS April Meeting

Vivienne Plumb & Owen Bullock

Vivienne Plumb is a Wellington poet, playwright and novelist. She has been the recipient of a Stout Research Centre Fellowship, the Hubert Church Prose Award, the Bruce Mason Playwriting Award, and the Buddle Findlay Sargeson Fellowship.

Her first collection of short fiction was *The Wife Who Spoke Japanese In Her Sleep*. She has had two collections of poetry published, *Salamanca* (HeadworX, 1998) and *Avalanche* (Pemmican, 2000, and a novella. Her most recent publication was *Secret City* (2003).

Last year Vivienne also edited a collection of short theatre pieces, *Red Light Means Stop*, a celebration of BATS Theatre, Wellington's most essential alternative theatre venue. This project was funded by the Wellington City Council.

Vivienne is also on the board of the New Pacific Studio, a residential artists' space situated near the Mt Bruce Bird Reserve.

Owen Bullock is a Bay of Plenty poet and singer-songwriter who was featured in *Poetry NZ #27*. Owen is also well-known as a haiku poet and is published worldwide.

He is poetry editor for *Bravado*, and co-judge with Catherine Mair of the Bravado Poetry Competition, 'Ocean Spirit Earth'. Last year he became managing editor of *Spin/Kokako*, and No. 47 – the first to be edited by Owen - is due out soon.

Hen Enterprises will publish two chapbooks of Owen's poetry this month: *summer, Hauraki Plains* and *after the buddhist comes to call*. A CD of original songs, *Take this thing as far as it goes*, is also scheduled for release.

The meeting will be held on Thursday April 15th at 8 p.m. in Turnbull House.

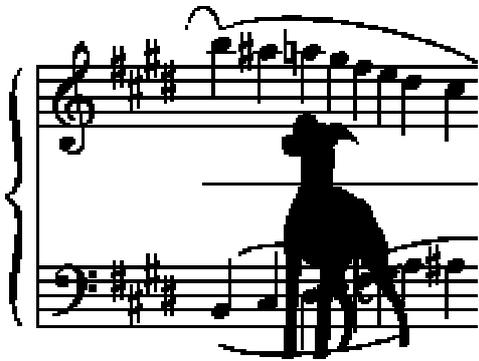


A Celebration of Spirit Songs

Casa Nueva Publications and Steele Roberts are pleased to announce *A Celebration of Spirit Songs*, a fundraising event to mark the arrival in New Zealand of a new collection of poems by Ron Riddell, following publication in Colombia and the U.S.A. The book launch will be held in the Theatre of the Wellington City Art Gallery at 2 p.m. on Saturday 24th April. This Spanish-English edition follows the acclaimed parallel edition, *El Milagro de Medellin y otros poemas*.

Saray Torres reads her own Spanish translations & there is a musical accompaniment from Ron Riddell on hand-drums and Bryan James on flute, shakuhachi and saxophone. Peter Cooley, the distinguished U.S. poet, will also read.

A Celebration of Spirit Songs will be on sale @ \$20. For further information, please phone 04 577 1747 or e-mail poetfest@paradise.net.nz.



Nominations for 2004 Prime Minister's Awards

Readers, writers, organisations and the New Zealand public are invited to nominate their choice of outstanding New Zealand writer in the genres of poetry, fiction and non-fiction for the 2004 Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement administered by Creative New Zealand.

Aimed at New Zealand writers who have made a significant contribution to New Zealand literature, the annual Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement offer three awards - poetry, fiction, non-fiction - each worth \$60,000.

The inaugural Prime Minister's Awards for Literary Achievement were presented last year to Janet Frame for fiction, Hone Tuwhare for poetry and Michael King for non-fiction.

Nominations close at 5 p.m. on Friday 28th May 2004. They will be assessed by an expert literary panel and its recommendations will be forwarded to the Council of Creative New Zealand for approval.

The Awards will be announced in late 2004. Forms can be download from their website www.creativenz.govt.nz. Or contact Danielle Tolson for more information at daniellet@creativenz.govt.nz.

Publications

Jaam 21 'Greatest Hits': a celebration

In years to come you'll kick yourself if you don't own this copy of *Jaam 21*, edited by Michael O'Leary & Mark Pirie. This is an anthology of New Zealand and Australian fiction and poetry published in *JAAM* between 1984 and 2004, and what an incredible collection it is – 104 named contributors from one hundred publications.

The exuberance of the writer shines through. Like the boy Rufus in Anna Jackson's *Poet* (from *Catullus for Children*):

'... is never happy
unless he is writing poetry.
And you should see him then,
the sun shines on him,
his eyes go all cloudy,
his ears are all deaf,
he chews pencils into shreds,
stares through walls,
through the teacher,
and when he writes,
his hand whirls across the page
like a swarm of locusts ...'

This special 21st birthday issue – with its great take-off of the Beatles 'Abbey Road' cover – is going to become a classic.

JAAM 21 is a retrospective showcase of some of the local and overseas writing that has helped to reshape and reinvigorate the local literary scene over the past two decades.

As usual *JAAM* is impeccably produced and satisfying to hold. Reassuring that so many have gone on to be bigger names than ever. As the editors instruct: "Read on! Rock on! Kia kaha!"

Kokako

The next submission deadline for *Kokako* poetry magazine deadline is July 1st. The editors say, "We welcome good poetry of any kind (no longer than two A5 pages), haiku, senryu, tanka, renga etc. Our special section this issue is auditory haiku.

Our only criterion is ... send us your best."



Mail or e-mail to Patricia Prime 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Auckland, pprime@ihug.co.nz; or to Bernard Gadd at 43 Landscape Road, Papatoetoe, Auckland, bernard.gadd@xtra.co.nz

Quill

The *SP Quill Quarterly Magazine* plans to feature a special Asian Verse section in its Spring and Fall issues yearly and invites submissions. Find out more online at: <http://www.shadowpoetry.com/magazine/spquill.html>, or write to the Chief Editor, Marie Summers, Shadow Poetry, SP Quill Quarterly Magazine, P.O. Box 125 Excelsior Springs, MO 64024 USA.

Shadow Poetry offers six unique poetry contests per year with over \$US2000 in cash and prizes. Enter your poems today, online, at: <http://www.shadowpoetry.com/contests/poetrycontests.html>

evasion

It's been a long slow summer for *evasion*, hampered by pre-occupied volunteer editors and lazy webmasters - but not, however, by a lack of submissions - we've been slow to put any new material online.

The website has now been modified to bring you a rolling selection of new work all year round - as opposed to the occasional 'issues' of the past. We hope that this will give more immediate feedback for fans and writers alike. Check out the changes at www.evasion.co.nz.

We've uploaded new poems from Iain Britton and Maurice Oliver, and some editorial comment from Malcolm - but we still need more fiction, poetry and criticism (not to mention some cash). Please send your writing (&/or cheques) to the editors today by e-mail to: editor@evasion.co.nz.

And finally we have announced, at long last, the winner of our inaugural competition. Could it be you? This means, of course, that our new competition is under way. We're looking forward to reading your entries.

Check out winners and details now on: www.evasion.co.nz/main/competition/index.html

(Report by James McGoram, Editor)

The publishing of poetry: finding out online

Anyone interested in poetry will want to know what is being published *now*. That's not so easy to find out from magazines or newspapers. These publish only a small selection and usually the work of well-known writers: but not even all of them.



The best way to learn what's available is online. Fortunately public libraries are installing computers so it's possible for anyone to learn how to use the web.

Our best source of information about New Zealand poetry is the National Library:

Type into your search engine subject bar:

National Library of New Zealand.

Click **Search our catalogues.**

Click **National Library catalogue.**

Type into **Search for:**

New Zealand Poetry (using **Subject heading**)

Click **Search**

Click **NZ Poetry 20th century**

(& afterwards **21st century**)

On **Sort by** click **Publication date descending** (i.e. from 2004 to the earliest books)

The point of using the National Library is to find the most comprehensive list of titles available. This offers you a chance to come across both well-known writers and new writers. Trying out the unknowns is often worthwhile - anthologies of local poetry and authors you're not sure you'll appreciate. Listed in early 2004, for example, were *Two Otago Poems* by Brian Turner, *Vanilla Wine* by Geoff Cochrane, *Working Voices* by John O' Connor and Eric Mould, and *Nice Morning For It* by Vincent O'Sullivan.

Not so easy is to find out which literary or poetry magazines are currently 'active'. We all know the usual titles like *Takahe*, *Bravado*, *JAAM*, *Kokako*, *SPIN*, *Glottis*, and *Poetry New Zealand*, but there are always new magazines starting (sometimes for a brief life span only).

One source, far from complete, is NZEPC - the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre. Here's how to find out:

Type '**nzepc**' into your search engine subject bar.

Click **Poetry Links.**

Scroll down the list of electronic resources e.g. *Black Mail Press*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Trout*, *Turbine*.

You can click on any of these titles to be transferred immediately to that magazine's site.

Or you can scroll on down to **NZ and Pacific Poetry Resources in Print** e.g. *Brief*. Clicking these will bring up the address for subscriptions and submissions.

University library sites are useful to find what poetry is being published overseas. To reach Auckland University's Library site, for example, simply type voyager.auckland.ac.nz into your search engine, then:

Click **Main Voyager Search List.**

Click **Subject heading.**

Type in e.g. **English Poetry.**

Click **Search.**

Click **English poetry 20th century**

(& afterwards **21st century**).

Click **Sort by Publication Date descending.**

New titles in early 2004 were *Oxford Poets 2000* (eds. Constantine, Lee, O'Donoghue) and *52 Ways of looking at Poem* by R. Padel. As an example, the shelf no. for this is 821.91409 P12 - the number by which it's arranged on the library bookshelves.

Of course, you can't borrow the books unless you are enrolled as a student - but you can use them in the Library if you live near enough. Or you can request them through the Inter-Library Loan service (ILL) at your local branch library.

All libraries maintain a catalogue of stock holdings, often online. Nearly all of them encourage readers to make suggestions on what to buy by filling in a request form or by e-mail. Give them as much information as you can - including ISBN, if you've got it. Sometimes libraries have items of special interest such as Manukau Library extensive *Manukau in Poetry* anthology. (Click on **What We Have** to find other treasures.)

Readers and writers of poetry can help foster the publishing of poetry in New Zealand. The more poetry we borrow from our local library, the more likely they are to keep on buying poetry. In fact, if we *don't* borrow as much as possible, nothing is more certain than that, within a few years, scarcely any new poetry will be on the shelves. Libraries operate under financial constraints, and are managed by local authority committees, many of whose members seldom read books, let alone poetry.

And the same goes for buying ...If we never buy - or buy only work by the Famous Few - poetry publication in New Zealand will decline, diminish ...disappear?

by **Bernard Gadd**

☯ Congratulations ☯

Congratulations to Ernest J. Berry, three of whose haiku were chosen to feature in the Spring 2004 edition of the SP Quill Quarterly Magazine.

Ernie also got honourable mentions in the Hawaii Education Association's 26th International Haiku Contest, in the Humorous, Season Word and Hawaii Word categories.

Here's his entry for the Humorous Category:

old headlines
she studies an article
about Botox

☯ Reviews ☯

Ultima Thule

John Graham

Ultima Thule means 'the most distant unknown land' and John Graham has spent time travelling in Japan and Europe, where he studied art and worked in the London theatre. He now lives on Great Barrier Island in the Hauraki Gulf, from where

'Old age has pinned me down at last.
Only memories now...'

(from *Being Old*)

It his experiences and memories his poems gather and celebrate, especially of German Jewish poet-in-exile Karl Wolfskehl, who wrote for him *Poet to Poet John Graham*. The compliment is returned with *Ultima Thule*,

30 poems written over several years whose title poem is dedicated to Wolfskehl.

Fellow-poet Kevin Ireland writes: 'John Graham casts a nostalgic eye back upon some of the landmarks and implications of his journey, and on the traces left of friends and lovers. The poems celebrate places, occasions and people seen from the distance of times now gone forever, yet still clutched passionately near in memory. Most of all the writing is remarkable for the warm intimacy of its descriptions, its integrity and the convincing intensity of all it has to say.'

'Images stand like gravestones on the memory
to mark those once-lived hours
which are falling into shadows now.

And that wooden doorstep, hollowed in the middle
of a thousand moving feet
the worn signs of their passing, over which I stepped
all those years ago; never to return.'

(from *Nineteen Thirty*)

Journal-keeping is often recommended to practising writers as a means of creating beginnings. For John Graham it would seem these poems serve as a similar aide-memoir, and as a finished record of friendship and of other allegiances.

2004. Graham, J. *Ultima Thule*. Hazard Press, \$24.95

Wild

Anne French

Bold and bodacious was how Captain Morgan liked his women, and bold and bodacious is how I like my poetry. Anne French satisfyingly meets her title's requirement to be wild. She is also tender, lyrical and witty - something else I go for, in my quieter moments. There is so much elegance of expression here in *Wild*, such delicately accurate use of language. Even when not noticeably out of control, untamed, she doesn't lack effrontery. Like so many poets French is prepared to wring out her emotions in acute phrases then hang them out to dry in public places. Like the love letter on p. 49...

Satisfying to me as an Englishwoman with a Cornish father were those poems set in Cornwall - satisfying as individual observations, and the best kind of travel guide when brought together as *Holiday in Cornwall*.

This exemplifies how she has ordered the book: as sections that can be read separately or in sequence, or as single poems sampled in random order.

French has borrowed from all those things that occupy her days. Singing in a chamber choir, managing the Wellington Youth Sinfonietta, racing with the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club in Wellington - any one of these would keep you and I so busy we'd never have time to put pen to paper.

Somehow this book is a testimony to what we become through doing. Anne French has brought something to her writing from them all. I will give you only one example from the many I could have chosen:



Mutability canto

The nor'wester has been blowing all night
tossing the trees, sending the clouds racing
from west to east, piling the seas up into waves;

and tomorrow it will be doing the same thing
somewhere else, while here the light is falling
on things in a slightly different way, and trees

and sea and air will all have altered. New cells,
shifting molecules, changes in temperature
and pressure, and another day closer to the day

when the sun grows old and red and eats the world.
Like the wind, I make you no promises, rushing
on and on into the future, pushing material things

into different shapes, caressing or cajoling them
and moving on. Three years from now it will all
be different, I tell you. Like the wind, I can make

no promises. Only let my heart remain true and steady
and in not waiting I will hold all things still; only let
my feet dance across the hillside and I shall still be here.

Oh, yes, please, Anne.

2004. French, A. Wild. Auckland University Press, \$31.99

(Reviews by Jenny Argante)

Other News

Best of New Zealand

Best New Zealand Poems 2003, edited by Robin Dudding and containing 25 individual poems can now be read online at www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/bnzp.

The editor of *Best New Zealand Poems 2004* is Dunedin poet and novelist Emma Neale. Readers and writers are welcome to draw her attention to work that she might not necessarily encounter.

E-mail suggestions to modernletters@vuw.ac.nz with 'BNZP 2004' in the subject line. Alternatively, send copies of 2004 publications to Best New Zealand Poems, IIML, Victoria University, P O Box 600, Wellington.

The Bell Gully National Schools Writing Festival

Bell Gully have kindly agreed to support this for a second year and the 2004 festival will be held at Victoria University in Wellington over the weekend of 28th – 29th August with readings, panels and small-group workshops for Year 12 & 13 students from around New Zealand.

The winner of the \$1,000 Bell Gully Poetry Prize will also be announced. This will be judged by Glenn Colquhoun who joins writers Margaret Mahy, Emma Neale, and Damien Wilkins. Bell Gully's sponsorship means that 200 participating students attend free, and it is hoped to make some provision this year for teachers.

You can download nomination and entry forms and read more about this year's festival and poetry competition at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/festival.htm

The Prize in Modern Letters

The \$60,000 biennial Prize in Modern Letters has been awarded to Northland doctor-poet Glenn Colquhoun by unanimous choice. 'Glenn Colquhoun makes poems in the great tradition of doctor-writers who exploit the healing properties of passionate and precise language to bind the world's wounds. His curiosity - an abiding sense of wonder at the people he lives among - is a priceless tonic,' wrote Geoffrey Wolff, one of three American judges.

MA in Creative Writing expanded

From 2005 places in the *Writing for the Page* stream of the MA in Creative Writing double to 20. The fiction workshop will be led by Damien Wilkins and poetry and non-fiction by Bill Manhire. Selections are made on applicant potential and groups meet jointly for special events. The scriptwriting workshop convened by Ken Duncum will continue as usual. Applications close 1st November 2004.

www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/macrew2004.html

Freehand Exercise from Whitireia Online Writing Course 2003

Andrew caught me in the bookshop last week. As usual he wanted to discuss his poems. He told me how hard he finds it to write for money – he does verses for greetings cards – and that he is worthier of a much higher calling. I can't see the evidence for this, and I was trying to circumvent him before he got to the bit I hate, where he pulls out a poem and reads it to me with slow precision and a solemn air.

He told me what his poem was about: the individual's life journey in search of a soul (it usually is) and why this was so special because it was written for a friend (it usually is) – a woman friend (it usually is) and how she found it illuminating, uplifting and totally spiritual (they usually do.)

Andrew likes big words that mean nothing and he likes to link them to emotions that he described, as he always does, as overwhelming. We then proceeded to the agony of writing something that had such deep intense feelings that can hardly be contained in a poem. I felt like saying, 'That's all right, Andrew. You're quite safe. Your writing lacks focus, detail, concreteness and specificity.'

By now he was holding my hand and squeezing it, his blue eyes fixed soulfully on mine. Good God! I wonder if I should have listened more carefully. I think he was telling me that *this* deep, meaningful poem had been written for me.

JB



**NORTHERN LIGHTS
POETRY TOUR**

presented by
**The New Zealand Poetry Society with the
assistance of Creative New Zealand**

**Nick Ascroft
Emma Neale
James Norcliffe**

Day 1: Gisborne - Wednesday 5th May

2 p.m. Reading at Gisborne Girls High School *
Evening Public reading at Muir's Bookshop *

Day 2: Opotiki & Whakatane - Thursday 6th May

11 a.m. Reading at Opotiki College *
2 p.m. Reading at Whakatane High School *
8 -9 p.m. Reading: East Bay Live Poets &
Whakatane CAC *

Day 3: Tauranga - Friday 7th May

10.30 a.m. Reading at Otumoetai College *
1 p.m. Reading at Tauranga Boys College *
6 - 8 p.m. Bravado Poetry Competition
Prizewinners Awards
Washington Room, Hotel Armitage,
Willow Street

(Enquiries: Jenny Argante ph 07 576 3040, or e-mail
jenny.argante@xtra.co.nz)

Day 4: Tauranga - Saturday 8th May

12 - 2 p.m.
Poetry in the Park – Yatton Park, Greerton

Open Air Celebrity Reading with Music, Dance & Arts
(Enquiries: Jenny Argante ph 07 576 3040, or e-mail
jenny.argante@xtra.co.nz)

6 p.m.
Celebrity Reading
University of Waikato in Tauranga
Durham Street Tauranga
Enquiries: Karen Tindall ph 07 577 0620, e-mail
tindall@waikato.ac.nz)

Day 5: Rotorua - Sunday May 9th

1 - 2.30 p.m.
Celebrity Reading - Rotorua Mad Poets Society
Exhibition House RAVE Hinemoa Street

* For detailed information on venues, etc.
please contact Tour Co-ordinator David Howard:
maxgate@clear.net.nz or ph 03 482 1092

NELSON

Yaza Yarns

A small, friendly group met at Yaza for coffee and soup. Carol read haiku: how the time flew. Wayne wooed us with the rhythm of the shearing shed while Yaza kept us all fed.

Jessica told us Of over-ripe plums falling from the tree to bleed on the ground. Cass spoke from the heart - men and women playing their part.

Betty looked up and said she would bring a better bulb because the light was too dim. Gaelynne was handed a number by hospital staff made us all laff cos' she nearly said no salt with my chips. From Lesley' s lips *Motorbikes* - a respectable middle-aged woman Throwing her leg over to get her thrills. Mark stayed in Mississippi a day too long but that' s alright, it was a Bob Dylan song. Please forgive me those not mentioned. See you all there at next month' s convention.

(Report by Lesley Haddon)

PICTON

Artrageous interlude for Picton Poets

On Sunday 29th February the Picton Poets had a blast participating in *Artrageous*, the annual community arts day in Pollard Park, Blenheim, organised by Creative Marlborough.

With The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, The Frog Princess and a Good Fairy in their midst, the Picton Poets entertained throughout the day with renditions of their own and other's poetry.

The day was a huge success with one 8-year-old coming back several times requesting yet another poem. We finally persuaded her to write one of her own:

The grass is green
the flowers are yellow
the trees are big and brown
but the trees are still
not as big as the land
just because
the land is bigger
than the trees
and longer than the grass
it doesn't mean
that the land is boring
the land isn't actually boring
the land is fun.

Kimberley Whitt

(Report from Anne Barrett)



WELLINGTON

Double Bill at the NZPS

David Howard shared guest billing with Dinah Hawken's students at the NZ Poetry Society's March meeting at Turnbull House. NZPS Vice-President Ron Riddell introduced David with a poem of his own. "Oh happy king, you give yourself away," he wrote of the poet wandering through the flower- and bird-filled garden of his brother's house in Titirangi.

David is an informal and fluent speaker threading his poems with observations on the craft. "I use poetry to make sense of the world and my place in the world and to assert that the world does have value in spite of news bulletins that suggest otherwise."

Often described as a 'thinking poet', David Howard keeps ontology and his denser metaphysical work for the page, where he writes for a solitary reader rather than for and with a community. For us he chose poems with a lyric voice from his books *Shebang* and *How to Occupy Ourselves*. "Poetry is a way of placing oneself, an identity bracelet," he observed.

The subject of another poem is one of his heroes - a French tightrope walker who takes 'the shortest path between two stars.' His poems are studded with such images ('I'll ride your smile into the night'. 'Somewhere else the sea covers a stone you will never throw.')

After working part-time for the National Library, David trained as a pyro-technician, which brought him close to popular culture. Somehow, he said, ten years vanished: then, in Sydney, as he hit forty, he began to write full-time. The result is his collaborative work with photographer Fiona Pardington, *How to Occupy Ourselves*. Howard likes working across genre and has done so internationally outside 'the New Zealand pecking order'. An example is his libretto for an opera set in Prague during World War II is an example.

And he has written some new poems about his father whose death last year prevented David from attending the launch of his latest book in Wellington.

'...neither surface nor depth are measurable

without you. When I hold my breath you hold court
there, inside my left lung: you rub your forefinger
across the air that keeps me

here. Your tape-measure extended the length of my
childhood.'

This, David Howard's third public reading in seven years, was a rare treat. The poems and the talk we heard are the products of a subtle mind and an independent spirit.

Then, after a short break Dinah Hawken introduced four poets from the second course of *Writing The Landscape* which she teaches at the International Institute of Modern Letters at VUW.

"This was a more experiential course than usual," she explained, "one that trains us to be more attentive to what we see and hear." It included an overnight stay on Mātūi/Somes Island in Wellington Harbour.

Diana introduced, in order of reading, Clare Needham, Heidi North, Keith Westwater and Kerry Popplewell.

"Clare has a legal background," she said, "and you will hear precision with language and references to Wellington and London. With Heidi you will hear lovely spare writing and a lyrical voice and you may hear descriptions of Lauris Edmonds' house in Grass Street where she lived last year. Keith writes with a very thoughtful compassionate voice and a delight in word play. Kerry has tramped almost the whole of New Zealand and is well travelled in literature as well. You will hear well crafted and intelligent poems."

And we did. A rich and satisfying menu.

(Report by Robin Fry)

Wellington Windrift

A new idea for our March meeting when we were invited to write in the style of 18th century Japanese haikai Issa. Here's a response to Issa's compassionate haiku on animals and insects.

katydid
nibbling my rose
enjoy your dinner

Elena Lindsay

Haiku using Issa's art of surprise and use of juxtaposition showed great ingenuity. We wrote a different final line to haiku by Issa, e.g. 'entwined/ by the maiden flower ... /my wrinkled foot' became:

entwined
by the maiden flower
old man's beard

Veronica Haughey

Issa wrote 'in the rain shower/ standing straight ... /the radish puller'. Here, poets outdid themselves with 3 lines that included: the unmown lawn, a car up-ended, the umpire's finger, an hallucination, yesterday's trodden grass, the balloon seller, the Old Woman's shoe.

Our customary haiku 'tree' produced everything from falling stars to rearranging dust - many neatly humorous. Autumn and birds pervaded many haiku - high country stock, and daylight saving; a blackbird feeding his mate and the first shag. Quipped Lindsay Forbes, 'A poet is someone who has to look up a bird book'.

autumn muster -
mist brings down
the high country stock

Kerry Popplewell



Vanessa Proctor sent word of a new book, *A New Resonance 3: Emerging Voices in English-Language Haiku* ed. J. Kacian & D. Evetts (Red Moon Press, USA.) This includes two NZ/ Australian poets Jeffrey Harpeng and Vanessa Proctor. Copies from Vanessa for NZ\$30 incl. p&p (airmail) to New Zealand. E-mail to vanessaproctor@bigpond.com

The last issue of Northland News featured a full page of results of its recent haiku competition. And yes, Veronica Haughey, first!

We have decided to have an extra meeting this year. So the next meeting is on Thursday May 20th 2 p.m. at 50 Cecil Road, Wadestown. Contacts: Jeanette Stace (ph 04 473 6227, e-mail njstace@actrix.gen.nz) or Nola Borrell (ph 04 586 7287, e-mail nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz)

(Report by Nola Borrell)

Calling All Haijin - National Haiku Workshop?

Windrift, Wellington' s Haiku Group, wants to know if other haijin out there are interested in attending a national weekend workshop in 2005, possibly March. We' re thinking of a central NZ venue. Expressions of interest please. You can either reply to nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz or post the clip-out below to: Nola Borrell, 177A Miromiro Road, Normandale, Lower Hutt.

<p>National Haiku Workshop</p> <p>Name</p> <p>Address</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Yes, I am interested in hearing more. Yes, I am very interested in attending.</p> <p><i>(Please tick as applicable.)</i></p>
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⌘ Competitions ⌘

Landfall Essay Competition

The fourth *Landfall* Essay Competition is now underway. Entries will be accepted from 1st May to 30th June 2004 and the winning entry will be published in the November 2004 issue. The prize is \$2500 and a year' s subscription to *Landfall*.

Essays should be fully developed, independent works on subjects of general interest and no longer than 6000 words. Open to writers resident in New Zealand. For more information, write to: *Landfall* Essay Competition, University of Otago Press PO Box 56 Dunedin, or e-mail university.press@otago.ac.nz.

And why shouldn't this year's prize-winning essay be all about poetry? Go for it!

The New Zealand Poetry Society 2004 International Poetry Competition

Open and Junior Section Instructions

Entries close 30th April 2004. Judges: Elizabeth Smither & James Brown.

Open Section

Prizes: 1st Prize \$500, 2nd Prize \$200, 3rd Prize \$100. Unlimited number of entries. Entry fee is \$4 a poem (NZPS members) or \$5 for non-members.

Open Junior Section

Prizes: *Elizabeth Kakalec Memorial Prize* (1st Prize) \$200, 2nd Prize \$100, 3rd Prize \$50. Unlimited no. of entries. Entry fee \$2 a poem. Open only to entrants who are 17 years of age or younger on 30th April 2004.

Entry information

Names must not appear on poems, only on the entry form. Enclose two copies of each poem, each on a separate sheet of paper.

Poems should be typed or printed, each poem on a separate page.

Entries must not have been previously published or accepted for publication in either print or electronic form.

Entries will not be returned but will be destroyed.

Entry constitutes acceptance of all terms herein.

Poems must not be submitted elsewhere in New Zealand until 1st October 2004, by which time entrants will be notified if their poems have won or been accepted for publication.

Fees may be paid by cheque, in cash, or by IRC (available from post offices.) Overseas entrants may pay the NZ equivalent in their currency.

Results will be posted on our website www.poetrysociety.org.nz and in our member newsletter; by request via e-mail, or enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope (SASE) with your entry.

Publication: All poems entered must be made available for publication in an anthology compiled by the New Zealand Poetry Society. Entrants will be notified by 1st October 2004 if their poems have won or been accepted for the anthology.

Copyright in individual poems will remain with the poet, but copyright in any book produced by the New Zealand Poetry Society will remain with the NZPS.

Questions? You will find fuller details online at our website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz.

Entry forms available by e-mailing a request to: competition@poetrysociety.org.nz. or by sending an SSAE to our postal address.



Haiku & Haiku Junior Sections (including Senryu)

The NZPS gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Asia 2000 Foundation

To be judged by Richard von Sturmer.

Haiku Section Instructions

Entries close 30th April 2004.

Prizes: the top five haiku/senryu will be awarded \$100 each. Unlimited number of entries. Entry fee: \$1 per haiku (members & non-members). For members of NZPS, every 5th haiku is free.

Haiku Junior Section

Prizes: the top five haiku/senryu will be awarded \$50 each. Unlimited number of entries. Entry fee: Entry fee is \$1 *per pair* of haiku. If only one haiku is submitted, the fee is still \$1. Open only to entrants who are 17 years of age or younger on 30 April 2004.

Entry information

Names must not appear on poems, only on the entry form. Enclose two copies of each poem, each on a separate sheet of paper. Poems should be typed or printed, one poem per page. Entries must not have been previously published or accepted for publication in either print or electronic form. Entries will not be returned but will be destroyed. Entry constitutes acceptance of all terms herein. Poems must not be submitted elsewhere in NZ until 1 October 2004, by which time entrants will be notified if their poems have won or been accepted for publication.

Fees may be paid by cheque, in cash, or by IRC (available from post offices). Overseas entrants may pay the NZ\$ equivalent in their currency.

Haiku help: Haiku do not need to follow a strict 5/7/5 format (17 syllables are usually too awkward in English) but should capture the 'haiku moment'. Innovation in haiku and senryu is encouraged. Entrants may visit the following websites for guidance:

<http://www.execpc.com/~ohaus/haiklink.htm>

<http://www.worldhaikureview.org>

Results will be posted on the NZPS website at www.poetrysociety.org.nz and in the NZPS Newsletter; by request via e-mail or enclose SASE with your entry.

Publication: All poems entered must be made available for publication in an anthology compiled by the NZPS. Entrants will be notified by 1st October 2004 if their poems have won or been accepted for publication. NZPS has the right of first publication of all poems accepted for the anthology.

Copyright in individual poems will remain with the poet, but copyright in any book produced by The New Zealand Poetry Society will remain with the NZPS.

Questions? e-mail info@poetrysociety.org.nz or visit www.poetrysociety.org.nz

Kokako NZ Haiku & Senryu Contest 2004

Again this competition is open to New Zealanders and ex-pat Kiwis. Please mail \$5 entry fee with 2 copies of your entries: one with your name & address.

You may submit unlimited numbers of unpublished haiku or senryu. Post or e-mail entries to Kokako NZ Haiku Contest, Bernard Gadd, 43 Landscape Road, Papatoetoe, Auckland 1701, bernard.gadd@xtra.co.nz.

There are no age limits nor any restrictions on the type of haiku or senryu submitted. The judges are Patricia Prime and Bernard Gadd together with the Patrons of the contest, Catherine Mair and our new Patron, Ernest Berry.

The top three entries earn a free annual sub to *Kokako-SPIN* (worth \$20) plus a book token, and a further 20 of the best will be published in *Kokako 2005*, for our international readership.

Deadline for entries is January 1st 2005. The top three for our first contest, whose results will appear in the 2004 issue, set a high standard.

Haiku Presence Award 2004

With a first prize of £100 (approx. \$300) and £25 each for up to 4 runners-up. Winning and commended poems will be published in *Presence* #25 or #26. The principal judge is Matt Morden.

Entry formats are as follows:

Option 1: Up to three haiku on a single A4 sheet, including name and address. *This entry option is free of charge at the first stage.* You *must* include an s.a.e. If from outside the UK, you *must* include 2 IRCs or \$1 to cover return postage.

Option 2: A single A4 sheet including your name and address and as many haiku as you like, at the rate of £1 per haiku, or \$5 per three haiku. Payment should be by UK £ cheque to *Haiku Presence* or in \$ bills. If neither payment method is suitable, please contact Martin Lucas to arrange an alternative, or use Option 1.

Entries by Option 2 will be guaranteed inclusion in the judge's shortlist. Entries by Option 1 will be sifted for quality by Martin Lucas and/or the *Presence* team. Those failing to reach the shortlist will be returned to the author. *Entrants whose haiku are accepted for the shortlist will be charged a total of £3 or \$5 for entry to the next stage (irrespective of the number of haiku accepted).* Payment for this stage must be made by 31 October 2004.

All poems will have author details deleted before final judging. *Entries must be original, unpublished and not under consideration elsewhere.*

Closing dates: 31st August 2004, Option 1 & 31st October 2004, Option 2. Please send entries to: Martin Lucas, 90D Fishergate Hill, Preston PR1 8JD UK.



Yellow Moon Nutshell Competition

Closing date May 21st 2004. Prizes as follows:

- A. Cinquain. 1st & 2nd prizes \$70, \$30.
B. Idyll (country life, to 22 lines.) 1st & 2nd prizes \$70, \$30
C. Limerick (page of 3) 1st & 2nd prizes \$70, \$30
D. Humorous Poem (to 24 lines) 1st & 2nd prizes \$70, \$30
E. Tetractys (page of 2) 1st & 2nd prizes \$60, \$30

\$3 per entry. Winning & Commended poems published in *Yellow Moon*. Entry form essential. Information as above.

Yellow Moon Chaucerian Challenge

Closing date May 31st 2004. Two equal first prizes of \$100 plus publication (with highly commended poems) in *Yellow Moon* 15, Winter 2004 for a poem up to 20 lines in modern language but heroic verse (rhymed couplets) about a person in the workforce of the 20th or 21st century. (See article in *Yellow Moon* 14 on writing this form.) Entry form essential. Information as before.

☞ Corrections & Apologies ☜

Well, of course I know it's Robert Graves, not Richard (for those of you who didn't get the amended last page of our March Newsletter.) Obviously, I have a mis-wired neuron somewhere in my brain as I keep saying Richard Harris Café when I mean Robert Harris ...and will I now start referring to another favourite poet as Richard Frost?

☞ Welcome ☜

...to Sandi Legge, Otarehua, Central Otago
... Samuel Marsden Collegiate School, Karori
... Nyle James, Blenheim

If you would like to become a member, the annual subscription for overseas members is \$30. For those living in NZ, the sub is \$20. From October 1st please pay HALF the appropriate subscription rate. Send cheque to: Treasurer PO Box 5283 Lambton Quay Wellington.

The language we use in poems

One of the great movements in poetry of the past two centuries (not for the first time) has been taking the language closer to everyday speech because of its vigour and its accessibility. In New Zealand the language of most of our poems is certainly more relaxed and less formal than it was even in the 1970s: but is far from being colloquial. There's still a feel to the lines of our poetry that we should be on good behaviour in our language, unless for special reasons.

Allen Curnow is in many ways our archetypical poet. Here he is very Curnowesque in his last collection, *the bells of Saint Babels*:

We stood at the timbered railing just one steep
rain-forested mile above the sea
the upper rail being level enough
to lay your pocket compass to copy there
(from *The Pocket Compass*)

And a shade more relaxed:

Dad
only just gone

for the takeaways
at KFC,

when he says – quiet,
sort of sudden ...

'Can't wait any more
for Dad, I've got

to go now- '

(from *The Cake Uncut*)

Of course our middle classes do tend to be somewhat careful of their speech, but not as precise as our poetry suggests. And we don't have the local linguistic colour of dialects as Britain still has, such as Cornish:

Do ee think et could be Tom Trevorra
Pesterun us right thinkun voke agen?
I woulden put et pass un ta chuck iz
Wisht traade down yurr ensted av sum fuggan.
(from *As I sink a shaft*, Bryan Teague]

- let alone a Tok Pisin to make a pronounced contrast with ordinary speech:

Yu ting se	<i>You think that</i>
Yu – yu – masta	<i>You are the boss</i>
Mi – mi – boe	<i>I am the servant</i>
Taem mi rong	<i>When I do things wrongly</i>
Yu kikkim as blong mi	<i>You boot my arse</i>

(from *Mi Stap Sori Nomo*,
Kali Vatoko & Albert Leomala)

But some of our writers successfully work the colloquial vernacular into poetry, as in this from John O'Connor:

'how much?'

from some
toffee-nosed git & 'is pissed mates
nothin'

ya can do about it ...
but here

I'm part of the furniture.

not many

can say that now

can they?

(from *Jazmin*)



Though I've had a go – some years back - at getting down working class teen talk:

... You're no
more gonna be tellin' me who
I gotta be.
(from *A bullet for the rich man*)

Of course there are plenty of quite different voices in our poetry, which are equally as far from ordinary speech or writing as from the colloquial. This from John Garaets results from what he calls 'slippage' in making selections from verses of the Biblical Book of Isaiah:

Promissory bell God,
slid along portals to prophet. Abet.
His sons, chord flesh David. Concerned

Descent, to conjugation ought
Loquacious power boles in spirit bite
ejection galleys deed.
(from *Hasay*: 1, 127)

Ian Wedde's lines give a sense of language that is clearly poetical, rather formally so, and apart from the language of conversation or written language we usually come across:

... knuckle-

Cracking Cotton Mathers of cultural bureaucracy.
Was this your fate also, Horace,
To sit in meeting rooms filled with nodding
Heads – that semaphore of acquiescence signalling
An infantile desire for the boss's caress ...

(from *To my mirror*)

Some wisecracks still repeat the old advice to use the everyday Anglo-Saxon words. (As if our vocabulary were that simple in origin!) Surely the better advice is to use the sort of language which fits the poetic purpose. We shouldn't hesitate to turn the truly colloquial into poetry when it best suits our purpose.

Perhaps the most fundamental advice is to listen carefully to how people really speak. While it's not usually useful (except when it meets the poetic need) to transfer to print the confusions and ambiguities of everyday conversation, nevertheless its cadences, rhythms, idioms, feeling, sprightliness can invigorate poetry.

Poets don't always have to write wearing their best linguistic suits. But if we wish to write in more formal vein, let it be as fluent and interesting as Wedde or as striking as Garaets.

by **Bernard Gadd**



Regular Gatherings

AUCKLAND

Poetry Live meets at Pog Mahones Tavern, 108 Ponsonby Road on Tuesday nights. Contact: Judith McNeil, (09) 360 2510.

The Glad Poets of Henderson meet at the Waitakere Community Resource Centre Ratanui Street Henderson on the last Sunday of each month, 2.30-4.30 p.m. Contact: Maxine Green (ph 09 836 7280).

The Pub Poets meet in the Royal Room at The Cock and Bull Botany Town Centre at 7.30 p.m. on the first and third Monday of the month. For more information contact Alan (ph 09 272 4104).

Passionate Tongues is a monthly reading at Temple, 486 Queen Street from 8 p.m. There's also an open Poetry Slam (prizes). \$5 or \$3 entry. Contact Michael Rudd: (ph 09 441 7034 or 021 299 86 43, or e-mail oralink@hotmail.com). Michael is also running the occasional **Vocal Point** at The Depot 28 Clarence Street Devonport.

Auckland Poetry Nights. 6 p.m. First Monday of every month at Baxter & Mansfield's Bookshop, 54 Wellesley Street West, Auckland. BYO work or someone else's – Bloomsburys, beatniks, punks and post-modernists all welcome. e-mail books5@hardtofind.co.nz or phone 09 307 7889

BALCLUTHA

Meets every first Wednesday of the month from 7 p.m. at The LumberJack Café Owaka (15 minutes down Southern Scenic Route). Information: Gwyneth Williamson (ph 03 418 983).

CHRISTCHURCH

The Airing Cupboard Women Poets meet at 10 a.m. every 2 weeks (starting from February 1st) at The Quiet Room in the YMCA on Hereford Street. Ring Judith Walsh (ph 03 359 74330 or Barbara Strang (ph 03 376 4486).

Another group is **The Live Poets' Society**, which meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Linwood Community Arts Centre (corner of Worcester Street/Stammore Road). Contact Alan McLean (ph 03 389 0908).

A haiku group, **The Small White Teapot**, meets upstairs at the Mainstreet Café Colombo Street at 7.30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. Contact Barbara Strang (ph 03 376 4486) for more information.

CROMWELL

Cromwell Writers meet on the last Tuesday of the month in the homes of members on a shared basis. Contact Tom Llandreth (ph 03 4451352) or e-mail tomal@xtraco.nz.

DUNEDIN

Fortnightly readings are held at 8.30 p.m. at the Arc Café, 135 High Street. Check with the Café itself for dates and times.

GOLDEN BAY

Joe Bell from Milnthorpe is the Convenor of **The Golden Bay Live Poets Society**. This Society has a monthly Performance Night at the famous Mussel Inn Bush Café at Onekaka. (For dates go to www.musselinn.co.nz.) Visiting poets are most welcome. For news of meetings contact Joe (ph 03 524 8146, fax 03 524 8047; or e-mail gbaybell@xtra.co.nz).

HAMILTON

The Hamilton Poets Group meets on the last Thursday of each month at the Satellite Campus on Ruakura Road Hamilton at 7.30 p.m. Contact Penny at: pen101nz@yahoo.co.nz (ph 07 854 0378).

HAWKE'S BAY

The Hawke's Bay Live Poets' Society meets at 8 p.m. on the second Monday of each month (except January) at the Cat and Fiddle Ale House in Hastings. Contact Keith Thorsen (ph 06 870 9447) or e-mail: ktorsen@xtra.co.nz

LOWER HUTT

Poets Pub A free entry community sponsored poetry reading happening. First Monday of the month from 7 p.m. at Angus Inn, Murphy's Bar, Waterloo Road. Bar is open & food to order. Free coffee and tea. Guest reader plus open floor mike session. For more information contact convenor Stephen Douglas (ph 04 569 9904, e-mail DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz).

NELSON

The Yaza Poets meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 8.00 p.m. at Yaza Cafe Montgomery Square Nelson. New poets welcome. Contact: Martina (ph 03 548 2989) or Gaelynne (ph 03 546 8434).

OPOTIKI

Opotiki Writers Inc meet at 10am on the last Wednesday of the month at the Opotiki Hotel, for a morning of chat, support and motivation, all loosely based on our writing experiences. Contact Ann Funnell 07 315 6664 or timann@paradise.net.nz

PICTON

The Picton Poets Picton Poets (founded by Ernest Berry in 1996) meet at The Cottage 75a Waikawa Road Picton at 10.30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. Contact Ernest Berry (ph 03 573 7774, fax 03 573 6882, or e-mail bluberry@xtra.co.nz)

PORIRUA

Poetry Café meets in the function room upstairs at Selby's Sports Café 1 Selby Place Porirua on the second Monday in each month. Free entry.

ROTORUA

The Rotorua Mad Poets meet every Monday night at the Lakes Hotel Lake Road, 7.30-9.30 p.m. Contact: Colleen (ph 07 347 9847) or Kay (ph 07 349 0219).

TAURANGA

Poets' Parlour meets on the second Sunday of each month at 12.30 p.m. in the Robert Harris Café, State Insurance Arcade, off Grey Street. For more information please contact Jenny Argante (ph 07 576 3040, fax 07 570 2446 or e-mail: jenny.argante@xtra.co.nz).

TIMARU

If you are interested in the Timaru **Poetry in Motion** performance poetry group contact Karalyn Joyce (ph 03 614 7050) or e-mail karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz.

WANAKA

Poetry Live at the Wanaka Arts Centre, first Thursday of the month 7.30 p.m. Contact Pip Sheehan (ph 03 443 4602).

WELLINGTON

The New Zealand Poetry Society meets on the third Thursday of each month (except for December and January) at 8 p.m. at Turnbull House Bowen Street.

Bluenote, 191 – 195 Cuba Street, has performance poetry most Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. Contact: Blaise Orsman (mob 025 616 04 53) or Blue Note (ph 04 801 5007) after 4 p.m. to confirm.

Café Poetry to Go. A low-key friendly small group who come together to talk poetry, write, drink coffee with muffins. Led by Stephen and Rosa Douglas at The Rock, Glover Court, 4 Glover Street, Ngauranga Gorge (up from LV Martin). Planned dates May 11th, July 13th, September 14th & November 9th from 7.15 p.m. Contact: ph 04 569 9904, e-mail DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz.

Cafe Poetry to Go at The Rock Café 4 Glover Street, off Ngauranga Gorge (up from LV Martin). If poetry is new to you this is the place find friends, learn to read aloud and exchange tips and books. Last Thursday of the month, supper provided, gold coin donation appreciated. Contact Stephen and Rosa Douglas (ph 04 569 9904, or e-mail DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz or phone 04 5699904).

Poesis: Poetry and Religion Forum

A forum to discuss religious poetry (international and New Zealand) will be held every five weeks in the WIT Library, Anglican Centre, 18 Eccleston Hill, Thorndon. All enquiries to antonin@wn.ang.org.nz.

WEST COAST: HOKITIKA

Contact Don Neale (ph 03 755 7092) or e-mail: startledworm@paradise.net.nz for news of the winter meetings of the **Hokitika Wild Poets' Society**.

WHAKATANE

East Bay Live Poets meet at 7.30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month in the Settlers Bar of the Chambers Restaurant.

WHANGAREI

Poetry, Prose, Tea & Talk. Last Sunday of the month, 2.00 p.m. at 18a Vale Road Whangarei. Contact: Rosalie (ph 04 388 913) or e-mail chtoomer@xtra.co.nz.

☯ About Regular Gatherings ☯



If you belong to a group not listed in the Newsletter, or if you need to change the information you've sent in, please contact the Editor.

You can also send in reports of meetings, and publications for review. We'd like to make the Newsletter as 'country-wide' as possible.

☯ TalkPoem ☯

You would think we'd have grown tired of writing about it by now. Fortunately, there are as many varieties of love as there are forms and variations in poetry. And love is such an individual experience, though common to us all. Love is part of our growing and learning. Through love we come to know who we are and what we can be. Love is both triumph, and tragedy – for when love goes wrong, or is lost, the pain can be unbearable.

The expression of that pain needs no fancy words or phrases, as Mercedes Lawry demonstrates with profound simplicity in the following poem:

Stones

The brightness of stars signifies
nothing but distance
as if old love could enter your body,
filling it with light, the pain
buried under useless rubble,
your skin once more swollen
with desire. Can we swallow
emptiness? Can it displace
sour memories? Darkness is reliable.
I would never have given you up,
drunk as I was. I might
have grown wings. Instead
I carry stones in my pockets,
sleep with them clutched
in my cold hands and scattered on the bed.

Mercedes Lawry

That seemingly straightforward statement, "The brightness of stars signifies nothing but distance", is actually based on astrological fact: yet it also places us in the realm of fantasy. We are now participants in the experience of the poem, and being shown the dark spaces that fall between lovers who once promised each other both moon and stars.

The 'useless rubble' is all that was shared in the building of the love relationship, and is now in ruins, no longer needed. All we have left is the memory of passion.

The poet asks two rhetorical questions: "Can we swallow/emptiness? Can it displace/sour memories?" Whether we answer yes or no, there is pain. To forget completely is one form of suffering, to remember what we no longer possess another. "Darkness is reliable" – a place to both remember and forget, and to hide the tears, the pain.

"I would never have given you up,/drunk as I was ... "Intoxicated with love. If it had lasted, the lover might have grown wings – been transported, transfigured: one with the angels. Instead, s/he is weighted down with loss and with memories, the sad, dark things that weigh you down (like stones in the pocket of a suicide by drowning).

Throughout the poet is steadfastly confronting exactly what the end of love has meant. The stones scattered on the bed are like markers and memories of something that is dead and gone.

The poem has not mythologised or exaggerated individual emotion. Instead, the poet has rested secure on the ability of language to deal directly with the subject and, without over-elaboration or distortion of phrase, to validate the experience for any reader.

by Jenny Argante

If you have a favourite poem you'd like to comment on – preferably but not essentially by a New Zealand poet - please remember contributions to TalkPoem are welcome from any reader. This is an opportunity for you to share with Newsletter readers. Please contact the Editor.

☯ KiwiHaiku ☯

following the wheelchair
a Doberman,
limping

Charline Pocock
Eketahuna

KIWIHAIKU features one haiku, senryu or tanka each month. Poems with a New Zealand slant are preferred. Fresh submissions (including details of any previous publication) with SSAE to Owen Bullock PO Box 13-533 Grey Street Tauranga.

May Deadline
April 23rd 2004