

# a fine line

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Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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**DEADLINE FOR NEXT  
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7 MAY

## a fine line interviews Wellington poet and Seraph Press publisher Helen Rickerby

Anna Hudson

It is a stunning summer afternoon in Wellington when I sit down for an interview with Helen Rickerby in the courtyard of her Aro Valley home. A successful poet, magazine editor and publisher, Helen talks about poetry in New Zealand, ten years of Seraph Press and the inspiration for her latest collection *Cinema*.

**afl: Starting your own publishing venture seems like such an incredibly brave thing to do. How did Seraph Press come into being?**

HR: I'd been involved with JAAM (Just Another Art Movement) magazine since 1995 and done the Whitireia Publishing course in 2000, so I knew a bit about publishing. It was something I had thought about doing for a while, and I'd already decided what I would call it.

The catalyst for actually starting Seraph Press was when a couple of friends, Anna Jackson and Jenny Powell Chalmers, had a manuscript for a collaborative collection they didn't know what to do with. Their usual publishers weren't interested in such an unusual book, and at first I said, "We can publish it," which soon became "I'll publish it." And so their *Locating a Madonna* became the first book Seraph Press published. Since then I've just kept going.

**afl: Is publishing as stressful as it sounds? Has it gotten easier over time?**

HR: I publish very little, and do fairly small print runs, which keeps it manageable. And I only publish books I'm really in love with, so I don't resent the time I put in. There are always some stresses and tensions, and there have been occasions when the books have only just made it to the launch on time. I've developed quite a good relationship with my printer (Wakefields Digital) though and that's helped make things reasonably smooth. Realistically, you're doing pretty well if you sell 300 copies of a poetry collection in New Zealand, so it needs to be enjoyable.

**afl: How does Seraph Press find poets to publish? Do you go out looking for new talent or does it come to you?**

HR: They usually come to me. But I tend to know most of the poets I publish, in some capacity or other, or I know their work at least. I knew Nina Powles (author of Seraph's latest release *Girls of the Drift*) from Twitter and she was a student on one of Anna Jackson's courses at Victoria University, which is how I came to hear about her poetry. A lot of it happens through networks and recommendations.

**afl: Your own collection *Cinema* was published by Mākaro Press rather than Seraph, why is that?**

HR: I have never felt that publishing myself was right for me. I find it hard to promote myself and, as an editor myself, I value what an editor can bring. I've really valued the support and advice I've had from my publishers, most recently

Mary McCallum at Mākaro Press.

**afl: How did *Cinema* come into being?**

HR: After I finished *My Iron Spine* (HeadworX, 2008), I noticed I had written a few poems about film, which I quite liked, and I thought writing poetry about and informed by film would make an interesting project. For me poetry is both an emotional and intellectual exercise, and I was interested in exploring the way film shapes us.

**afl: Do you have any particular favourites in the collection?**

HR: I am especially fond of 'Chris's life, as directed by Ken Russell' – it's the first in a series of poems about what some of my friends' lives might be like if they were directed by particular directors. 'Two or three things I know about them' is another favourite – because it was quite ambitious for me, and took literally years to finish writing. My most favourite of all though is 'Nine movies'. It's the most personal and the last poem in the collection.

**afl: Are you aware of any recurring themes or meanings in your work?**

HR: I think it's dangerous to think about your own work in that way, it can turn you into a parody of yourself. That said, I have noticed some recurring things in my work: the colour red [Helen is wearing red for our interview], women's experience and identity.

**afl: What about influences? Are there any poets or artists that have been a strong influence on your work?**

HR: Fleur Adcock and Margaret Atwood were early influences for me. Recently I've been impressed by Anne Carson, a Canadian poet who wrote *Red Doc* and *Autobiography of Red*. Even when I'm not that keen on a particular book, I still find her audacity inspiring. I'm currently very influenced by a little chapbook of hers, *The Albertine Workout*, which is amazing! I'm reading Virginia Wolf's *The Waves* at the moment. It's been on my bookshelf for a long time and I finally got the push I needed to read it from a podcast by Pip Adams. I hadn't really listened to podcasts before, but I love Pip's podcasts, and I listen to them while I'm doing other things, like dishes. [<https://betterreadnz.wordpress.com>].

**afl: It seems like quite a long time between collections for you. Do you play around with different ideas between books, until you hit on something that seems promising? Or do you simply wait until it hits you?**

HR: I'm quite a slow writer. I've been working full-time, and then there's the publishing. I discard a lot of poems too. I tend to work thematically; I like to explore an idea from different angles. My current project started a while ago when Sean, my partner, was ill. It's exploring how to live – better and worse ways of living, how different people live, how to not die, how to really *live*, and so on. I'm also now combining that with ideas of biographical poetry –

how you can tell a life in a poem. This is something I've been interested in for a while – *My Iron Spine* has lots of biographical poems – and I've been thinking about this again after co-organising a conference on biographical poetry (Truth or Beauty: Poetry and Biography; <http://poetryandbiography.net/>).

**afl: What challenges or obstacles to writing do you experience and how do you overcome them?**

HR: I have the usual insecurities: I'm not any good, nobody's going to want to read it, that sort of thing. I try to get over it by focussing on what I'm doing, how much I enjoy doing it, and try not to measure myself all the time. Getting the right head-space is another big challenge. It's not necessarily the same thing as time, though of course you need time too. Trying to get the everyday out of my brain and make a mental 'space' to work in. I find it's quite helpful to first stuff my head full of information, raw material, by reading or watching movies, and then thinking about it.

**afl: What about revision? How do you know when it's finished?**

HR: That varies. Some poems I write and discard immediately. Some I leave basically as they come out. Others I keep trying to fix until I've got what I want from them. I frequently want to change poems after they've been published. There's one in *My Iron Spine* that I decided to change several years after it was first published! When I finish the first draft of a manuscript I also always give it to a few people whose opinions I trust, who give me feedback and advice.

**afl: Feedback can feel so uncomfortable for a lot of poets. Given you're a poet and an editor of poetry how do you handle feedback?**

HR: Poets – and in fact all writers – do need to make sure they're getting feedback from the right people. The most useful feedback is going to be from people who generally like your work or the sort of work you do. Some people are just never going to like it, no matter what you do, because they don't like your style. I think it's important that both the editor and the poet are happy with the work, but I wouldn't expect a poet to make changes they really didn't agree with and I wouldn't do that myself. Usually there's a third way that makes both parties happy and makes the work stronger. You should always consider the feedback you get to see if there is a problem, even if their suggested solution doesn't seem right to you.

**afl: What other general advice do you have for poets looking to get published?**

HR: Write good poetry of course [smiles]. Find an editor who likes what you write. You need to read a lot, particularly literary journals, and it's good to be involved in the community somehow. Most editors want to publish poets who have had work published in journals and who are involved in and committed to poetry and the poetry

community. I think it makes your poetry better, and also means there should be people who will be interested in reading (and buying) your work.

**afI: Is there anything else you'd like to say to the readers? Parting words so to speak?**

HR: I'd like to encourage New Zealand poets to buy more poetry, especially New Zealand poetry, and go to poetry events. It was so amazing to see all the people who came out to listen to readings and talk about poetry at LitCrawl in Wellington last November (<http://www.litcrawl.co.nz/>). It showed me that people *do* care about literature, or at least more people than I suspected.



## From the Editor

Laurice Gilbert

This is my last issue as Editor. I have been planning to give up my Poetry Society work for quite a long time now (and in fact officially resigned from the paid job in November 2013), and this time I'm really going. There comes a time in every volunteer's life when the word STOP looms large and will not be ignored. That time has arrived for me, and I'm moving on to other projects, other passions. (Though the annual competition will remain in my experienced hands.)

I'm pleased to report that our President, Lonnard Watkins, is stepping into the editorial role. It feels important to leave the publication in good hands, and I'm confident that's exactly what I'm doing. Lonnard is committed to continuing *a fine line's* development into a distinguished and prestigious literary magazine. He has breadth of experience in many sub-genres of poetry, and is more than capable of taking the magazine in directions I haven't thought of, for the benefit of us all. I wish him every success in this endeavour, and look forward to seeing it grow.

I, in the meantime, have returned to university, briefly, to extend my writing skills into Creative Non-Fiction, Harry Ricketts' course at the International Institute of Modern Letters. Look out for me as a Front Page author some time in the future!

We have been short on reviews in the last few issues, and not for lack of books to review. Like everyone else, our regular reviewers get busy, have other priorities – those 'life' things that keep us all occupied. If you think you'd like to do a close reading of a poetry collection, either by someone whose work you already know and love, or as a way into a poet you're unfamiliar with, email us at: [editor@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@poetrysociety.org.nz) You can find a list of the available books on the website at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/bookshelf>

Thank you for your attention over my eight-plus years as editor. I really have loved this part of the job, and have given it up a bit reluctantly. But it really is time to go.



## From the President

Lonnard Watkins

How do YOU like to share poetry? The diversity of how poetry is shared among poets and admirers of poetry is extremely diverse. Books, chapbooks, pamphlets, online journals and even blogs are among the many popular ways to share poetry in printed form. Open Mics, book launches and Spoken Word events offer the opportunity to present poetry in a direct manner, allowing poets to put a 'voice' to their words, and giving poets immediate real time feedback. But I contend that the methods of presentation are far more diverse than just these examples. We now see more collaboration between poets and other forms of artistic media. A number of poets are teaming up with visual artists, either writing poetry to interpret a piece of art, or artists creating their visual pieces to interpret the poet's words. Music is another medium that has been increasingly used in conjunction with the spoken word. Although song writing and poetry have similarities, poetry is very much an independent art form and not generally written with music in mind. An annual event that brings these two art forms together is the Kerouac Effect, which takes place in Auckland and Wellington to celebrate the life of poet/writer Jack Kerouac. Poets and musicians are randomly paired, and with little or no rehearsal perform together. Although these collaborations between poets and other artistic media are not new, recent developments in this area are exciting and I am sure poets will continue to explore these and other media in the future.

Collaboration, sharing poetry, networking. This is very much the theme for 2015 with the New Zealand Poetry Conference scheduled for November in Wellington. The subcommittee is working diligently on NZPS's behalf to put together an exciting schedule of poetic events and readings. You will have recently received our first NZPS Newsletter which contains a link to a short survey that we encourage everyone to complete, to express what your interests are and what you would like to see at this biennial event. By registering with this survey, you will receive ongoing Conference updates.

Finally, a word regarding Past President and former National Coordinator, Laurice Gilbert. Laurice has decided to resign from administration duties for NZPS. She has had a long and distinguished association with the society and her energy and commitment will be missed. I am, however, delighted to inform you that Laurice will still be involved in an advisory capacity to ensure continuity in our commitment to foster poetry in New Zealand. Please join me in thanking Laurice for her dedication, her unrelenting commitment and her hard work over these many years.

[Ed's note: Thanks, Lonnard.]



## About our Contributors

**Laurice Gilbert** is currently the Vice-President of the NZPS, with poems published in many journals and anthologies in New Zealand, internationally and online. She has published one collection.

**Anna Hudson** is a Wellington based writer of poetry and short fiction. She lives in Island Bay with her partner, her elderly dog and precocious cat.

**David Taylor** is an English Teacher at Northcote College and currently completing a Masters in Educational Leadership at Auckland University. He was a 2012 Woolf Fisher Fellow and is a representative on the New Zealand Association for Teachers of English council. He has published poems, reviews, opinion pieces and academic articles.



## A Warm Welcome to...

**Alexander Wedekind** Auckland (rejoin)

**Bill Conroy** Tauranga

**Ellie Zugel** Napier

**Janet Bache** Wellington

**Julie Sargisson** Auckland (rejoin)

**Louise Wrightson** Wellington

**Mac Miller** Hamilton (rejoin)



## Mini Reviews - Collections from the Poetry Society Bookshelf

Laurice Gilbert

**James K. Baxter – Poems to a Glass Woman** Ed. John Weir (VUP, 2012) 979-0-86473-836-3

This is a short sequence of previously unpublished poems written in 1944-1945, released to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Baxter's death. Baxter was in his late teens when he wrote them, and they refer to the end of his first serious love affair, which was unreciprocated. At the risk of sounding inappropriately patronising, I found them surprisingly good, demonstrating the promise of a young poet who started well and went on to greatness. There's the occasional Shakespearean influence, and some wild experimentation with strings of multi-syllabic words, but on the whole they stand up to the scrutiny of this reader of (mostly) contemporary poetry.

I had not known pain  
Was the soul's skeleton  
And love the rare flower  
Under a darkened sun.

(from: 'I had thought the sun's speech')

The second half of the book is a long and eminently readable essay by the editor, investigating the detailed context of the failed relationship and exploring how extensively its echoes rippled through the rest of Baxter's life and work.

**Common Land** Lynn Davidson (VUP, 2013) 978-0-86473-760-1

Davidson has lived a peripatetic adult life, and yet these poems and essays resonate with a feeling of groundedness that only someone with a deep sense of belonging could express. She does 'place' with exquisite ease; peoples it with her family of origin, her children and their alternative whanau, her whakapapa. She epitomises the concept that wherever you lay your head is home, because everything that's important is within her, whether she has time to feel it or not. She also has the sort of talent for imagery that I can only dream about, noticing and recording the tiniest details:

This is the family court.

The rattle of paper  
and a snare of light on the floor  
you could step right into.

A snare of civil talk before  
someone stills the room.

The rattle of a foot  
clinching a chair leg.

(from: 'Chivalry in the Courtroom I')

Reading the essays reminded me Davidson is also a teacher, not in that academic style that urges you to take notes, but in that thoughtful style that links *this* with *that*, and makes it all *gestalt*, even if you're not paying particular attention. Throughout this collection there's story-telling and music and history and travel writing, and it's all of us living in the commonality of establishing our turangawaewae.

**Dried Figs** Helen Jacobs (Sudden Valley Press, 2012) 978-0-9864529-1-8

Christchurch writer Jacobs' sixth poetry collection is pensive. While it is ostensibly concerned with the natural world, and her place in it, she initially comes at it slightly removed. She's observant, but I get the impression she's not always the observer, and easily slips into the passive voice. The title of the first section, 'Counting Down', sets the tone. There's much about growing older, about how things used to be: "It operates in the past tense now / the language of poetry" ('The Language of Poetry'); "I would have walked there once" ('Group Outing'); "... it is hips and cataracts / and finding a chair to sit on, / and a cup of tea would be nice." ('Joining the Club'). Not that it's maudlin at all, but there is definitely an element of 'letting go' – of youth, of agility and flexibility, of unrealised dreams, but also of expectations and regrets. She isn't dwelling in or on her past unduly – merely putting things in perspective, especially

after the earthquake: "I do not think I will go on bus tours / that empty the heart".

A change of tone marks the second section, 'Maps'. Here is Jacobs the activist – still reviewing the natural world, but now she's concerned about habitat destruction, overuse of the land, the threat to water in the Canterbury region. These are the protest poems, showing there's 'life in the old girl yet' – she's still paying attention to the future, and she's not convinced there is one for too much of the world she loves.

**From Mānoa to a Ponsonby Garden** Albert Wendt (AUP, 2012) 978-1-86940-734-6

There are two sections in this book by one of our literary taonga, a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to literature (2001): 'Mānoa' and 'A Ponsonby Garden', the latter being an extended sequence from 'Garden 1' to 'Garden 40'. I understand a little Te Reo but no Samoan, and while a glossary might have been helpful, I managed to work out most of the unfamiliar words from context and approximation to the words I know in Maori. That minor quibble aside, 'Mānoa' is a delightful set of poems, exposing as they do Wendt's day to day life in Hawai'i, his love for partner Reina, his musings on sleepless nights, and travelling to Las Vegas with Hone Tuwhare:

Every night the porcelain moon over the city wore  
the Joker's cynical face  
but a rescuing Batman wasn't in sight  
as our cousin showed us how to play the machines.

(from: 'With Hone in Las Vegas')

Wendt's everyday chattiness disguises an acute awareness that seems to find something to write about in anything. Hence the 40 'Ponsonby Garden' poems. These are anecdotes with more people than garden, populated by Reina, offspring, mokopuna and other relatives, along with the (always present) family cat, Mānoa.

Reina travels the North Island with Wendt's sister, Lu; Barack Obama is inaugurated; Wendt has a knee replacement operation; a brother dies in Samoa. As Summer evolves unstoppably through Autumn into Winter, others die – several old friends, a cousin – and Samoa is engulfed by a tsunami ("Guluafi"). In Spring, Reina has a hip replaced and returns to the garden to start the yearly cycle again.

As I lead with my sore knee into the morning kitchen  
I hear the huge absence  
of the pulsating cicadas yet it was only yesterday  
that Mānoa caught three  
scuttled with them in her mouth into our bedroom  
and tortured them playfully

(from: 'Garden 15').

Highly recommended, if you're of a story-telling turn of mind; probably less so if you like your poems lyrical. I'm keeping this one.

**Old Hat** Mark Pirie (HeadworX, 2012) 978-0-473-22123-2

This is a book entirely devoted to triolets, a difficult form to pull off. As described in the Author's Preface, they have a long history (French, 13th Century), and aren't particularly common among contemporary poets, unlike the villanelle and pantoum. Unfortunately, this volume is unlikely to contribute to their popularity. Pirie has used the form to write about everything from historical figures to science fiction with quite a lot of sport thrown in (mostly rugby and cricket), as we've come to expect from him. The overall effect on this reader was to start skipping lines and then pages, in search of something meaningful. Pirie uses his personal definition of the form as "an extended epigram on a subject", but their epigrammatic nature isn't especially noticeable, lacking as they are in either wit or satire. I'm not sure an entire collection of them was justified, but here's one I liked:

### Privates, WWI

In the death books  
they would write "sickness", at sea  
for the young Privates.  
Better that than (on land): "syphilis".

Theirs no battle fought: lost at land or sea.  
For the young Privates  
in the death books,  
they would write "sickness", at sea.

**Wild Like Me** Elizabeth Nannestad (VUP, 2013) 978-0-86473-881-3

A curate's egg – good in parts. There's a lot of nature, some philosophy, and frequent use of the ode-like second person address – toward both animate and inanimate subjects. Nannestad does vivid images (though not enough of them) and occasionally the personal becomes universal, but the whole is a little underwhelming. It's not that she's a bad poet – she was joint winner of the New Zealand Book Award for Poetry in 1986 – more that the title (and its title poem) suggests something 'wild', with no evidence to back it up. Good poems (mostly), in a satisfactory arrangement, but nothing special. Here's one that appeals to me, probably because I have a daughter who teaches this age group:

### New Entrants

Your great failing  
as a child, is that you have not read the book  
on child development.

Your first teacher  
explains it to you. She explains it and explains it  
like putting in a corner post

for miles and miles of fencing.

**Giotto's Circle** Diana Brodie (Poetry Salzburg, 2013) 978-3-901993-41-1

A UK resident but NZ-born, Brodie's first collection encompasses her broad travels, artistic and literary experiences and her New Zealand childhood. If that sounds a bit much, think of it as a memoir – selected memories that illustrate a life. Brodie has a sure touch and the poems read enticingly, one after the other, reassuringly feeling the ache of the earthquake as if she had never left:

...Earth's in charge, can find new faultlines,  
break understandings, pack up my hometown  
like a box of untidy, broken playthings  
left by a visiting child.

(from: Earthquake City)

There are other stories of loss: a baby, a brother missing for several years and eventually found in a trailer (what we would call a caravan, I assume). Nevertheless, the collection as a whole is determined to find redemption, and reflects an interesting life. I enjoyed it.

**The Judas Tree – poems of Lorna Stavelly Anker** ed. by Bernadette Hall (Canterbury University Press, 2013) 978-1-927145-46-3

A collection of poems by New Zealand's "first woman war poet". Bernadette Hall's introduction to the poems includes both a generous history of the extensive Cantabrian literary community, and detailed and personal memories of her friendship with the older poet. There's also a chronology of Anker's life at the back of the book.

The war poems in Part One include the poignant 'Ellen's Vigil', chosen for inclusion in the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, in Wellington, 2004. Anker has a gentle voice, even when the subject is anything but gentle. She was born on the day of Archduke Ferdinand's assassination, and her life experiences reflect what followed:

The nightmare's gone these past eighty years,  
Great storm, pier and house too,  
But Kaiser Bill's ghost at the foot of my bed  
Has endured – in dungarees blue.

(from: 'Child's Cry in the Storm' 1918)

And of course she had to relive it when it came around the second time:

The boys know there is little time left  
to enjoy the phoney peace,  
before their substance is added to Egypt  
Guadalcanal and the River Plate.

(from: 'Featherston' December 1939)

The poems in Parts Two and Three are reprints of selected poems from the collections published during the poet's lifetime. They're about people she knows and places she's been (or imagined going), but that description doesn't do

them justice. Her confident poetic voice is very readable, and there isn't space here to convince you to read the collection. Try this:

### The Uninvited

The day, a scorcher,  
when she blew in,  
tinsel from crown to toe  
and  
teetering on the parapet,  
inspected the builder's toil,  
preening  
her varnished cocoon.

Whilst I,  
frayed, work-worn,  
gave her resentful son  
cool cordial  
from the family fridge.

Well, maybe not always gentle.

**Family Songbook** John Newton (VUP, 2013) 978-0-86473-839-4

Long poems, each one a chapter in a book of memoir, not always personally true (as befits memoir), but well-researched to fill in the memory gaps. Ultimately a love song to mid-twentieth-century rural New Zealand, especially the famed High Country. There's a diversion into the great artists of that time and place, and a bit of nostalgia set in the present day, but really this is Newton showing us who and where he's from, "rabbit-sick" soil and all. I loved this collection, and have placed it on my to-read pile, to enjoy at greater leisure when I haven't got a magazine deadline to meet.

... Giants had laboured here, it seemed,  
and left behind hay bales tall as houses,  
hay to feed every last sheep in the  
high country, broadcast over the prairie  
like megalithic knucklebones.

(from: 'High Lonesome')



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### Quotation of the Month

In truth, I am nothing but a plodding mediocrity – please observe, a plodding mediocrity – for a mere mediocrity does not go very far, but a plodding one gets quite a distance. There is joy in that success, and a distinction can come from courage, fidelity and industry.

Benjamin N. Cardozo, 1870 – 1938

# Regional Report: Windrift

Nola Borrell

Windrift's February workshop specialised in 'summer' (what else!) and movement (art, music, progress), exercises set by Julie Adamson. But first, the open section:

ghost town  
the hotel bar  
open all hours

Ernest J Berry

"Neat", "like it" "West Coast" As usual, we found it hard to criticize Ernie's haiku. On to the next:

Manawatu Gorge tramp  
fifty shades of green  
ha! - a kereru

John Ross

Immediate appreciation. The bushlovers liked the multiple greens, and then the surprise of an extra green – the metallic green of the kereru. We liked the unexpectedness as well as the underlining of the 'aha moment' in line three.

retirement village  
on my daily walk  
through well-kept gardens  
my delight at finding  
a healthy weed

Karen P Butterworth

A turn for gardeners' delight. This one was appreciated in light of the writer's past gardening life and now change of residence.

Summer in the second section, was abundant.

the kaka  
mimics cicadas  
lasting summer

Harumi Hasegawa

An alert observation. There's a contrast between the cicada's above-ground life and the third line. True, as someone pointed out, cicadas imply summer.

iridescent  
a kingfisher  
fishing

Julie Adamson

The group was a little hesitant to appreciate this haiku as more than a descriptive one. I think that you have to see a kingfisher dive to feel the delight in the vividness of that split second of iridescence. There's a nice play on descent in the first line (though Julie had to point this out).

itch  
of a sandfly bite  
summer

Kerry Popplewell

Immediate communication here in simple clear terms.

After the workshop I spent several days at St Arnaud, Lake Rotoiti where I learnt that only 2 of 13 sandfly breeds bite; and only the females, for a ?good cause. No consolation to the bitten one.

The third section, movement:

cloudy hill walk  
I count the cracks  
in the footpath

Penny Pruden

Initially, slight mystification but any reader balance-challenged or recovering from a fall, will immediately understand this haiku.

backcountry road  
kangaroos bounding  
in unison

Julie Adamson

First time seen – delight! It may be that's what they do, but! (It's equivalent to the first time I saw several shags drying their wings: not a unique experience, but a delight to the watcher.)

En route, much laughter, quipping and repartee all witness to our pleasure in haiku.



## Competition Update

### GALLIPOLI SECTION

For 2015 only there is an extra section in our international poetry competition. In commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, we invite you to write poems on the theme of Gallipoli. Enter these poems as usual, on the competition entry form and include the appropriate entry fee. Unless otherwise directed, we will transfer all poems on this theme into the extra section. There will be a single prize of \$100 for senior entries, and \$50 for the winning junior entry (17 years or younger).

The judge for this section is **Harry Ricketts**. Harry is a past President of the NZPS, and he judged the Open section of the competition in 2012. One of his poetry collections, *Strange Meetings: the Poets of the Great War*, was published by Chatto & Windsor in 2010 and focuses on the War Poets of 1914-1918.



# Featured Poet: David Taylor

## The Schoolboy

School was trying to flush us out  
of the summer and drive us towards the fourth  
form

hungry for more momentum we went over the hill  
and after a couple of days scampering

around dusty pine-needed headlands above  
the coast road we took the old major's dingy

out into Children's Bay the sea's skin peeling  
back where the tiny outboard cut its tension

catching nothing we drifted towards open  
water slipping the embrace of the Bay's arms

we could feel the storm coming            as you do  
here

on your skin in the sea's increasing solidity

but neither would be the one to suggest going back  
we started to look only at the water

that last half-hour before it hit the fish were  
frenzied good sized cod striking every time

they kept biting when the Southerly came  
thumping up the harbour to rattle our skulls

the dinghy bucking the chop and slap the sea  
knocking on the bottom to see how full it was

the water turned blind panicking and thrashing  
the wind cast our words shoreward    the  
lighthouse swayed

rocks sawed savagely at the waves    we wouldn't  
turn back    or talk any more            but continued

to hook broken pieces of lightning    dragging  
them flashing and shivering from the ocean

to lie arcing in the bottom of the boat  
which was cowering low in the water now

we blew all the way back to the ramp  
though the bay we had left was obscured now

replaced by a drizzly uncertainty  
and it was hard to say where we were

all courses altered by the southerly change

## The School Leaver

Monday's child is an oyster fisher,  
watching waves being torn open on the bar,  
salt grating against calloused hulls,  
a wind-polished pearl in the ocean's palm,  
his bird eyes waiting for the tide to offer safe  
passage  
to a tractor waiting beyond the river's mouth.

Tuesday's child is a curator,  
a cataloguer tying strings of paint & light,  
moa bones & motor bikes,  
marble and moths,  
then magician-like, pulling them through  
the white, white walls of his world.

Wednesday's child is an outdoor recreation guide,  
daily remaking whatever was out there  
when people could guide themselves,  
planting and harvesting, planting and harvesting,  
wiping the work from his forehead  
for each brightly jacketed, camera faced group.

Thursday's child is an archaeologist,  
brushing gently at deep time,  
untold years, minutes, pressured to this hard earth  
he now relaxes into dust,  
even as his own hours and days  
settle rapidly over him.

Friday's child is a customs officer,  
checking for traditional dress,  
repeated observances and moving feasts,  
searching for and confiscating unprecedented  
behaviour,  
desperately containing outbreaks  
that would eat through next season's seed.

Saturday's child is a hunter/trapper,  
rarely seen even by the quarry,  
skin of algae, hair of fine roots,  
looking for prey to move alongside,  
to circle round, to leave still with a startled eye,  
sometimes it's pest control, sometimes food.

Sunday's child is a minister of religion,  
perhaps none as surprised as he,  
looking out today from this pulpit in the shed,  
to the bent nails, old boxes, motor panels  
and off cuts crowding round,  
needing both hope and salvation.

## The Apprentice

'Fetch me an axe to kill a man!'  
she would roar through the corridors of her house  
that castle in the sky suspended from its high gables  
its buttresses holding it gently  
and also my bicycle  
each Saturday  
she employed me to help  
put all in order  
giving hurried instructions  
across a chasm of time

for how many ages separated  
the weathered and sagging master  
from the scrofulous boy?

she left me bewildered  
in the den where walls of books blocked  
the windows and thousands of paper lions  
clawed at the unravelling patterns of the rug  
afraid to shuffle my feet

I followed her disappearing figure  
through endless rooms of book cases  
under the rolling breath of time  
dust swirling in currents along the shelves  
each mote its own cave or fort  
hilltop pa or city state  
its own civilisation stirring  
rising and falling  
on the inhalation  
exhalation of memories  
the paper of the books pressed  
thickly together  
their shelves  
their whole cases  
reeling

and when I looked back she was gone

one week I didn't see her at all  
a day spent searching all the many rooms and  
passage ways  
rolling from one decade to the next  
sheds documents doors to other times  
other systems always leading back here  
to a house with its own weather inside  
its own dust from the great river's fertile flood plain  
dirt from under the nails of clay warriors

bronzed skin of young men  
sweat of acrobats leaping bulls  
water dripped from the rivers' secret trails  
across the back of Te Wai Pounamu

so I came to wander each weekend  
on my own  
the innumerable hallways  
each a different height  
lined tightly with columns of books  
weighty volumes full of pottery shards  
spears bones spades camels booby-traps  
horseback warriors or triremes  
all of which came spilling  
if you prised a cover with a nail bar  
figurines and deities amphorae and carvings  
tumbling onto your lap  
all pouring into the vortex  
whipping through the house

with me on the edge

never sure of what I was trying to achieve  
moving stacks from place to place  
unearthing one treasure to bury it amongst others  
moving one continent closer  
or further away from another  
or simply contemplating the ride home  
to the suburbs through the nor'west bluster  
while watching dust rising  
from the whale pot in the back yard

## The Whaler

He pushes the door open on something bigger  
the museum's four story courtyard is  
stillness amongst noise  
silence within movement

waiting along the far side  
the skeleton of the blue whale  
a hundred feet if it is one

cast on the beach that black and white day  
a demasted vessel run aground  
too high to see over  
even on horse back

disgusting wonder  
strips of stinking blubber peeling off  
as the spade goes in

the inversion begins  
inside becomes outside  
life becomes bone dry

the flensed enormity  
entombed in a building  
a boy can stand inside a whale  
on the bottom of the concrete slab tank

the only visitor  
he always washes up here  
in this eddy

waiting for it to move  
he crouches where the sun's line bisects the wall  
body warming  
view preserved  
tries to imagine its ancient facts  
swimming towards him

beautiful terror  
skull at ten feet wide  
eleven long  
four and a half deep  
phalanges  
ulna radius  
mandible

he tries to take in the whole  
walks closer to examine it

hands pass through the swimming whale  
the grubby cream of the lumbar vertebrae  
soft curves of the chevrons  
ribs reach around to still hold the air

though really it is a deception  
it floats only in imagination  
reality hangs it in irons braces  
denied both sea and gravity

and standing inside and outside the whale  
in this poised quiet shaft  
centre of the spindle on which we turn  
he looks way up to the always moving sky  
sees the surface of the water

while back down here  
in stony depths  
the skeleton of a boy waits

a whale swimming slowly around  
in the quiet

here then is another memory  
the flesh and life  
cut away  
flensed of what won't keep  
and these lonely bones all that  
can be hung to try and prove it existed



## *Competitions and Submissions*

**Border Town Press Anthology - Call for Submissions (Canada) Deadline: 30 April** Theme: 'Borders & Boundaries' will be poetry or prose that describes, in a clear and concise voice, something involving borders or boundaries. We are open to all types of poetry and will be looking for poetry and prose that is inclusive rather than exclusive, but we are open-minded.

In general, we would like poems to be less than 36 lines (stanza breaks included) BUT if you think you have a poem that deserves more than that, more than one page, certainly submit it; if it is good enough and fits the criteria, regardless of its length, we will publish it. Just try to keep in mind we will not be publishing two poets' work on the same page. We will also be accepting submissions of 'flash fiction' – works of prose of 300 words or less.

There will be a submission fee of \$5 Canadian per poem, \$10 Canadian per flash fiction piece.

The publication will be a perfect-bound book with a colour art designed cover – actually the one posted on our web site – and some theme-related black & white photographs. The book size will be dependent on the number of quality submissions made and accepted for publication.

ALL poetry & prose submissions should be sent as Word document/s attached to your email OR included in the body of the email. Submissions should be emailed to: [macfadyen2@yahoo.ca](mailto:macfadyen2@yahoo.ca) See website for full details: <http://www.bordertownpress.com/>

**Ware Poets Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 30 April** Entry Fee: £4; 4 poems for £12, then £3 per poem (in the same submission) Prizes: £600, £300, £150, and the Ware Sonnet Prize (£150). Anthology publication for winners and shortlisted poets. Informal prize-giving ceremony at Ware Arts Centre, Friday 10 July 2015. Length: up to 50 lines. Sole judge: Carrie Etter. Entry form available at: <http://www.poetrypf.co.uk/comps/ware15.pdf>

**Four Chambers 04 - Call for submissions (USA) Deadline: "mid-May"** We're a community literary magazine. We don't limit or restrict ourselves to certain genres or styles. We don't have a specific aesthetic or

agenda. We want to find something for everybody, we're trying to give people a space for publication where there might not be, and we want to assemble an eclectic collection of literary work.

We have our own particular tastes and ideas about what makes for good work, sure, but we're open-minded; we like being surprised by new things, and most of the time we don't even know what good work looks like until someone waves it in front of our face. (Also, we use a board of editors rather than individuals, so each piece is determined by consensus rather than specific taste).

So while we could say lots of things about the kind of work we're looking for – and obviously recommend buying a magazine or reading some of the work we've released online – we would just be saying things, we can't say anything about a piece of work until we actually read it, and at the end of the day we're simply looking for good work, whatever that means, in all and any of its forms (and we hope it belongs to you).

For submission guidelines and to submit online see: <http://fourchamberspress.com/>

### **David Burland Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 31 May**

Entry Fee: £8 for first poem and £4 for each additional. Submissions open to poets worldwide writing in English, and poems may be in free style and any length. Entries accepted from writers of any nationality, over 18, and writing in English.

1st Prize: £500. 2nd Prize: £200. 3rd Prize: £100. Winning writers will have their work published in the Second volume of *Poetic Art 2015/2016*, and the winning poem will also be published on the David Burland website. All entries to be sent with a signed application form and confirmation of payment.

Submit entries and completed application forms to: Anna Burland Services, 39 High Street, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton WV11 1ST, England, UK.

To download application forms and for more information: [http://www.davidburlandliteraryservices.com/Poetry\\_Prize/index.html](http://www.davidburlandliteraryservices.com/Poetry_Prize/index.html)

### **Frogmore Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 31 May**

Entry Fee: £3 per poem. The winner of the Frogmore Poetry Prize for 2015 will win two hundred and fifty guineas and a two-year subscription to *The Frogmore Papers*. The first and second runners-up will receive seventy-five and fifty guineas respectively and a year's subscription to *The Frogmore Papers*. Adjudicator: John McCullough.

Poems should be typed and no longer than forty lines. Entries should be sent to: The Frogmore Press, 21 Mildmay Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1PJ, UK. For more information, please see website: <http://www.frogmorepress.co.uk/>

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No good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.

*John Ruskin*

## *Classified Ads*

### **FREELANCE - Writers Helping Writers**

For over thirty years a quarterly magazine, *Freelance* – New Zealand-based and New Zealand-biased – has been doing just that. In March 2015 it was revamped and relaunched with a colour cover and 12 extra pages.

The leading article is always 'A Writer's Journey,' to help you with your own. *Freelance* has a regular column on writing memoir; on fiction and on indie publishing. In addition, writers from all over New Zealand contribute wise words on different genres, content and format, and on being a 'writerpreneur.'

We include information from overseas, too, especially Australia, the USA and the UK. We also encourage our subscribers to write for us – and pay them. In addition, you can ask questions of *Freelance's* 'agony aunt,' Hene Pukapuka and send in comments to your own letters page, Write of Reply. And *Freelance* is always interested in your own news, views and reviews.

In between, we invite you to follow us on Facebook – [www.facebook.com/Freelancewritershelpingwriters](http://www.facebook.com/Freelancewritershelpingwriters). Or you can visit our website: [www.writershelpingwriters.nz](http://www.writershelpingwriters.nz).

Or send an email to: [info@writershelpingwriters.nz](mailto:info@writershelpingwriters.nz) with your queries and comments or to enquire about being a subscriber or contributor.

*Freelance* has been around for over three decades and our motto is and always will be 'Writers Helping Writers.'

Editors: Jenny Argente & Kaye Lister

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA**

### **The 2015 University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize**

Entries are now open for the second year of one of the world's richest poetry prizes.

1st Prize \$15,000; 2nd Prize \$5,000

Administered by the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI), the prize celebrates the enduring significance of poetry to cultures everywhere and marks the University of Canberra's commitment to creativity and imagination.

Entries may be submitted until 29 May 2015. Winners will be announced in September 2015 and notified in advance. Please register and enter at the website:

[www.canberra.edu.au/vcpoetryprize](http://www.canberra.edu.au/vcpoetryprize)

Maximum length is 50 lines. Each entry is AUD\$20. Discounts for students. Closing date: 29 May 2015.

## Members' Poems

### Write on

The retired judge offers nothing  
to appeal; from the injudicious  
jaw no judgment drops;  
no act affords any relief.  
Direction-less minutes yawn  
into the statutory afternoon  
drowse: nothing to report.

The only record that is kept  
plays over and over; the same  
circling tunes haze like boysenberry  
ripples licked repeatedly  
off holiday ice-creams;  
youthful tastes renewed like hits  
heard fresh on the transistor.

Dust covers the untouched  
volume, no-one needs to refer  
to this anymore; pages develop  
brown spots: how did that happen?  
Let it burn: memories should be  
interred, the past consumed: use  
the light for poetic righting.

*John Adams*

### I Know it's Hard for You, My Baby

*i.m. my teenage years*

The time to hesitate is through –  
girl, you'll be a woman soon

Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song  
I've got Friday on my mind

I think we're alone now  
It's all too beautiful

Give me a ticket for an aeroplane  
Oh Lord, won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?

I've just gotta get a message to you:  
bend me shape me any way you want me

Don't think I don't wanna please you –  
it's a little bit me and it's a little bit you

you gotta gimme some lovin'  
I don't know when I'll be back again

Just what you want to be, you can be in the end  
Excuse me while I kiss the sky.

*Laurice Gilbert*

### Bleeding hearts

An archetype war is tearing  
us apart

The sun  
in pure intensity  
brings along a lionlike warrior

The sunset  
kindness in the moon  
healing and soothing  
our open wounds  
our bleeding hearts

The battlefield at night  
landmark made out of scars  
body made out of stars  
filled with pain  
yet bright in memory

A full cycle means death  
Silence takes place  
Stillness takes time

And Peace, the sunrise,  
is to be

*Mariela Durnhofer Rubolino*

### Bombing black holes

I imagine doing something  
stupendous  
like bombing black holes.

Bombing black holes  
twelve billion times bigger  
than  
our sweet little Sun.

But then I remember  
the dishes need washing  
the potatoes need peeling,  
who else but me.

*Cecelia Fitzgerald*

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## Haiku Corner

yellow lupins stir  
in a haze of tanker dust

*Judith Gunn*