

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

ISSN 1177-6544 (PRINT)

ISSN 1178-3931 (ONLINE)

DECEMBER 2014



NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
PO BOX 5283
LAMBTON QUAY
WELLINGTON 6012

PATRONS

Dame Fiona Kidman
Vincent O'Sullivan

PRESIDENT

Lonnard Dean Watkins

EMAIL: info@poetrysociety.org.nz
www.poetrysociety.org.nz

FACEBOOK: [NewZealandPoetrySociety](https://www.facebook.com/NewZealandPoetrySociety)

TWITTER: @NZPS

WELLINGTON MEETINGS
Poets' Corner, The Thistle Inn
3 Mulgrave St, Wellington Central
Starts at 7.30pm with open mic.

To find out who the Workshop Facilitator is
please see:

[http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/
comingevents](http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/comingevents)

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT
ISSUE:**

14 JANUARY

Lost for Words

Keith Nunes

I have a gurgling brain. This mosh-pit of antagonism has troubled me for more than 30 years and led to suicide attempts and an enthralling nervous breakdown. In an attempt to keep my evil twin at bay in the past I've enthusiastically taken to alcohol, cannabis and gambling. I take medication and have counselling but nothing works like poetry. The tap-tapping of my fingers on the keyboard is therapeutic – the words that come out please me (mostly) to such an extent that the troubled mind is banished for long stretches of time. I'm grateful.

I'm not alone even though I feel like it sometimes. I have writing or artistic friends who have mental illnesses and we all know the famous sufferers. Contemporary British poet Roddy Lumsden has written that "a poet confessing to mental illness is like a weight-lifter admitting to muscles".

According to a study by psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison, the incidence of mood disorders, suicide and institutionalisation was 20 times higher among major British and Irish poets between 1600 and 1800 than the general population. The 'Sylvia Plath effect' is a term coined by psychologist James C. Kaufman in 2001 to refer to the phenomenon that poets (principally women) are more susceptible to mental illness than other creative writers.

After I had my colourful but distressing breakdown about 10 years ago I started writing poetry more seriously. The event changed the way I look at the world and life and all the big and boisterous questions. My writing became more intimate and confessional and intense – except when I was joking about being too intense. British writer Clare Allan: "In my own experience, one of the enduring legacies of a 'breakdown' is a vastly increased flexibility, a smudging of the boundary that used to divide 'the real' from 'the imagined'. Once you realise that the world you perceive is precisely that, the world you perceive, and not an objective reality, it's impossible to unrealise it again."

I wasn't able to hold down a job for years – I'd lost focus and confidence. Now we run a guest-house from home and I write for magazines. I crave silence when I write and only launch into it after the household goes to bed around 10pm or 11pm and continue through to dawn – very anti-social. I pursued poetry with more energy because I flipped out although I don't write about mental illness all the time. My depression and anxiety has given me an insight into another way of seeing myself in among all these other people. It colours my writing and I think adds a component to it that enhances the poetry. But it doesn't make me a better poet than the person who has a clear head and wind in their sails.

British poet Luke Wright says: "I don't think you have to be 'mad' to be a poet but if your mind is alive, then it can produce both positive and negative responses. It can mean wonderful things but it can mean that fitting into 'normal' life is difficult."

Psychologist Gary Fitzgibbon says: "Creativity is certainly about not being constrained by rules or accepting the restrictions that society places on us. Of

course, the more people break the rules, the more likely they are to be perceived as 'mentally ill'."

Writing poetry has given me a cliché (sorry, that should read 'purpose'). The expression of my thoughts keeps me sane - along with the plastic pills I pop in the morning.

In a recent poem I wrote I deal with the many-headed beast that hides in my shadow:

Falling Foul Feet First

I'm tired of all this evil
burning bulls and spinal taps
ashes in my mouth,
bent-over-backwards monkeys
talking about bombing Briscoes,
suicidal actors playing
hostile dictators in soiled nappies

I'd like to turn the ace of spades
into a shovel and bury
three quarters of the majority
who voted for whoever's in power

no matter
there's always next year
until it's last year
then you grab your history
and throw it against walls of silent farts
waiting patiently for the crestfallen
to ask you to leave quietly
with good manners strapped to your back
and frisbies holding up the meaning of life

I felt better for writing that, whether it's considered good or not. And for me that's the point – I don't have to measure up I just have to write. Poetry is cathartic, healing and inspirational and plays a significant role in my battle with mental illness.

NB: Some poetry that rings true for me -

Charles Bukowski: "these words force you to a new madness"

Sylvia Plath:

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.
The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility
Fumy, spiritous mists inhabit this place.
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

(from: 'The Moon And The Yew Tree')

Charles Baudelaire:

My impoverished muse, alas! What have you for me this morning?

Your empty eyes are stocked with nocturnal visions,
In your cheek's cold and taciturn reflection,
I see insanity and horror forming.

(from: 'The Sick Muse')



From the Editor

Laurice Gilbert

Another Competition / Anthology cycle drew to a close on Saturday 1st November, when we held a great launch at Meow Cafe in Wellington. From Palmerston North to Wanaka, poets both young and mature came to share the celebration. Guests read their own poems as well as those of others who couldn't attend, and we finished with an open mic. The slight technical difficulty of Meow not having us on their booking schedule (their oversight, not ours) was a small matter, easily overcome, and it proved a welcoming and hospitable venue. I appreciated not having to do the catering myself this year.

As always, we have published enough copies of the anthology to share the love, and there are some left to offer to members at the Contributors' price of \$25 (RRP\$27). They make super Christmas presents, as they contain an energetic selection (by our Judges and Editor) of the best entries in the competition, which are nevertheless accessible to the not-usually-drawn-to-poetry reader. There is an order form attached to this issue.

In other news, our President has been on an extended poetry tour of the USA, which also included the All Blacks test match in Chicago, and is keen to share his experiences. You'll be hearing from him next.

It seems to have been a quiet couple of months on the publication front for our members (unless there are a whole bunch of emails I've missed), but certainly not for poetry in general. The University presses continue to publish most of the poetry I receive for review, but an increasing number of smaller (so far) independent publishers are making a big impression, and I look forward to seeing more from the likes of Seraph Press and Mākaro Press. No doubt there are others I'm not so familiar with, and I'd love to hear about them. I believe that in the shrinking world of mainstream publishers, small presses are essential to New Zealand poetry, and I urge you to support them.

Quotation of the Month

It's a pity to put a poet into a job that someone else can do

Les Murray

From the President

Lonnard Watkins

Poetry is universal. Poetry draws enthusiastic crowds no matter where in the world poets share their work. I recently returned from the United States and although poetry was not the main reason for my trip, I was fortunate to attend some poetry events. Every two years since 1986, the Geraldine Dodge Poetry Foundation has staged a 4-day Poetry Festival in New Jersey. I was able to attend three sessions on the Sunday. The festival included a tribute to Amiri Baraka, where a number of poets, including former US poet Laureate Billy Collins, read Baraka's poetry and discussed their relationship with him. In the final session Billy Collins was joined by Marie Howe, Alberto Ríos, Rita Dove, Robert Pinsky and the legendary 'beat' poet Gary Snyder, who all read from their recent work. It was truly an honour to listen to these great internationally recognised poets.

On Wednesday evening I had the pleasure of attending and competing in a regional New York poetry slam, at the world-renowned Nuyorican Poets Café in New York City. Although I have competed in a number of slam events in New Zealand, I was apprehensive about facing a US audience. But after they got used to my kiwi drawl, I started to hear positive feedback and murmurings from the crowd. Like all poetry, spoken word is universal. Whether in New York or back home in New Zealand, the themes and energy are very much the same.

Not long off the plane on my return to NZ, but long enough to sleep off the jetlag, I attended LitCrawl in Wellington, which took place in a variety of venues on the evening of November 15th. Based on a similar event in San Francisco, LitCrawl offered fourteen events showcasing the amazing literary talent of New Zealand poets and writers. As it was scheduled during three time blocks, it was not possible to attend all the venues. The tough decision had to be made on which three I would attend. For the first event I chose 'The Young' art gallery where Mark Avery, Mary-Jane Duffy and Megan Dunn read their work based on the subject of art. Next I attended the Paramount Theatre where writers including James Brown, Bill Nelson, Elizabeth Knox and Lawrence Pratchett shared work published in the *SPORT* magazine. I finished LitCrawl by joining Helen Rickerby, who celebrated 10 years of Seraph Press with readings from poets she has published over this period.

The coordination of an event like LitCrawl took time and effort from many people who came together to organise and to volunteer their time to make this a success. It is a wonderful event and all should be very proud of what was achieved.

From New Jersey to Wellington, poetry truly is universal and universally appreciated.



About our Contributors

Kirsten Cliff is a free-range writer and book trader, with a love of all things haiku. She blogs at <http://kirstencliffwrites.blogspot.co.nz> and you can read her free chapbook here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/206750514/thinking-of-you>

Mary Cresswell is a Kapiti poet whose work appears in a variety of print and online journals.

Paula Harris is a tango-dancing naturopath and Pilates instructor in the fine metropolis of Palmerston North. She is most productive in her writing when in the depths of extreme happiness, lust or heartbreak. Her work has been published in *Broadsheet*, *JAAM*, *Poetry NZ* and *Takahe*, amongst others.

Keith Nunes lives in rural Bay of Plenty with a retinue of crackpots. His obtuse and melodramatic poems have been published in *Landfall*, *Poetry NZ*, *Takahe*, *Trout*, *a fine line* and *Snorkel* among others and his book reviews appear widely in *Oropi*. His chapbook *Crashing the Calliope* is on the streets. He's a former newspaper sub-editor but has been granted divine forgiveness.

Vaughan Rapatahana (Te Àtiawa) is a recently-returned resident of New Zealand-Aotearoa, with homes also in Hong Kong and Pampanga, Philippines. Extensively published across a wide array of genres, from philosophy through to fiction to poetry and language critique. Ph.D University of Auckland; Poupou Huia Te Reo Te Whare Wānanga o Raukawa.

A Warm Welcome to...

Belinda Diepenheim Ashhurst (rejoined)

Carol Reiley USA

Charline Pocock Eketahuna

Diane Newcombe Waiwera

Julie Adamson Wellington

Laurel Astle Australia

Linda Bartlett Auckland

Sile Mannion Christchurch

Suzanne Frearson Auckland

Congratulations

Valeria Barouch's tanka earned an Honorable Mention in the United Haiku and Tanka Society's *cattails* 'Fleeting Words Contest', September issue.

Laurice Gilbert's poem 'I've written my autobiography - it's time to start over' was published in a post-competition anthology, *In Transit - Poetry of People on the Move*, by Border Town Press (Canada).

And from **Keith Nunes**:

brief (NZ print) - September

Shot Glass Journal (US online) - September

Catalyst (NZ print) - September

Strong Verse (US online) - September

Allegro Poetry Magazine (US online) - October

Poetry NZ (NZ print) - October

Blackmail Press (NZ online) - October

take back our sky NZ Poetry Society's 2014 anthology (NZ print) - November

Noticeboard

Information Wanted

Tena Koutou poets.

I am a librarian for Te Wananga o Aotearoa and am trying to locate a poem for an elderly woman. She remembers it from her childhood but doesn't know the author. All she can provide me with to go on is that it was about a girl 16 years or so old, who describes what she sees and experiences in a sanatorium. Native trees also featured in the poem too. The title of the poem is 'The Green Door'.

If any of you can shed some light on this I'd be very grateful. Thank you.

Sue Raureti - Susan.Raureti@twoa.ac.nz

haikai café

Your bite-sized serving of haiku, senryū, tanka and haibun

edited by Kirsten Cliff

a blackbird hops
through the undergrowth
crescent day moon

~ Haiku by Norah Johnson

within the weave
of this wax-eye's nest
history hidden
the myth of an olden race
called forth in song

~ Tanka by Kirsten Cliff

The Fortyninth Wave

The wave comes without warning, a blue wall of water, towering above me. I am unable to run, my legs held by the suck of the out-tow. Then there is nothing but tumbling, swirling blue-green colours holding me in a strangely peaceful embrace. So this is what it feels like to drown, I think. I am carried up the beach and deposited ungently near the soaked picnickers and their tightly held children. Lifeguards run towards the receding sea.

under my feet
the crunch of leaves
almost gone

~ Haibun by Maureen Sudlow

This is the final *haikai café*. Many thanks to Kirsten for her devoted and sterling work in collating the submissions, and to all the poets for sending them in. The position of haiku editor for *a fine line* is open. If you have an idea for continuing a haiku presence, please email: editor@poetrysociety.org.nz

Opportunity (advertisement)

LEARN WRITING BY WRITING Study with a great group of fellow writers!

Graduates of the Whitireia Creative Writing Programme have published over 120 books, have contributed to literary and general magazines, are performance poets, organisers of literary events, MA (Creative Writing) graduates, are employed as writers and editors – they are in every part of the writing landscape.

Become a part of this diverse and lively writing community.

Study part-time (the poetry module for example), full-time or online, for personal goals, publication, diploma or degree. Work with established writers to develop versatile writing skills, or complete a major project: poetry collection, novel, short fiction, non-fiction.

Late applications will be considered if places are available.

The Whitireia Creative Writing Programme

Dixon St, Central Wellington

For further information: ph 0800 944 847

mary-jane.duffy@whitireia.ac.nz

and check us out at:

Creative Writing Programme at Whitireia NZ

<http://www.whitireia.ac.nz/AreasOfInterest/Creative-Writing/Pages/CreativeWriting.aspx>

Regional Report

WINDRIFT - OCTOBER

Penny Pruden

Eight members met for the final bi-monthly meeting of 2014. By way of inspiration, Nola arrived with a handful of parsley and a haiku by Beverley George (Australia) to inspire us:

parsley bed
the stretched necks
of snails

While some of us found it hard to aspire to that standard, at least a snail made a brief reappearance later in the meeting.

Themes were (1) Open, (2) A touch of colour in the rain, and (3) Changing situation. There was a good response from all members, though several contributions from those present were kept back for re-working or publication elsewhere. Amongst the many from corresponding members, the recognisable touch of Ernie Berry produced the first one 'plucked' from a bowl; all agreed it got to the point sharply, almost with a shock:

crossroads
a new crop
of crosses

Ernest J Berry

Next to be considered was:

gathering watercress
a disturbance of ducklings
spring

Kerry Popplewell

Kerry immediately agreed that the final word was not necessary and that it made a good two-liner.

Next to be discussed were four contributions written while Julie Adamson was visiting Blenheim. Some raised the favourite query of 'where is the haiku moment?', although someone remarked that the evocation of memories could constitute 'the moment', as in (my personal favourite):

the old homestead
lingering scent
of hyacinths

Julie Adamson

Annette produced a puzzle with the next haiku:

an orchestra
full of melody
captured on the wing

Annette de Jonge

She admitted that the "orchestra" was composed of wild

birds, not musicians rushing towards the interval! Although questioned by Bevan, Karen conceded that the use of metaphor was part of the poetic tradition. While various alternatives were suggested, Karen felt that it was a good poem as it stood.

More levity was produced by my own effort, although most agreed the second line (the 'moment' to me, although not necessary to spell it out) could be cut:

on the damp concrete
catching my eye
a snail's 'footprint'
heading straight for my garden

Penny Pruden

Spring blossomed freely in several efforts.

cold Spring gusts
- mostly spared
revels of cherry blossom

John Ross

The need for a dash was questioned, and one suggestion was that this could work well as a two-line poem without the middle line.

The mood quickly changed when Bevan reminded us of the recent 'blood moon' (seen in Wellington only by those who stay up till midnight, when the cloud cleared) and the conflict and bloodshed it echoed for him:

bloody syrian moon
also failed to shine in aotearoa
blood brothers

Bevan Greenslade

The great depth of associations was acknowledged, with Nola and Karen suggesting this could be expanded to a tanka to accommodate the emotional element.

On to the final two offerings in this section, with agreement that this would be better in four lines:

sixteen solar panels
on one new roof -
in the yard a stack of firewood

Penny Pruden

and, with neither moon nor birds quite dismissed:

Beethoven's Moonlight -
a blackbird pauses

Lynn Frances

There was general discussion on the group's progress in visualizing while a haiku is read. In the second theme - a touch of colour in the rain - that progress was tested in:

invisible chimney
the first wisp
of winter

Ernest J Berry

No difficulty in visualizing, though, with:
driving in heavy rain
the loom
of traffic lights

Karen Peterson Butterworth

Bevan's contribution proved more enigmatic and - not surprisingly - amusing:

in grey courtenay place
chased by jealous brothers
joseph from st gerard's

Bevan Greenslade

His constant inclination to pun was discussed and provoked more laughter before we moved on to Nola's

raindark the white wings of black swans

Nola Borrell

This stunning picture eluded some, with the word "raindark" leading to an assertion by Bevan that it sounded "so fabricated", and Nola defending its use (all in a comradely way, of course). Annette brought us down to earth, with:

spring
after the winter rain
garden full of weeds

Annette de Jonge

A familiar complaint, but all agreed something more was needed, although 'spring' was unnecessary.

As we started on the third exercise, 'changing situation' (or contrast), Ernie's was the first to be plucked:

squabbling crows
the scarecrow loses
his sombrero

Ernest J Berry

As it is almost impossible to suggest amendments to any of Ernie's haiku, we embarked on a discussion of different black birds, here and elsewhere, and which were extinct or had never existed in New Zealand. The haiku remained as submitted!

mid-morning
the hail melted
still low, the tulips

John Ross

Kerry felt the need for contrast, possibly something which had 'sprung up'. John replied that he'd hoped the word 'still' had conveyed that.

A puzzling picture was evoked by the next sample from Harumi, whose first language is Japanese (not English trying to think Japanese!):

unpleasant grade
looking at the empty quad
from the back row
failure
who to blame?

Harumi Hasegawa

This sad picture was discussed at length, as well as the means of expressing it. Karen drew attention to two turning points, and Bevan suggested deleting the last two lines. Karen agreed that they might be unnecessary and the remaining three lines would convey what the writer had implied. Some felt the first word, "unpleasant", did not express the emotions Harumi meant to evoke and that the poem was going in too many directions at once. NB: Harumi's other contributions were much admired. Because these were all held back this discussion was the only one we could report.

skimming casually
the death notices
- O good grief

John Ross

The slightly dismissive tone was discussed and John agreed it would be better to omit "casually".

beautiful snowdrop
pew! what a smell
onion weed

Annette de Jonge

The surprised reaction had come from a disappointed toddler. Two contributions described by Karen as "good, experimental, very short haiku" concluded the meeting. We then said goodbye until February 2015.



Reviews

The Baker's Thumbprint Paula Green (Seraph Press, 2013)
ISBN 9780473236311

Vaughan Rapatahana

I like this collection of clever poems by Paula Green, although – as with all poetry collections, I guess – it is a little uneven and one or two poems are somewhat slight or don't quite work, especially when the poet is tugging around with repeated tropes, lines, words.

Then again, several poems – particularly early on – I 'very like' as my Hong Kong students were prone to saying, because they are excellent. The lead poem 'Thursday', with its extended metaphor paralleling housing and poetry, is probably the 'best' poem in the book, as below where I quote the first stanza:

If you look beneath the floorboards
of this poem you might find

endless days of rain and wind
on the Waitakere Ranges...

Which sets the tone and raises expectations high.

Expectations which are matched by some brilliant
imagery throughout the book:

...the way

the Tasman Sea lifts the imagination
like an old-fashioned washing machine
willing to take any load.

(‘Bethell’s Beach’)

I have walked past vats of dye in the Fez medina,
around the Wellington waterfront searching for
poems,

(‘The Odyssey’)

The water is like a dog’s tongue at the shore
The sky is like an empty tropical fish tank.

(‘Janet and Frank Catch a Ferry’)

Which leads on to several interesting points about
many of these poems – themselves somewhat varied
as regards formatting; style and ‘versification’; length;
domestic/international locale of inspiration; and subject
matter (maybe too much territory is traversed here, by
the way?) After all there are also tapas consisting of how
to write poetry; William Shakespeare; and an earnest
token to do with te reo Maori amongst this buffet. The
dish selection into five sections also comes over as
somewhat arbitrary.

Firstly, several personages repeat themselves
throughout. Simone de Beauvoir is here, along with Plato
and Horace and Janet Frame, Copernicus and Einstein,
although I read these guys and dolls as not literal, but
as figurative representations of family and friends of
the poet. They are interpolated with Paula Green as
extant not only in Ponsonby Road, but also in New
York City. Like the poet herself they are intelligent and
philosophical, musing and amusing, well read and well
fed.

Indeed so many poems here are food orientated and
read somewhat like taste-inspiring menus.

So, we are pleasantly regaled throughout with
whimsical existential pronouncements and aphorisms by
haute cuisine aficionado, as in:

Simone has laid pomegranate seeds
the length of the table
to track the faultline of human existence.

‘It all comes back to story,’
she says, admiring her handiwork.

(‘Sunday Lunch’)

Then there is the intermittent replay of the superior
poems – by which I mean these stand out somewhat from
their immediate cohorts – regarding Green’s own youth
and growing-up years in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Poems
like ‘Standard Three’, ‘Sunday Afternoon’, ‘1955’, ‘1968’,
‘1984’, ‘Beam’ are all rather good as regards the honesty
and history intertwining with some quite yummy poetical
decoration:

Sunlight on the tamarillo trees
heat spreading- the English teacher’s lips pursed.
My words, a wonky overcoat, she dismisses
with a flick of her tongue.

(‘Beam’)

Speaking of replay and revisiting, Green tends to repeat
and repeat not only thematically through her episodic
pages, but also within a poem. To reiterate words and
phrases particularly, so that a poem such as ‘Summer’,
has “pohutukawa” x7 times in seven stanza, and “fish” in
an identical pattern, while ‘Ode to Vegetables’ gives us
the hiccup of “fade/fades” a mere nine times. This poet
delights in planning and plotting her verse, in constructing
playful yet quite salivating ontological menus to titillate the
discerning reader. She is so careful and studious in fact, that
16 poems have astute *Notes* pertaining to them.

At times, however, such constructs do not convince
– such as the final repetitious edifice ‘Imagine Standing’,
which like the initial poem, among several others, is
dedicated to a fellow female writer, and which is long-
winded and somewhat bathetic. There are other such
repeated tracts such as in ‘February’, which do not feed me
at all. Others also – far fewer and tending to be more like
experiments from poetry-writing classes as in ‘Low Tide’,
‘The Fairy Tale’, ‘Quarter Moon’, ‘Half Moon’, ‘Matapouri
Beach’, ‘April’ – here reproduced in full – with their
deliberate iteration, serve to get you flicking faster through
the pages in search of more nourishing treats:

April

The pink on my cheeks
And the pink in the clouds
Fits the pink of my cup
And the pink in my blouse.

Then again, the deconstructed prosody of both ‘Early’
and ‘Late’ and the chant of ‘Cold’ – with more of this
duplication of the same word – do whet my appetite
considerably. (continued on p.10)

The moment that you feel that, just possibly, you’re
walking down the street naked, exposing too much of
your heart and your mind and what exists on the inside,
showing too much of yourself. That’s the moment you may
be starting to get it right.

Neil Gaiman (University of the Arts Commencement
Speech)

Featured Poet: Paula Harris

after 17 years, we say hi

for those ninety seconds
after,
we wrapped our arms around
one another
and just stood there

my arms slid over your shoulders
while yours fell around my waist
and we curled our heads
into each other's necks
for comfort

and I could feel your heart
as it raced
and thumped against your ribs,
echoing mine

my left hand curved around
the back of your head
as I looked to rediscover
the lines of you,
after holding their memory
in my palms for so long

you turned your head
and kissed the side of my neck
and we both breathed
in the scent of each other,
and it was like coming home
when I hadn't even realised
I'd left

my father's daughter

i sometimes wonder what
this man - who looks
nothing like me except
for curly hair and
great legs - is doing
in my life and
what i am doing
in his
where neither
of us really belongs

(re)finding inspiration

I spent months and
months
and
months
not writing anything,
and then

you

came back into my life

just long enough

to provide me with the
exact
balance
of happiness

and misery

that makes the words
flow
so quickly
and smoothly

that I feel sane
again.

thanks.

bastard.

** Originally published in the 'Manawatu Standard'*

Welcome home

for Mahinarangi Tocker

Welcome yourself home
greet your plants
kiss your walls
lie naked on the floor

Bang your pots and pans
loudly
skip through all the rooms
singing nonsense words
jump on the furniture
and wave at the world
outside your windows

And then curl up
safe in the knowledge
that you're
home

shrapnel

when you broke my heart
all those years ago
I swept up the shattered pieces
in silent fury
while you looked on

away from you
I buried the pieces
deep inside myself
to keep them from harm
and the silence fell away

now
I realise
that I missed one shard

it lodged itself
inside you
burying between your ribs
working its way in deeper
with time

my only options
are
to dig it out
with my bare hands
pushing muscle,
bone and organs
out of my way

or
to leave it where it is
slowly burrowing
further inside you
until it lodges too deep
to safely
remove

finding the luck

I stare at the ground
searching through the clovers
nestled in the overgrown grass

do you remember
looking for four-leaf clovers
when you were a kid?

I ask

yeah
you answer

why don't we do that anymore?

I ask

we know better now
you answer

silence

we know that there is no magic
you say

but there has to be

I answer

I stare at the ground

yes, another love poem

you should fall in love

because Everest has been climbed
because Alexandria has been found
because the moon has been walked on

you should fall in love

because the sun is warm
because rain feels good
because white clouds are floating by

you should fall in love

because chocolate tastes good
because sometimes grapes are seedless
because parmesan cheese smells

you should fall in love

because birds have wings
because frogs can jump
because dogs chase their own tails

you should fall in love

just because

i should follow my own advice

Reviews (cont.)

Again – and now I have caught the habit - most of the poems in the book do nourish and tend to leave you purring for more. Paula Green is at her master chef's best when serving up a personal and historical – as in concocted from 'non-personal events' she has read about, such as Spiro Agnew's 1970 foray to Auckland – poetical smorgasbord which tantalises the reader and gets them going back for more, and more, and more. Her own baker's thumbprint is deeply embedded in such dishes and there is ample kai to share around.

Well done, I say. Food for thought indeed:

In the endless change

I need something to hold

that will lead me out of the cul-de-sac.

('Ode to Vegetables')

C'est vrai mes amis. C'est ici.

Oh, did I mention, as coffee and after dinner mints are served, that the table setting of the book itself à la the cover and the printed presentation of the entire repast, is also quite delectable? Bon appétit!

High-voltage lines Tiel Aisha Ansari (Barefoot Muse Press, 2012), ISBN 978-0-61566 376 0, NZ\$13.62 (postage free when ordered via The Book Depository)

Mary Cresswell

Solstices suspend the year, a crown

of days that hang between extremes of light....

The year falls ragged from my windowsill.

God hems the sky with silver seams of light.

('Solstice light')

Like high-voltage lines, the poems in this collection carry power – suspended, sparking, and with frequent arcs of light reminding us of danger and destruction. They show the intimate:

Your wine is private; I would broach your cask

and swallow you in intimate embrace

or is that something that I shouldn't ask?

('Fluid boundaries')

the despairing:

... sparrows search in vain for insects where//

the farmers used to hold the Harvest Fair.

Then gleaners came, and carried bushels back.

Now combines leave the field stripped and bare

and sparrows search in vain for insects there.

('Threshed')

and the political:

A vote in the hand is worth two in the coop,
and as these birds fly home, the losers droop
while winners pat their backs and count their gain
in superdelegates.

('Superdelegates')

The poems are in a splendid variety of forms. The author introduces herself in a double dactyl; then we get heroic couplets (there's a great take on Keats' 'Lamia'), terza rima, sestinas, villanelles, pantoums, rondeaus: repetitive forms expand with modern, often political, content, and their variety is effortlessly explored. It's a delightful book to read.

Tiel Aisha Ansari lives in the state of Oregon, USA. She is a Sufi, a martial-arts expert, and a data analyst – all appropriate to the combination of passion and discipline that informs this book. Her poems don't describe a comfortable world, but they are very much at home in the world; we are reminded early in the collection that:

As in the sunset's dreamy afterglow

as when the dawn draws light out of the black

no-one talks about it, but we know

there's something out there, something that we lack

a thing half-light can only halfway show

as when the dawn draws light out of the black.

('Hobo's door')

On the Wing Sue Fitchett (Steele Roberts, 2014) PB 80 pp ISBN 978 1927 24252 0 RRP\$25

Laurice Gilbert

Life, the universe and everything, through an infrastructure of birds. The back cover bio identifies Sue Fitchett as "an avid conservationist, particularly with birds", so it's an appropriate theme to weave together a collection that defines a story arc from childhood to freedom. With the birds as warp, the fabric develops as the weft journeys through the intricacies of taking off and soaring, observing, falling/landing/loss, and finding oneself before starting the cycle all over again. It's an appealing construct.

That's not to say every poem is about birds (though all but one of them contain birds, one way or another), but as metaphor for life's difficult issues, flying creatures in their multifarious forms are an effective and endearing presence. And each of the five sections of the book is introduced by a quotation from *The Peregrine*, by JA Baker, providing a relevant clue to the theme of that section, particularly important for those of us of a strictly narrative persuasion.

The poems vary in form from simple free verse through parallel vertical paths to the concrete, as in '(in)formation – a plain letter V', which takes the shape of a flock of flying geese (though it's not *actually* about geese). Many are spaced on the page in zigzags, and there's a 2-part poem

(‘periphery /peripheral & the slow forgetting’) consisting of an erasure poem on the right-hand page movingly reflecting the original on the left, which is heart-breaking enough on its own, covering as it does the extinction of many NZ birds. Clever.

What you won’t find is traditional ‘form’ poetry – no villanelles, sestinas or obligatory pantoums. Fitchett is her own poet, and it shows in careful arrangements of words, lines and spacings. Ultimately it’s the words that do the grunt (or squawk) work, not overexposed literary devices.

In Section 1 (‘where she takes off from; / where she flies to’) we accompany the poet’s launch from Barraud Grove, “our whole universe” up until “our house was taken under The Public Works Act”. It’s a road that sees her losing her childhood and (later) her father, soaring over the world, observing, learning, closing doors and opening windows. In this section alone, there are blackbirds, godwits, swallows, ravens, heron, geese, chaffinches, and a “Jurassic chicken”, in ‘Sue T Rex (Chicago’s Natural History museum)’. All contribute to taking on an understanding of the world. This bird evolves.

Section 2 (‘falling, a fear of falling / & where she lands’) is incisive, examining closely the details of life – its very bones and feathers. It includes, as the section title suggests, the possibility of failure, the observer interrupted. Daedalus and Icarus are almost inevitable in a collection about taking wing, but they don’t impose unduly. From ‘on the wing (1)’:

Wile E. Coyote was the first
to strap on a pair of wings
& fall off a cliff

when she straps on wings
she puts on
burning
ice
marries air

death picks his teeth
waits in the pit
...
flying on alone
Daedalus drops
waxy tears

in a flock she could
hinge the sky
twist wings in unison
change direction
...

A few poems later, in ‘on the wing (2)’, she’s getting the hang of it:

in the matter of putting wings on

pectoral muscle to breastbone keel

she first perceives them as weight

ulna to shoulder girdle these stretched bones

...

wait
let’s wait
for earth’s rotation

Section 3 (‘finding/considering a world with / & without birds), is altogether a back-to-Earth-with-a-thud experience. There is loss, and an intense sense of ‘other’. It contains my favourite sequence – ‘small frames - the hens of Rarotonga’. This is – very loosely – a sort of ‘thirteen ways to look at...’ and maybe I like it best because it reads well even without the metaphorical implications (although it’s more likely to be because I love chooks):

v.

Consider these propositions

A free bird is tough

A free bird is not tender enough for an umu

A bird that squawks in the morning should be eaten at night

We eat chicken from the umu

banana leaf-wrapped, earth-cooked & steaming

Are these birds those birds?

The hens just cackle in our faces

Too tough too tough

Too free too free

The concept of freedom for hens gets stickier as the sequence goes on.

Buller appears in this section, as well he might, in another sequence on loss ('heavenward eyes'). He's followed closely by a long narrative poem, 'the day we go to Oświęcim- Brezinka (Auschwitz-Birkenau) – find an absence of birds', containing the plaintive refrain:

alas

no birds sing

on the grass alas

So much loss.

And on to Section 4 ('lifting the wings to dance all those hellos / & goodbyes'). The first poem in this section, 'step up to form seven stars', references ta'i chi ch'uan – that most slow and elegant of pursuits adopted by baby boomers for health reasons, but with its roots firmly in the martial arts. The dancer in the poem is the broлга, a beautiful but aggressive crane-like bird – an apt juxtaposition.

There is ancestry to be found in this section: "my great-aunt Kate" ('landed' – the only poem in the book without any sign of a bird; perhaps Kate *is* the bird), "my grandmother's body" ('effortless as sleep'), "my mother" ('nga roimata toroa') – issues of identity and place take center stage among the swans, albatrosses, tui and magpies. Finally, the godwits take off as "flocks of yes / to Siberia" and we are on our way again, as we were when the godwits beckoned back in Section 1 ('godwits all').

And there we are, come full circle, in the final Section: 'on the wing'. The last few poems establish that the poet is not alone, not 'other', except when it matters, and those "too tough", "too free" birds are holding their own:

& every bit of blue

calls to you

you can't close eyelids

shut blue out

it's already taken up residence

a squatter

a monkey on the back

pulling wings from shoulders

feet from the ground

& before you know it

you're taking off

flying

a bright morning sky

('wing walking')

Sue Fitchett has published or edited four previous books, with only one solo collection among them. Her experience shows in the exquisite care with which this one has been put together. There are some poems I didn't enjoy, but that's not her fault – my literal mind isn't up to the demands of deciphering some kinds of verse. Don't let that put you off. This collection is cohesive and satisfying, and deserves a place in the ongoing NZ literary landscape.

Life & Customs Bernadette Hall (Victoria University Press, 2013). Pb, 88pp. RRP\$25. ISBN: 9780864739001

Keith Nunes

Bernadette Hall's latest collection is swarming with the deft touches of a woman who has a settled voice. The respected New Zealand poet has composed an engaging and endearing tune through these pages. And yet, in my bombastic and naive way, I'm underwhelmed. Maybe because I'm charging at concrete walls and she's comfortable on her sofa watching writers like me self-destruct. Maybe because she has a maturing woman's perspective that slips down the hallway and eludes me. I'm angry, she is not. Maybe because she's a dug-in Kiwi assured of her next meal while I ache to be shocked. Hall will out-subtle allcomers and spread rumours with poems of her gradual ascent to the trig where she surveys her life, and the customs that come with it, and be satisfied. Quite an achievement in a world full of madness and ferocity.

[Ed's note: Mea culpa. I usually try and match books to reviewers, and I might have misjudged this combination.]



Competitions and Submissions

Ballymaloe International Poetry Prize (Ireland)

Closing Date: 13 December Entry Fee: €12. 4 cash prizes for a single unpublished poem - 10,000 Euro for the overall winner and three runner-up prizes of 1,000 Euro. Open to everyone, as long as the work is original and previously unpublished. Further details at: www.themothmagazine.com Email: enquiries@themothmagazine.com

Literary Laundry Contest (USA) Deadline: 15

December \$500 for best poem. Submit up to 3 pages of

poetry, which could be one three-page poem or many short poems. Electronic entries only. Website: <http://www.literarylaunder.com/submissions>

Best New Zealand Poems - Call for Submissions

Deadline: 16 December To be edited by Vincent O'Sullivan. All poetry published by New Zealanders (locally, internationally, or online) within the calendar year of the current collection is eligible for consideration. Publishers or poets may submit books, magazines, journals, links to online publications, hard copy extracts, or a small selection of poems in electronic form. Please do not submit whole manuscripts electronically. E-books may be submitted in pdf form, including a link to the publication site. Full submission guidelines at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/modernletters/resources/bestnzpoems#submission-guidelines>

The Dorset Prize (USA) Deadline: 31 December

(postmark or online submission date) Prize: \$3,000. Open to anyone writing in the English language, whether living in the United States or abroad. Translations and previously self-published books are not eligible. Poets submitting work may be published authors or writers without prior book publications. Please read the full guidelines here: <http://www.tupelopress.org/dorset.php>

DreamQuestOne (USA) Postmark deadline: 31

December Up to \$500 for a poem or short story. Poem: 30 lines or fewer on any subject; short story: 5 pages maximum, on any theme. Writing Prizes: 1st \$500, 2nd \$250, 3rd \$100. Poetry Prizes: 1st \$250, 2nd \$100, 3rd \$50. Visit <http://www.dreamquestone.com> for details.

Flash 500 Humour Verse Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 December. Up to 32 lines. Prizes: 1st £150, 2nd £100, 3rd £50. The results will be announced within six weeks of the closing date and the three winning entries will be published on the website. Entry Fee: £3 for the first poem, then £2.50 for each poem thereafter. Website: http://www.flash500.com/index_files/humourverse.html

Mattia Family Poetry Competition (Canada) Deadline: 31 December (closing date varies by location and is noted on site) Prizes: CDN \$100, \$50, \$25. A family-oriented poetry site. Limited to poems under 100 words. Electronic entries only. Website: <http://www.mattia.ca/competition14/rules14/rules14.html>

Landfall Deadline: 10 January Open to work by NZ and Pacific writers or by writers whose work has a connection to the region in subject matter or location. If you are a new writer, find copies of *Landfall* in bookshops and libraries to get a sense of what is published. • Email submissions preferred and should be sent as a .doc or .rtf file to landfall@otago.ac.nz Please save your file with your name, e.g. John Smith submission.doc • Hard copy submissions to Landfall, c/- Otago University Press, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054. Please include an email address if you have one. We do not return submissions unless specifically requested (include a

stamped, addressed envelope if you desire this) • Include author's name on each page of submission, in the running head • All submissions must have a covering email/letter, providing full contact details, including email and postal addresses, and a brief biography of about 30 words • Poets please submit no more than 10 poems per issue • Do not send work that has been published before • All submissions will be acknowledged on receipt. If you do not receive an acknowledgement, email landfall@otago.ac.nz • *Landfall* is published six-monthly. Submissions may be made at any time and will be considered for the next issue. Submissions will not be held over for future issues unless you have been contacted and agree to this. Contact: The Editor, Landfall, Otago University Press, Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand or : landfall@otago.ac.nz

Magma Judge's Prize (UK) Closing Date: 19 January

Poems of 11 to 50 lines. Judge: Jo Shapcott. Prizes: 1st £1,000, 2nd £300, 3rd £150. All winning entries will be published in the magazine. Entry Fee: £5 for 1st poem, £4 for 2nd, £3.50 for 3rd and each subsequent poem. For further information and entry see website: <http://magma-poetry.com/competition/>

Magma Editors' Prize (UK) Closing Date: 19 January

Open to poems of up to 10 lines. The Prize reflects the magazine's rotating editorship and poems will be judged by a panel of *Magma* Editors. 1st £1,000, 2nd £300, Plus 10 Special Mentions £15 each. Entry Fee: £5 for 1st poem, £4 for 2nd and £3.50 for 3rd and each subsequent poem. For further information and entry see website: <http://magma-poetry.com/competition/>

Torriano Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 30

January Unpublished poems of up to 40 lines. 1st £250, 2nd £150, 3rd £75. Entry Fee: £3 one poem, £5 for two, £10 for five. Cheques payable to the Torriano Support Fund. Name, address, email, phone number and poem titles on separate sheet. No entry form required. Entries to Patricia Griffin, 4 Cundishall Close, Whitstable, Kent CT5 4DA, UK. Enquiries: june.english@outlook.com

Kent & Sussex Poetry Society Open Poetry

Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 January Prizes: 1st £1000, 2nd: £300, 3rd: £100, 4th: 4 x £50. Entry Fee: £5 per poem. 3 or more poems: £4 each. Postal Entries: The Competition Organiser, 13 Ruscombe Close, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 0SG, UK. Put name and address on separate sheet - not on poem. Or enter online and pay by Paypal. For more details, go to: www.kentandsussexpoetry.com

Prole Laureate (UK) Closing Date: 31 January

Prizes: £200 and publication in *Prole 16*, due out in April 2015. 2 runners up prizes of £50 each and possible publication in *Prole 16*. Winner and runners up showcased on Prole website. Entry Fee: £3 for 1st entry, £2 for subsequent entries. For more details and entry see website: <http://www.prolebooks.co.uk/page6.html> Email entries to: poetrycompetition@prolebooks.co.uk



Members' Poems

Tracing a fine line (Triolet)

Those mails are sometimes aberrant
As you and I know very well.
They let enclosures gallivant.
Those mails are sometimes aberrant.
You now may need a search warrant,
Unless you have a magic spell.
Those mails are sometimes aberrant
As you and I know very well.

Valeria Barouch

Light Brew

Amber light plays upon
This hoppy hue of ale
Of which I sup a sip
And ponder.
The darkness of your stoutheartedness
So dark, like your love of me
That is brewed within your
Barrel of a heart

Joanne Kingston

Kinder Scourge

You lousy parasitic
Mother of millions
Infester of many
Skin eater blood sucker
Scalp squatting hair clinging
Filthy creeping king of the crawling itch
I will eliminate you systematically
You obligate ecto-scavenger
Tenacious spitting feeder nymph
Covetous thief of sebaceous secretions
Destroyer of peace
There is no place for you
On my head or the heads of mine
My pleasure is to crack your bloodswelled body.
My blood and that of mine
Splat and crunch on white
So your corpse is but a smear
Brown red on bright white
You wet scab
You odious crab
You are nothing

SJ Mannion

The Remarkables

Rippled muscular mountains
Decked in their coat of
Soil tussock trees
And skin of stone
The jewelled bones of the earth
Covered and lying easy now
Easy as a sleeping thug
And as ready to wake
Undulating curved sinuous
Dune like
Even the highest peaks
Soft edged
Blur into sky
Young too I think
As mountains go
Crouched on this land
Barely rooted
The gang of them roaming
This length of land
Utterly indifferent sons
I shiver and know myself to be
Ridiculously insubstantial
A mere fleeting creature
There is also comfort in this

The light changes
Bathes them in the bright
Of a low winter sun
Furiously gilded now
Brings to mind
Stollen on a table
Snow iced and glazed
A deep rich brown
Studded with scrub
A beckoning scene
Inviting as Christmas
And as false as safety
We will be what we are
We bear witness and pass

SJ Mannion

Action is the foundational key to all success.

Pablo Picasso

American Life in Poetry: Column 296

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Those of us who live in the country equate the word 'development' with displacement, and it has often been said that subdivisions are named for what they replace, like Woodland Glade. Here's a writer from my state, Nebraska, Stephen Behrendt, with a poem about what some call progress.

Developing the Land

For six nights now the cries have sounded in the pasture:
coyote voices fluting across the greening rise to the east
where the deer have almost ceased to pass
now that the developers have carved up yet another section,
filled another space with spars and studs, concrete, runoff.

Five years ago you saw two spotted fawns rise
for the first time from brome where brick mailboxes will stand;
only three years past came great horned owls
who raised two squeaking, downy owlets
that perished in the traffic, skimming too low across the road
behind some swift, more fortunate cottontail.

It was on an August afternoon that you drove in,
curling down our long gravel drive past pasture and creek,
that you saw, flickering at the edge of your sight,
three mounted Indians, motionless in the paused breeze,
who vanished when you turned your head.

We have felt the presence on this land of others,
of some who paused here, some who passed, who have left
in the thick clay shards and splinters of themselves that we dig up,
turn up with spade and tine when we garden or bury our animals;
their voices whisper on moonless nights in the back pasture hollow
where the horses snort and nicker, wary with alarm.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2005 by Stephen C. Behrendt from his most recent book of poetry, *History*, Mid-List Press, 2005. Reprinted by permission of Stephen C. Behrendt and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2010 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Possibly of interest or amusement

It's not real haiku, of course (nor does it pretend to be), but I thought you might be interested in a new website:

<http://haikudipity.com>

I'm describing it with these 'benefits': * Learn some new words. * Tickle your funnybone. * Ask a question for an *I Ching*-like answer. * Exercise your imagination and mental agility. * Find inspiration for your creative project. * Discover a name for your band. * Get past your writer's block. * Submit, subscribe to, and rate the especially good ones.

Warmest regards, Steve

From the brain of Steve Kinzler: steve@kinzler.com

2014 ANTHOLOGY ORDER FORM

take back our sky

Please send this completed form and payment to:

NZPS

PO Box 5283

Lambton Quay

Wellington 6145

New Zealand

- Please make cheques payable to: New Zealand Poetry Society.
- For overseas orders, we accept these foreign currencies (cash only): \$AUS, \$US, \$CA, €, £
- All figures below are in NZ dollars. Check www.xe.com for current exchange rate.
- We also accept PayPal payments at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/2014anthologyorder>

Free delivery within New Zealand for up to 2 copies. Please contact us for the postage cost of more than 2 copies, either within or outside New Zealand.

	per copy	number of copies	total
Contributor / NZPS Member rate (includes poets with work in the anthology) 1-2 copies	\$25.00		
Australia, incl. p & p, 1-2 copies	\$30.00		
Rest of the World, incl. p & p 1-2 copies	\$33.00		

Amount enclosed:

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Post Code _____

Email: _____ Tel. _____

NZPS does not sell or otherwise distribute your personal information. We will only contact you if there is a question about your order or for membership purposes.

NZPS website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz | NZPS email: info@poetrysociety.org.nz