



## Newsletter February 2005

### New Zealand Poetry Society *Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa*

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#### ☞ This Month's Meeting ☞

Thursday February 17th 8 p.m.  
Turnbull House 11 Bowen Street  
Wellington

Hinemoana Baker & Emily Dobson

#### ☞ Anthology & Competition Launch ☞

It was a full and excited house for the NZPS launch of the 2004 anthology, *The Enormous Picture*, at our November meeting in Wellington. The launch was opened by President Gillian Cameron then handed over to Anna Livesey, editor of the anthology. Anna ably guided the audience through an introduction to the anthology and the editorial process and we heard from a variety of contributors and Competition winners. Thank you once again, Anna, for the wonderful job.

Notable readers included the Open Competition winner, Harvey Molloy, who read 'Diwali' to a hushed crowd. "Aaahs" resounded at his line "if the dusty god stretched then none of us/felt his bronze trunk tap our shoulders". A number of Open section shoulders were however tapped – to name a few: former NZPS committee members Nola Borrell, Kerry Popplewell, and Robin Fry; 2005 Competition Secretary Laurice Gilbert; Ralph Proops; and Sue Wooton. The audience was appreciative and the talents of all authors was evident.

As usual the Junior readers were impressive not only in the quality of their poetry, but their confidence and presence in front of so many people. The winning poem, 'The Enormous Picture' authored by Ursula Gilbert-Potts, was read by her mother. Other readers included Ross Iness-McLeish, Matthew Oldfield and Daisy Lim. The future of New Zealand poetry seems assured in their hands.

Well-known haiku poets Nola Borrell, Karen Peterson Butterworth, Sally Holmes Midgley, and Jeanette Stace

delighted audiences as did Diana Strang.

As always the evening was a success and a wonderful way to close the NZPS year of poetry and hard work from the Committee. An appropriate quote from Harvey Molloy's winning poem seems as good a closure to this report as it was a beginning to the evening:

But somehow our gift was given  
Somehow we made it work.

Congratulations once again to the 2004 winners, commended poets, and anthology contributors. And good luck everyone in 2005.

To wrap up the evening, the launch of the 2005 Competition was announced. We are delighted that the Asia New Zealand Foundation is continuing to sponsor the two haiku sections of the competition with a generous donation of \$1500. We are also happy to announce that The Learning Connexion in Wellington is sponsoring the first prize of \$500 in the Open Section. This is a new sponsorship for the Society.

The 2005 Competition Secretary is Laurice Gilbert. Laurice has taken over from Giovanna Lee. We would like to thank Giovanna for the tremendous job she has done as Competition Secretary over the last 2 years.

2005 judges are: John Horrocks, open section, Bernard Gadd, haiku, Pat White, junior open and Jeannette Stace, junior haiku.

Competition forms are available on the back pages of this newsletter, on our website, by email request to [competition@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:competition@poetrysociety.org.nz), or by mail request. The closing date for the 2005 competition is **30 May 2005**.

#### ☞ From the Editor ☞

This issue we farewell Jenny Argante as editor. The guest editor for this issue is Helen Heath. We would like to thank Jenny for all her hard work over her time as editor as well as for her contribution to this issue. We wish her all the best for her future work with Bravado, tutoring and the many other projects she keeps busy with.

## ☞ Upcoming Events ☞

### WELLINGTON NZPS Meeting

We kick the year off with two exciting new poets: Hinemoana Baker's debut album *puawai* and her first book *matuhi / needle* were released in October 2004.

Emily Dobson was recently awarded the Adam Prize for Creative Writing, and is working towards publication of a collection of poetry.

You can hear Hinemoana and Emily read at Turnbull House on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 8pm.

### Wellington Windrift

**Thursday February 10** Our first 2005 meeting is at 1.00 p.m. at Jeanette Stace's, 58 Cecil St., Wadestown. Please note the earlier time of month. Contacts: Jeanette Stace (ph 04 473 6227, njstace@actrix.gen.nz) or Nola Borrell (ph 04 586 7287, nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz).

**Sunday February 13** Windrift will give 2 short readings probably in the early afternoon at the open day to celebrate the centenary of Hutt-Minoh Friendship House, Normandale. All welcome.

### WAIRARAPA Poems on the Vine

*Poems on the Vine 2005* will once again be held at Gladstone Vineyard, Carterton on 5th March. Contact Philippa Broad, Poems on the Vine Co-ordinator: sales@hedleysbooks.co.nz Tel: 021 626 827, or view: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/events.html#vine>

## ☞ A Warm Welcome To ... ☞

Jane Canning from Whangarei  
Karisma Vala-Blackmore from Ohaupo  
Greg Severinsen from New Plymouth  
Hayley & Ena Were from Hamilton  
Marion Jones from Dunedin  
William Aitkenhead from Tirau  
Amanda Hunt from Hamilton  
Louis Heap from Auckland  
Deb Gracie from Tauranga  
Lisa Fernyhough from Buller  
Jim McGregor from New Plymouth  
Tim Jones from Wellington  
Hugh Monro from Christchurch

### Quotation of the Month

“ I feel that the function of the poet is to be somehow instructive and opinionated, useful even if only as a devil 's advocate ... The question asked today is, 'What does it mean?' Nobody says, 'How does it feel?' ”  
- Mary Oliver

## ☞ Other News ☞

### Ian Wedde off to Menton

Wellington poet, fiction writer and critic Ian Wedde, has been announced the winner of the 2005 Meridian Energy Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship. He says he is thrilled to be chosen as this year ' s fellowship winner. “ This is a tremendous privilege and the timing is great – I ' ve embarked on a journey to write a book about what home is, and the best way to do that is to go somewhere else. ” The Meridian Energy Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship is offered each year by Meridian Energy and the Winn Manson Menton Trust to enable a New Zealand writer to work at the Villa Isola Bella in Menton, France where Katherine Mansfield lived and wrote. Ian plans to use the fellowship to work on a travel book exploring the question, ‘ Where are we when we ' re at home? ’ and to complete the final draft of a novel called Chinese Opera.

*Report from the NZSA with thanks.*

### Judges for the Griffin

The three distinguished poets who will judge entries submitted by publishers around the world for the 2005 Griffin Poetry Prize are: Simon Armitage (UK), Erin Moure (Canada) and Tomaž Šalamun (Slovenia). The judges are selected annually by the trustees: Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young. Armitage, Moure and Šalamun will be judging books of poetry published in the 2004 calendar year. The shortlist will be announced in April 2005. The Griffin Poetry Prize is worth C\$80,000 divided between the International and Canadian winners, and will be presented at the awards event in Toronto on June 2 nd 2005, following a reading from the shortlisted poets on June 1 st . The Griffin Trust was created to serve and encourage excellence in poetry written in English anywhere in the world. Eligible collections of poetry, including translations, must be submitted by publishers in the calendar year of their publication.

## News from Toi Maori

Following the inaugural Maori Writers National Hui held in Wellington in September, Toi Maori has had an overwhelming response from writers to form a membership of some sort specifically for Maori writers, whether writing in English or in Te Reo Maori. Te Ha is currently reviewing their strategic plan and will be implementing new ways of communicating, networking and supporting Maori writers over the coming months. For more information please contact Naomi Singer, Projects Officer, Te Ha and Toi Maori Aotearoa

### World Congress of Poets 2005

Alisha Rodrigues (hilmuppy@aol.com) sends a message to the NZPS from United Poets Laureate International (UPLI) and Artists Embassy International (AEI). She says, "UPLI and AEI are co sponsoring a World Congress of Poets in China in the spring of 2005. We are looking for poets from around the planet who would like to attend this historic event that is intended to be a cultural exchange through poetry. "The theme is Under the sea we are all brothers, an old Chinese saying. We intend to influence by example not political rhetoric. AEI and UPLI believe in peace through poetry. It is the artists of the world who will bring about world peace, not the politicians. Planning is in progress for both time and place." If you'd like to know more, please contact Alisha direct on hilmuppy@aol.com.

## ☞ Publications ☞

### A double whammy!

Probably the best-looking poetry book ever published in New Zealand, Hinemoana Baker's *matuhi | needle* was launched late in 2004, along with her CD *Puawai. matuhi | needle* is jointly published by Victoria UP and Perceval Press, the California publishing company directed by Pilar Perez and Viggo Mortensen. The beautifully designed hardback features stunning art work by Ngai Tahu artist Jenny Rendall. Further information at: <http://www.percevalpress.com/needle.html>  
*Report from the IIML with thanks.*

### Welcome to Seraph Press

*Locating the Madonna*, a collaborative collection by much-admired poets Jenny Powell-Chalmers and Anna Jackson was launched in December. This coincided with the launch of Seraph Press, a new publishing company founded by poet Helen Rickerby. *Locating the Madonna* (RRP\$24.95) will be available from selected booksellers or contact: [seraphpress@paradise.net.nz](mailto:seraphpress@paradise.net.nz)

## ☞ Submissions ☞

### A Double Helping of Poetry Pudding

This publication will feature 52 poets, not necessarily writers for children, 26 of whom will each take a letter from the alphabet (A-Z running forwards) and another 26 of whom will repeat the alphabet (A-Z running backwards). So when the reader has finished the book, s/he simply turns it over and works through a second collection of poems. Most of the alphabet has been booked once by poets invited to participate. "We're now throwing it open to established and experienced poets and exceptionally talented beginners who know that writing for children 9-11 is a challenge. The only restrictions are 30 lines maximum (to fit the page) and that your poem is about something represented by your chosen or allocated letter. There is a deadline of 28th February 2005, but we'd like to see work as soon as possible, so as to have time to respond and reply. We want to see your best work, something quirky, fantastical or just damn good, so as to produce a classic text for children that will continue to sell year after year after year." Contact Hen Enterprises at PO Box 13-335 to find out more or e-mail the co-ordinating editor, Jenny Brice at [henenterprises@xtra.co.nz](mailto:henenterprises@xtra.co.nz).

### The Surface

The next issue will be following the theme of - Language - The deadline for copy and artwork is on or BEFORE the 10th February 2005. Please follow the submission guidelines - where you will also find a list of themes for the coming year.

The Surface is online at <http://www.surfaceonline.org>

### World Haiku Club

World Haiku Club's online Magazine has plans of going hard copy. In the past it has been closed to the public, members only, but they are now embracing a wider range of poetry, allowing poets outside of the WHC, to submit work. Send submissions of your prose style poetry, any style of western poetry, along with eastern tanka, sijo etc.to:

[Karina3884@aol.com](mailto:Karina3884@aol.com). Write: Submission and the genre in the subject line.

## ☞ Reviews ☞

### The Dogs of our Lives: an Anthology of Dog Poems - Ed. G.B. Yates

The dog on the cover is just like the Jack Russell terrier our family once owned, unimaginatively christened Russ. I use the term 'owned' lightly, as this

was a dog who disappeared for hours on his own urgent, mysterious errands. You'd take Russ walkies and strangers would hail him as Bozo, Freddy or Patch.

I was curiously ambivalent about Russ and other dogs I've known: I'm ambivalent, too, about this collection. Based on submissions sent in monthly to *The Mozzie* (once Micropress Oz) it includes poems from New Zealand and Australia that range from childlike to extraordinarily complex, given the nature of the subject.

There were perhaps too many from editor Gloria Yates; there's always a question mark over including poems of your own in a selection, though some conjunctions in her poetry make for interesting reading:

Brenda's dog has taken up Art;  
my honeysuckle is finally in flower:  
George Bush is planning to attack Iraq.  
(from *Brenda's Dog*)

This places world news where the telly does, in the home. I like also the occasional poem that stands back from adoration, such as this from Peter Macrow:

But I don't like dogs  
their bark and smell,  
the soulful look ...

and worst of all: digging holes  
leaving one to fill another  
when they die.  
(from *Brutus*)

Mostly this is poetry without pedigree; but, like a frisky mongrel, not without charm. Sometimes the sentimentality impedes the power of expression, and for me, the sparsest poems work best, e.g. in *Coburg Dogs* by Kerry Scuffins, who are 'Lost from their packs/ stopped from their running'. Or by Frances Meech (another new name to me), who says:

I feel the emptiness  
of his soul, when he lies

eyes open, staring into space  
like I do at times

and it's not great.  
(from *For Imram*)

In general, though, especially if you're more dog-lover than poetaster, these poems do work as celebration of that long affinity humans have had with dogs. I particularly enjoyed Bruce Dawe who wittily compares (in *Degustation de Lulu*) a dog sniffing another dog's pee to the rarefied expertise of the wine connoisseur. Also, in *November Nights*, Tony Chad gives us some good lines, though not necessarily those about dogs:

when the heavens drowned  
the paddocks  
and channelling through the fire-breaks  
the southerlies fired splinters  
from some forgotten iceberg

On an iceberg, a dog would make the ideal companion. Warm, furry: and good eating.

(2004) Yates, G.B. ed. *The Dogs of Our Lives*. Australia, pp. ISBN 0 9752 3990 2

### Palaver Lava Queen - Sue Fitchett

Sue Fitchett lives on Waiheke Island in the Hauraki Gulf. The poems in *Palaver Lava Queen* are about Auckland, its geology, history and culture, Pacific undertones.

Fitchett is a psychologist who teaches at University of Auckland. She knows her city intimately, both personally, and includes quotes from tradition and from literature as she recreates it on the page. In *Profit & Loss* she speaks of 'a sea of ferns/ a few boats/ tents/ break-wind huts/ & canoes on the beach.'. Later she reminds us that 'Skytower's built on Fort Ligar/ home to an empire's/ spit & polish soldiers/ defenders of an English god'.

It's all great stuff, and one imagines Fitchett, a conservationist, working to regenerate bush on her Trust property while her mind is busy with the present and the past.

Auckland University Press, 80 pp, RRP \$24.99

Above 2 reviews by Jenny Argante

### Campana to Montale Versions from Italian - Kendrick Smithyman.

Importance and poetry are partners in the same way that silver service and formality appear co-joined, or more universally let us say ocean and danger. Jack Ross' introduction asserts that these poems are as important as any Smithyman wrote – translations that are though more like original works than well-informed interpretations since Smithyman did not speak Italian.

Every act of communication is a translation or interpretation according to our background, mood and knowledge. Poems should move me, excite me, inform and mystify me in some grand or profound way or they may as well be messages on a cereal box. Many of these translated verses are the vehicles of wonder that I expect poems to be.

'...if you want to be yourself. From a palm tree  
a rat catapults, a flash of lightning plays about...'  
from *Promenade  
by the Sea*, Eugenio Montale (1896-1981)

Every language has its own atmosphere, and that climate is carried into translation. Overly familiar English words are revitalised. 'Angel... re-born... moon is a mirror...' in this exotic context such words spring fresh from the page.

I also found myself bewildered by my beloved English, but I live in a world where almost everyone wants a piece of it. Various names, plants and places are mentioned that I suppose I would identify with more if I knew Italian history or had formally studied Modernism.

I felt occasionally the way a person does after days struggling to be understood with people who have English as their second language. A healthy reminder that every time I attempt another tongue it may be a trial for others, and that poetry is possibly the kindest place to explore language without the constraints and dangers of business or politics.

How lovely to decide to understand another country's poetry whether you know their language or not. Just as a person may step off a plane or boat abroad into unknown territory, Smithyman explored parallel realities on a page. Perhaps through each line, as one of Salvatore Quasimodo's poems states so eloquently '...we seek a sign that will curve over life...' *from 19 January 1944.*

We are as dangerous as we have ever been and such poems remind us how many more rewarding qualities a human being may enjoy.

'...I look out and think, or make out I think.  
One pays a high price for a modern soul.  
I too may try one.'

*From In a Northern City, Eugenio Montale.*

**The Writers Group. RRP \$30- ISBN 0-476-00382-2**

**papertiger:new world poetry #04 Eds Paul Hardacre and B.R. Dionysius**

The packaging is arty fun in warm colours and since almost everyone *does* judge 'books' by their covers this CD-Rom jewel case could be attractive enough to intrigue many readers. Even those who know it is harder to read a computer screen than a page. Punkish, low tech graphics in a high-tech format may well make screen pages easier to scan than any bright, clean image. Full colour production - far too expensive to retail in any usual book format and a pleasant change for a poetry publication. Printed off and bound in some simple manner this papertiger production could stand many leafings, which is what I prefer to do with poetry rather than clicks and scrolling.

Eventually it was a pleasure to discover on my PC screen (no Mac format supplied), what this issue had to offer. Various informative prefaces and biographies introduce features and poems on this CD-Rom. Animated poems by Jason Nelson have 'no linear path' and in this format are truly able to be more randomly

explored than in a book, to clearly prove that you may create your own pattern and play with the visuals, voices or sounds. The 50 New Zealand poets are indexed with a wall of photographic faces which makes selection partly guesswork and agreeable enough but this could be frustrating for anyone who really wanted to find a certain piece.

Papertiger #04 contains 150 poems from over 100 world-wide poets - from Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore and the USA - and tries to be as inclusive as possible. A new tradition the editors believe - such as with the Short Fuse Anthology of World-Wide Performance Poets that they mention in the editorial, (Rattapallax Press, N.Y).

I gather there is a movement world-wide to present poetry in new ways and that the CD-Rom is catching on. It could be invaluable with younger people to excite their interest and did inspire me in certain ways too. The possibilities for cut and paste in hard copy of poems, and also for presenting work with colour were only two ideas that came to mind. Many known and emerging poets represented with backgrounds or critiques that provided welcome additional information. Well produced with care to make the form produce new images and formats, presenting in all some excellent poetry and that really is the bottom line for success.

**papertiger media. CD-Rom format ISSN 1445-1980 RRP \$AUD18- [www.papertigermedia.com](http://www.papertigermedia.com)**

*Above 2 reviews by Raewyn Alexander.*

## 🌀 Congratulations 🌀

### Haiku Presence Award 2004

At the Haiku Presence Award 2004, England, which received 298 entries, New Zealand received 2 commendeds both from NZPS members:

Karen Peterson Butterworth and Andre Surridge.

Both haiku will appear in *Presence #25* due out early 2005.

### 2004 San Francisco International Senryu Competition

Ernest Berry won third place and Andre Surridge won an honorable mention in the 2004 San Francisco International Senryu Competition, sponsored by the Haiku Poets of Northern California. Congratulations!

## 🌀 Websites 🌀

Former Wellington poet and books editor of the Evening Post, Andrew Johnston has for some years been living in Paris where he works on the International Herald Tribune. He's still writing poetry, and now has a

website where local readers can catch up on his literary life: <http://andrewjohnston.org>. Since then Andrew has also created a new poetry site called **The Page**. The Guardian (UK) made it their 'Site of the Week' on the Books homepage recently. [www.thepage.name](http://www.thepage.name)

For another view of what poetry is, read Tom Leonard's **100 Differences Between Poetry and Prose**: [www.tomleopard.co.uk/tomleopard/access\\_to\\_the\\_silence/100\\_differences.shtml](http://www.tomleopard.co.uk/tomleopard/access_to_the_silence/100_differences.shtml).

For an **Australian view of New Zealand poetry** from a Scottish poetry site, why not visit: [http://www.thepoetryhouse.org/Petryrooms/australia\\_newz.html](http://www.thepoetryhouse.org/Petryrooms/australia_newz.html)

The first issue of a new ezine called **Vague MagEzine** is currently under construction. Vague will cover a wide range of arts including fashion, fine art and literature. Although some of the ezine will be made up of articles written by regular contributors they would also like to make Vague available as a voice for other New Zealand writers and artists. Submission details are on the site.

Vague can be found at: <http://www.vague-mag.com>

Dee Rimbaud has added the **AA Independent Press Guide** in its entirety to his website at [www.thunderburst.co.uk](http://www.thunderburst.co.uk). Users can now access information on nearly 2000 literary magazines and presses without charge and without pop-ups or advertising banners. Dee was in negotiation with A & C Black to publish the guide but in the end they decided it wasn't financially viable so he's put it on the Internet instead.

**hutt 1.1** It's new. It's a home for poetry. Take a peek!

[http://www.papertigermedia.com/hutt/hutt1\\_1/index.htm](http://www.papertigermedia.com/hutt/hutt1_1/index.htm)

## ☞ Out & About ☞

### DUNEDIN

#### Upfront:

The last Dunedin Upfront Poetry Reading night for 2004 was attended by an attentive audience who were treated to some great poetry.

The Open Mic' session produced a variety of poetry on a variety of subjects. All of it enjoyable. Then it was the turn of the featured poets. We had three poets from out of town - Unn West, Gweneth Williams and Glen Taylor - who all come from the Catlins, West Otago and belong to a group of writers from Kaka Point. The work that these writers read largely reflected their rural leanings and it was interesting to hear the imagery used as a result. The subjects too tended to be rural, ranging from possums and rabbits to rivers and thistles.

As an introduction to each of her poems, Unn described the starting point or basis for each one - whether it was language or telling a story, for example. We enjoyed her humour and clever use of language. Her

reply to that well-known Glenn Colqhoun's poem inviting Hone to come back North, was especially affecting. She obviously wants him to stay South! (But holds him there lightly.)

Gweneth has a heart for the land and her gentle, thoughtful poems were a result of that respect and passion. Her poem about the felling of some trees dear to her heart left its impact. Her sense of fun and humour shines through her poetry. Her most striking poem I thought was the one about a hawk - a bird she likes but which, she said, often doesn't get good press.

Glen read some well-worked and easy-on-the-ear poetry. Among her very fine batch of poems was one from the point of view of a long-term holiday maker taking their time to observe and take in the surroundings, as opposed to a day-tripper tourist. She also read a thoughtful and stirring poem about soldiers and sacrifices they make for their country.

To end the evening we heard from the Burns Fellow for 2004, Kate Duignan. She admitted that she isn't really a poet, but did read us some poems she has written - mostly written in what she termed 'letter form'. The writing was refreshing and sharp, funny and often wry. Her prose-poem about her sister had us all in the palm of her hand with its descriptive language that tripped along in an easy, yet lyrical, conversational manner. What a treat! We look forward to more next year.

*Report from Kay Cooke*

### KATIKATI

"It's with considerable pleasure that I can report that Stage 4 of the Haiku Pathway is complete except for the engraving of the three haiku boulders. The contract has been awarded to CRB Stonemasons and I've now examined the boulders along with Steve Graveson, June Carlton's successor as co-ordinator of Katikati Open Air Arts Association, together with the engraver in order to match verse to boulder. "Weather permitting, this work should progress steadily - even the huge boulder in the stream didn't seem to be a problem, so I'm glad we took the innovative approach." Visitors to Katikati, the 'Mural Town', should certainly make it a priority to visit this tranquil landscaped area.

*Report from Catherine Mair*

### NELSON

#### Nelson Live Poets

The "Macabre" was the theme of the November meeting of Nelson Live Poets. We are definitely a ghoulish lot by the number of poems on this theme that were performed. M.C. Michael Lee set the scene for the evening, by dressing entirely in black and introducing each poet with a pot pourri of his own words and those of Edgar Allan Poe.

The "Macabre" poems included such diverse topics as; a woman removing her girdle, magical conjuring, groaning house, travelling roads to nowhere with an imaginary girlfriend and a skinned headless dog. There was some light relief with the reading of short stories about dancing and a child who couldn't spell.

The most poignant part of the evening was the reading of Mark Raffills poem "Gift of Honour". Betty Don read Ian MacDonald's translation of the poem into Maori, then Mark read the literal translation of the poem back into English, then the original poem. It was interesting to hear what can be lost but also gained when a poem is translated.

The next meeting is Wednesday 8th December at 7.30pm at Kafiene, New Street. Everyone is welcome.

*Report by Gaelynne Pound*

### PICTON

After a round of business odds and ends and new writings, Anne Barrett continued our *Down Memory Lane* tour with her own verses and others, the principle other being Alfred Noyes' *Ballad of Dick Turpin*. An interesting discussion accompanied this about ways of persuading *Google* to divulge the words of poems. Anne (and I) had failed to find the complete poem by searching under its name and the name of the poet, but Anne finally tracked it down by searching under 'smock-frocked yokel', words in the first verse. Google once tracked down one of my favourites simply from the words 'crannied wall' - in 3 seconds flat!

After the strictly poetic meeting, we repaired to the Echo restaurant for lunch and the second of our experimental Merry Go Round meetings, which this time we held around the table after the dishes had been cleared away. Anything philological is grist to that mill, and everyone had things to contribute, from a short sermon about relationships based on those in *My Fair Lady*, to a couple of classical love poems, a short story, several limericks etc. MGR seems to be taking off. Word-lovers of any ilk are welcome: ACES2@xtra.co.nz

*Report by Sandy Arcus*

### HAMILTON Alive Poets Society

Another interesting poetry evening on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November, with two new faces – Dean and Sheryl – among the regulars. We read our 'Big Mac' poems – the exercise set the month before when we were locked out and gathered in the nearest MacDonald's.

They were all very different, and most people also read another poem. There was a little discomfort about giving critique, but positive comments about specific features of a poem were welcome when expressed.

For next time it was decided that everyone should bring three of their own poems to read - any vintage, any topic – just not too long! As a group we would vote for the poem(s) we liked best and these 'favourites' would be collected up for a future anthology.

A few of us also discussed a statement of the purpose for the group, so we have some direction, format, etc. What do we want to get out of the Alive Poets Society? Members were asked to think about this and write something down for the next meeting, or respond by e-mail pen101nz@yahoo.co.nz

Our next meeting will be held on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005. (Enquire as above or check out the NZPS website, <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/events.html>.)

*Report from Celia Hope*

### WELLINGTON Windrift

At our November 2004 meeting original offerings for our haiku bowl varied in subject: dentist, politics, pigeons, ducklings, dolphins, fish and flowers. Vivid and poignant:

she visits him in hospital  
their two old hands  
on the bedrail between them

Kate Docherty

Summer or Christmas themes produced colour contrasts, roses, daylight saving, aromas:

spicy aroma  
Christmas puddings  
gently simmer

Ariana Te Aomarere

Response to a Photo: Haiku and tanka with accompanying photo; interesting, nostalgic and amusing:

side by side  
bear cub and baby  
drinking their bottles of milk

Lynn Francis

Discussion followed on our Haiku Festival (see page 8 – Ed). Wide interest was reported by Nola Borrell and Karen Butterworth and an enthusiastic response came from our members.

We have received an invitation to read Japanese Haiku at Jubilee Park on February 2005. It was decided to meet on 10 February to organise this.

Contacts: Jeanette Stace (ph 04 473 6227, [njstace@actrix.gen.nz](mailto:njstace@actrix.gen.nz)) or Nola Borrell (ph 04 586 7287, [nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz)).

*Report from Irene Ruth*

## ☪ Competitions ☪

### *Yellow Moon Seed Pearls*

*Seed Pearls* is the only Yellow Moon comp open internationally (all categories). View details at: <http://www.yellowmoon.info>

**Closing March 30 2005.** Contact: Beverley George – *Yellow Moon* PO Box 37 Pearl Beach NSW 2256

## ☪ Talk Poem 11 ☪

cloudless sky  
the baaing  
of penned sheep

### **Carolyn Hall**

This outstanding haiku is also quite unusual. It demonstrates an astonishing balance of intense (heavy) emotions, intellectual musing, and whimsical association. One can approach it from several directions, producing very different feelings with each reading. The literal and figurative interpretations are also beautifully balanced.

Paired images of freedom and confinement produce a heightened tension between exhilaration and sympathy, or even distress. Though the intense interaction between these emotions seems to be at the heart of this poem, so too are the philosophical and light-hearted implications.

From the philosophical standpoint, a cloudless sky can suggest more than freedom. It can suggest purity, faultlessness, wisdom, or enlightenment. Associate these concepts with a popular use of the word “sheep” in reference to people who blindly follow rather than think for themselves. Although ‘self-penning’ behaviour is often voluntary, it is commonly accompanied by feigned helplessness and much bleating. Considering this angle, it would seem that Hall’s poem is infused with a healthy dollop of social commentary.

In the realm of whimsy, how about ‘counting sheep?’ Have you ever (when anxious or otherwise too preoccupied to fall asleep) been advised to count sheep? This antidote for insomnia is intended to short-circuit the overactive mind by refocusing attention on an activity so boring that relaxation naturally occurs. It is then easier to let oneself drift off into the relative freedom of sleep—a relatively cloudless sky. Meekly, I admit to a vision of freeing those poor penned animals and counting them as they go.

Last, but certainly not least, and with a good measure of sheepishness (haiku guilt) for bringing up this notion . . . what about sheep as clouds? Fluffy white cumulus sheep, and the occasional cumulonimbus? The sky is cloudless. Surely this is because the clouds have been herded down from the heavens into the confines of a pen. Set free, they’ll drift up and away, filling the sky again. Hmmm . . . could it possibly be that Carolyn Hall mulled

over such fantasies too? I’d bet on it. Maybe she’s still laughing as she tries to get the tongue out of her cheek.

I don’t doubt that there are other possible readings. I know of another fanciful one, but I think I’ll leave you to find it, if you haven’t already.

On a technical note (and in hopes of steering away from my suggesting a connotation that involves a simile—perish the thought!), the hard ‘c’ sounds in the first line enhance a sense of clarity—a crystalline vision. The sounds of the second line add to a feel of mindless helplessness. Repeated ‘p’ sounds in the final line add to the feeling of restriction.

Many thanks to Carolyn Hall for sharing this well-wrought, thoroughly entertaining haiku.

*Christopher Herold*

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### **Haiku Festival Aotearoa – Reminder**

March 4-6, Stella Maris Conference Centre, Seatoun, Wellington. Interest is high, and space is limited. By the time you read this Newsletter, there may only be some part-time places for Saturday options and ginko. If you want to come (or at least be put on a possible waiting list) please contact the registrar Karen Peterson Butterworth straight away. [karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz](mailto:karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz) Phone: 06 364-5810

### **Information please**

We’d like to hear about NZ book & magazine markets for poetry with up-to-date contact info. for a new publication from NZSA & NZPS. Please send direct to Editor by e-mail ([info@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:info@poetrysociety.org.nz)) or snail mail to PO Box 5283, Lambton Quay, Wellington).

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