



a fine line

January 2010

The Magazine of The New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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FEBRUARY MEETING:

Monday 15 February, 7.30pm
Guest Poet: John Ansell

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

MARCH MEETING:

Monday 15 March, 7.30pm
Guest Poet: Mary-Jane Grandinetti Rader,
editor of *the fib review*:

<http://www.musepiepress.com/fibreview/>

Both meetings begins with an open mic, and the March meeting will include a short introduction to and workshop on fib poetry. \$2 entry.

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities / Wellington City Council

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Feature Article

Editing the NZPS Annual Anthology

Barbara Strang

The 2009 New Zealand Poetry Society anthology, *moments in the whirlwind*, was launched Saturday 7th November. It's a 116-page book containing the place-winning poems, and others selected by the editor, from the NZPS International Competition entries. The poem below is one which appears in the Open Junior section of the book.

The NZPS competition is run every year. Each of the four sections, Open, Open Junior, Haiku and Haiku Junior, has a separate judge. Afterwards the unplaced entries are forwarded to the anthology editor for a second chance, the nice side-benefit of this competition.

This year I was the editor, and faced with an eye-watering task; in effect another judging of the thousands of entries in all four sections. This was in addition to creating the book: editing the poems where necessary, working out the order, setting up the manuscript, liaising with authors, choosing a title, arranging a cover, and so on ... several months of full-time work.

So I was faced with four piles of anonymous entries, with reducing them to approximately twenty individual poems from each. They were in a huge variety of style and subject matter. I had to combine these with the awarded entries, which of course took pride of place, to create a coherent manuscript. How did I choose? I quote from the editor's foreword: "What made an entry stand out from the pile? Fresh use of language; something to say; subtlety; poems that started, continued and finished without a misstep; musical aspects such as rhythm, assonance and alliteration; haiku that were more than description; something which grabbed me."

This junior poem, unplaced in the initial judging, was one such. It is not a brilliant or showy poem, full of the verbal pyrotechnics which often grab the attention of judges, but quietly well-crafted, to a standard that any adult could aspire.

It is not a big poem but almost faultless, in my opinion. It is musical; good to read aloud; has something to say, though not lecture-style, but like a good poem, with a subtle marriage of imagery and content. It could be categorised as a list poem: a list of grey things. I would rather pronounce it a dance; the poet takes the reader on a path, step by step, image by image, to end on the other side of the room. No misstep here.

As an editor I observed again how we poets often ruin our poems at the very end; we are tempted to ensure the reader gets it, to round things off, to draw a moral. Saskia neatly side steps this trap – her last stanza continues building the images, and she brings the poem to a particularly apt closure with the image of "a concrete bridge".

I aimed to select work with themes of interest to the young poets; for instance: adolescent emotions, war experiences, and relating to parents and grandparents. This poem is among a number with the last theme.

You Asked Me What Is Grey

Grey?

It's hiding in the creases of your face.
in the curls scratching at your forehead,
stretching out from under your nose,
sprouting from your ears.

The no man's land between us,

unknown ground.
A cable running years of difference.

A fuzzy TV screen,
a crumpled piece of newspaper,
a radio between stations.

The face of a convict
at the start of a second life.

A cell,
a wall,
a shade,
a sky.

A question.
Fault line
without a way around.
Grandfather,
help me find a concrete bridge.

Saskia van Rijk
Karamu High School
Hastings

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

What an amazing launch we had for our 2009 anthology, *moments in the whirlwind!* Many thanks to Judith Walsh and the Canterbury Poets Collective for their assistance in getting the venue and refreshments sorted so I didn't have to do it all from a distance. There were 100 people present at the launch – our biggest audience ever. We heard from 30 of the contributing poets, which made for a vibrant and diverse reading. My humble thanks go to all those who attended and supported the event.

There are still plenty of copies left for that awkward early-in-the-year birthday so close to Christmas, as well as a few 'seconds' with spotty or scratched covers. The member's price for the anthology is a very reasonable \$25, or you can buy a damaged copy for \$15.

I'm sorry to report that once again Creative New Zealand failed to find my funding application compelling, and our request for a grant has been declined. This is a frustrating but not unexpected state of affairs – all of us in the arts field had a dream run under the last government.

You'll (hopefully!) be pleased to know that my commitment to ensuring that the NZ Poetry Society endures will continue regardless. My long-suffering partner has resigned himself to being a de facto Patron of the Arts for a bit longer, and I shall continue to make sure you have a *fine line* to look forward to every couple of months, a competition to enter annually, and an informative and value-packed website to refer to at all times.

It's time for me to take a break. There isn't much to do for the Society over January (other than promoting the competition) and I plan to get some serious writing done. Mindful that my mother always said that being inside on a sunny day was a waste of good weather, I'm going to make up for it by working in the garden for the first hour of every day, to keep my Vitamin D levels up. Then I'll make my way on foot to the Cuba Garret and write. Or it might rain all summer and I'll just write.

Whatever you're up to, I hope the holiday season has been a happy one for you all. Have a poetic year.

About our Contributors

Jenny Argante is a Tauranga writer, editor, teacher and literary Renaissance Woman.

Liz Breslin lives and writes in Hawea Flat and is co-founder of Poetic Justice Wanaka.

Rangi Faith has been widely published in New Zealand and is presently completing a new collection of poetry. His last book was *Conversation with a Moahunter* (Steele Roberts Ltd, 2005)

Anne Harré is a Wellington writer and musician, with editing and publishing experience.

Barbara Strang is a Christchurch poet and editor, with an MA in Creative Writing from Victoria University of Wellington.

Helen Yong is a Christchurch poet, and winner of a laptop in Christchurch City Libraries' 150th anniversary competition in 2009.

A Warm Welcome to:

Suzanne Butler Cambridge

Julie Leibrich Raumati Beach

Katrina Oliver Ekatahuna

Maris O'Rourke Auckland

Dave Rea Wellington

Joanne Rye-McGregor Mt Maunganui

Letter to the Editor

They're reading our anthology here

In it came - into the letter box this morning.

What a pleasant Monday morning. First looking at the envelope, then slowly opening and looking at the cover knowing that my poem is somewhere inside.

What a pleasant surprise to discover you were in the same volume. I liked your poem 'Having an Older Sister' very much. It strikes a perfect balance between humour and ? sadness. It is full of charm.

Then of course I like the very names of places contributors come from. They make me remember the many exciting arrivals in NZ towns in late afternoons.

This Monday morning I'm a happy man. And, incidentally, perhaps the only contributor to the general section who hasn't got English as his or her mother tongue?

All the best from Denmark.

Poul Høllund (Denmark)

Congratulations

Vice-President **Linzy Forbes** (Porirua), has had his first attempt at a Fibonacci poem published in *the fib review*, an online journal of this growing-in-popularity short form. The journal is edited by our March guest poet, Mary-Jane Grandinetti Rader.

Jenny Powell (Dunedin) was selected as a finalist for the International *Aesthetica* Creative Works Competition, Poetry Category, with 'Last Summer'. There were over 3000 entries, and all finalists are published in *Creative Works Annual 2010*.

Vaughan Rapatahana (Hong Kong) has been flying the NZ poetry flag internationally, with poems in 2009 issues of: *Bravado*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Cha*, an Asian literary journal, and *Valley Micropress*. He was also long-listed for the inaugural Proverse Literary Prize, an international competition. Vaughan has also co-written a poetry teaching resource, English Through Poetry (User Friendly Resources); books A to D are available online.

Keith Westwater (Lower Hutt) was awarded first prize of AU\$100 in the International Tertiary Student Poetry section of Australia's Bauhinia 2009 Literary Awards with 'The West Winds Gang is back'.

Patrick White (Wairarapa) is the NZ Writer in Residence at Wellington's Randell Cottage for 2010.

Surfing the Web

<http://www.poetrybusiness.co.uk/index.php/hands-off-poetry> The UK equivalent of the NZQA removed a Carol Duffy poem from its secondary English curriculum in 2008, because it suggested a knife crime. This website features both the poem and Duffy's response to the censorship. (Thanks to Janis Freegard for this story.)

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/ent/stories/DN-bk_pinsky_0405gd.ART.State.Edition1.4a66f39.html

An inviting review of Robert Pinsky's *Essential Pleasures: A New Anthology of Poems to Read Aloud*.

<http://www.universityreviewsonline.com/2005/10/top-100-poetry-blogs.html> Heavy on US blogs, but worth a look – there's at least one Australian included.

http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2009/05/grand_rapids_poetry_therapist.html Turns out you can even have poetry therapy. Works for me! Interview with Nessa McCassey, Poetry Therapist.

Everywhere I go I find that a poet has been there before me.

Sigmund Freud

Publications

New arrivals on the review shelf since the last issue:

The Yellow Middle – a collection of poems and artwork by **Neroli Cottam** (2009)

The Trouble Lamp Richard Langston (FitzBeck Publishing, 2009)

Shadow Friend **Julie Leibrich** (Rosetta Press, 2009)

Noticeboard

For a complete rundown of regional events, and to find the poetry meeting in your town, please go to our website:

www.poetrysociety.org.nz

POETS' CORNER – UPPER HUTT

Upper Hutt City Library resumes its bimonthly readings with the theme of love poetry, on 11th February at 10.30am.

Workshops

WAIRIKI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

There are heaps of interesting summer workshops, for those of you who receive this in time to enrol, including Poetry Boot Camp with **Majella Cullinane**: Monday 25 – Wednesday 27 January, 9am-4pm at their Rotorua campus. To enrol contact: Jaarna.Hoskins@wairiki.ac.nz or phone 07 346 8684 or 08000 924 74. Sorry – I can't find details of the courses on their website.

Competitions & Submissions

What follows is a sampling of the many opportunities that exist worldwide for New Zealanders to share their talent. NZ poets quietly but regularly appear in winners' and contents lists around the world, and I recommend you send out a couple of submissions/ entries at least once a month. Keep a record, as many publishers don't accept simultaneous submissions (and it gets awkward if you don't remember what you've sent where). You can find many more of these in the members' section of our website www.poetrysociety.org.nz/members and I add to the list frequently. What are you waiting for? Get yourself out there.

Strokestown International Poetry Prize (Ireland)

Closing Date: 5 February For unpublished poems of up to 70 lines. Prizes: 4,000 Euros; 2,000 Euros; 1,000 Euros. 10 shortlisted poets read at the festival and awarded a reading fee of 450 Euros. Entry Fee: £5 per poem. Enter and pay online; or print entry form from website: www.strokestownpoetry.org Festival Office, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, EIRE

Ambit 200 Words Competition (UK)

Closing Date: 15 February. Send poems or prose of 200 words (no longer than 204 words and no shorter than 196 words including the title). First prize: £500. £4 for first entry and £3 for subsequent entries. Ambit 200 Words Competition, 17 Priory Gardens, London N6 5QY, UK.

Snorkel (Australia)

Deadline: 15 February. Now accepting submissions for its 11th issue, due out in April 2010. Full details at www.snorkel.org.au

New Plains Review (USA)

Deadline: 16 February

The *New Plains Review* seeks writing on the theme of "Service" for its spring 2009 issue. "We invite you to interpret 'service' broadly: military and community service, school service requirements, jury duty, all forms of volunteering, religious services, food service, customer service, serving a subpoena or tennis ball, etc. We're interested in poetry, fiction, essays and creative nonfiction that is thoughtful and compelling, and we'll reprint previously published work (provided the author owns the copyright)." Submit by email (as a Word attachment) to Douglas Goetsch at doug@janestreet.org or send hard copies to New Plains Review, Submissions, Box 184, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 73034. Please put email, phone and postal contact on the first page of your submission.

FreeXpresSion Literary Competition (Australia)

Closing date: 28 February. A. Short Story: Open Theme up to 2,500 words; B. Traditional Rhyming Poetry: Open Theme up to 80 lines. 1st prize \$250.00 ~ 2nd Prize \$150.00 ~ 3rd Prize \$100.00 in both A & B categories. C. Free Verse: Open Theme up to 80 lines; D. Article/Essay: Open Theme 1,500 to 2,000 words. 1st Prize \$200.00 ~ 2nd Prize \$100.00 in both C & D categories. E. Haiku: Open Theme. One page of four represents 1 entry. 1st prize \$100.00 for the best single haiku. HC and Commended Certificates. Entry forms available by email from info@poetrysociety.org.nz or from the competition organisers at: FreeXpresSion, PO Box 4, West Hoxton, NSW 2171, Australia. Entry fees: \$5.00 per entry (\$25 for 6 entries) and can be paid via PayPal.

Chiaroscuro (USA) Deadline: 28 February. Genres & Themes: Dark. It's worth visiting the website just for the submission guidelines. Excerpt: "DO NOT SUBMIT: ... f) any werewolf poem. We know you think your werewolf poems are good. We don't. We're tired of the howling and the biting. You give us mange. g) any poem entitled "Underworld." The movies weren't THAT awesome. Also, it's the name of the knicker factory on Coronation Street, so it elicits immediate snickers from the editors." http://www.chizine.com/submissions_poetry.htm

Bravado 19

Deadline: 14 March. This is your invitation to submit short fiction (up to 3000 words) for *Bravado 19*, due out in July 2010. Guidelines are clearly set out on the website: www.bravado.co.nz *Bravado* is a literary arts magazine from the Bay of Plenty, and contributions are restricted to writers from New Zealand and Australia, whether living at home or abroad. Fiction for *Bravado 19* will be guest edited by writer Jack Ross. Poetry is welcome too.

Silver Boomer Books - Flashlight Memories (USA)

Deadline: 15 March. Silver Boomer Books seeks submissions for an anthology tentatively identified as *Flashlight Memories*. The focus of the anthology is childhood reading. What events in your childhood led you to become a reader for life? Did you crawl between the sheets with a book and a flashlight? Did a friend or family member influence you? What books drew you into the world of literature? Send poetry or prose, and consider our earlier anthologies, *Silver Boomers*, *Freckles to Wrinkles*, and *This Path* for examples of style. Payment is \$5 for poetry and \$10 for prose plus a contributor's copy.

<http://silverboomerbooks.com/submissions.html>

The Manawatu International Poetry for Performance Competition 2010.

Deadline: 5pm Friday 19 March. Massey University, The Palmerston North City Council and Palmerston North City Library, announce an open call for poets for the 2010 Manawatu International Poetry for Performance competition. The competition provides an opportunity for winning writers to have their poems developed and presented at the Biennial Manawatu Festival of New Arts in Palmerston North in October 2010. "We are seeking poetry that not only reads well, but also crosses the boundary between page and stage, to intrigue and involve an audience in performance (by which, we mean a presentation that goes beyond simple reading). Therefore, in addition to the poem itself, we ask poets to submit an overview of their performance concept in up to 200 words; concepts might include multiple voice pieces, the incorporation of dance, music, film or visual images: the scope is limited only by your imagination. This overview should not be prescriptive; it should communicate your vision, but leave room for directorial interpretation." The theme of the 2010 festival is 'Back to Earth'. The first 6 poems will be fully developed and produced at the Manawatu Festival of New Arts, Palmerston North in October 2010. There are cash prizes also.

For more details contact: C.A.Seelye@massey.ac.nz.

The Fish Poetry Prize (Ireland)

Closing date: 30 March. Fish Publishing runs the poetry competition each year, and publishes the winners in the annual Fish Anthology. Poem must be written in English and less than 200 words. Prizes: A First Prize of €1,000 to the winner plus publication in the 2010 Fish Anthology. The best ten poems will be published in the 2010 Anthology and each poet will receive five copies of the Anthology. Enter online at: <http://www.fishpublishing.com/poetry-contest-competition.php>

JAAM 28 call for submissions

Deadline: 31 March. The 28th issue of JAAM will be the DanceDanceDance issue, edited by Clare Needham and Helen Rickerby. "We are looking for: poetry - short fiction - creative non-fiction – images. Writing that dances - literally, conceptually, metaphorically. Writing about dance - dancing writers - life as a dance. Dance reviews will be considered, as will: programme notes - choreographic poetry, short stories about dancing the fandango on a moonlight night in Ngaio... Anything, in fact, that can be tied (loose or tight) to our theme... ...if there's something magic in the way it moves us." For publication in: September 2010. Please send your work to: jaammagazine@yahoo.co.nz or: JAAM, PO Box 25239, Panama Street, Wellington 6146, NZ.

David Burland Poetry Prize (UK) Closing date: 31 March. £5 Entry fee. Entries will be accepted from writers of any nationality and from any country provided that they are written in the English or French Language. A maximum of 3 poems per author may be accepted. May be on any subject and written in free style or rhyme. 1st prize: £150, 2nd prize: £50, 3rd prize: £30. All entries must be accompanied by a booking form and payment. <http://www.davidburlandpoetryprize.com/>

I've written some poetry I don't understand myself.

Carl Sandburg

Regional Reports

Readers are invited to submit reports on local events as they occur. Please email to editor@poetrysociety.org.nz preferably as attached Word or rtf documents, or post to PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145.

NELSON LIVE POETS SOCIETY, OCTOBER 2009

Mary Bell Thornton

Mark Raffills opened the evening with his usual enthusiasm and recited his poem "Porridge/ for Nelson Arts Festival 2009". The first stanza:

A pot of ordinary porridge, that's all,
thick and lumpy or smooth and runny,
covered with curdled goats milk and
a dob or two of sweet, raw honey.

He then introduced Betty Don, who read from Keri Hulme's *Strands* (Auckland University Press, 1992). The wine songs were very apt in our meeting place - The Free House, once a church now a bar.

Joan Lees read a murderous poem about bad pronunciation and grammar which finishes, "...when the language cops come knocking", and a play on words for Guy Fawkes.

Next up was Carol Don Ercolano, with 'Seasonal Talk' which begins:

You're one hot baby
Summer, said Spring
I'm off before
I get burnt

followed by a prose poem, 'Tree Ships', from a childhood memory, first published in *Boulder Writers 1*.

Jessica Le Bas, fresh from her book launch *Walking to Africa (AUP)*, read a humorous piece, 'Oh Holy Sunday' and, to welcome her friend and author Jeanette Aplin from D'Urville Island, read about Jeanette's home in her poem 'Autumn/ Iron Pot Bay', which begins:

She says the kitchen has turned to gold.
By this she means the house, because there are only
two rooms, and in the late afternoon the sun has arrived
at her table, loaded with light, such that it sets fire
to the baskets of booty she's brought from the garden;

Dean Walker read a series of bush poems:

I lay warm in my bed
of birdsongs
and wood songs
thumbed books and leaves
from: 'Soak it In'

followed by 'Being Extinct' and 'Pockets of Rain'.

Eva Brown, aka Panni Palasti, read a Paul Maunder short story from his soon-to-be released collection *Tornado* (Maitai River Press). Seamus Egan shared a fun sestina about a one-eyed black pirate, followed by Judith Paviell with her sonnet 'Art of the Muses' and Janet Frame's 'I Write Surrounded by Poets', from *The Goose Bath*. Cliff Fell gave some of his new poems an airing, including 'Kaleidoscope in Cuba Street' and a villanelle, 'What This Cloud Means'. Lines from his poem 'In the Eyes of Ned Kelly', after a Sydney Nolan painting in the City Gallery in Wellington, read:

the policeman's spur:
like starbeams on his heel
or a white flower
blossoming

The climax of the evening came while Cliff was reading his one-off squib, 'In Defence of the New Zealand F***', which set off a power cut that affected the entire Nelson region. He finished reading by torchlight. The torch was passed to me and I blew on the microphone and wondered why there was no

sound, (duh) before reading my sonnet 'Anniversary' in celebration of 31 years of marriage, 'David' in memory of a friend, and had a bit of fun with a fast moving 'piece to start the ball rolling'. Jessica Le Bas touched us with two poems from *Walking to Africa* - 'Two Cats' and 'Slice'.

In his second reading of the evening Dean Walker paid homage with 'Hei Hone' and 'Blessed', after James K., and a dramatic rendition of his poem 'The Storm'. For her second reading, Carol Don Ercolano chose Billy Collins' poem 'Forgetfulness'. Mark Raffills closed the evening, lighting up the dark with his poem 'Down A Long Road', with its stunning last stanza:

On this night I miss you and that rush of first love
that tripped my fingers fumbling at the buttons
down the front of the long, slim dress you once wore
when I was young and didn't know what it was I was looking for -

except you.

Reviews

wild camomile - 81 haiku Owen Bullock (Post Pressed , 2009) RRP \$15.

Jenny Argante

With the Haiku Pathway in Katikati a continuing draw from visitors from across New Zealand and overseas, and with our own haiku writing workshop well established in Papamoa, this should prove a popular purchase.

Owen Bullock, now based in Waihi, is a former poetry editor of *Bravado*, the Bay of Plenty's very own literary arts journal. His work has been published in such prestigious overseas and international journals as *Frogpond*, *Famous*

Reporter, *paper wasp*, *Raw NervZ*, *World Haiku Review*, *Kokako*, *Red Moon* and *Manaichi Daily News*.

This collection of 81 haiku exemplifies Bullock's insight and skill in taking everyday moments and events, and somehow, in simple language, making them something much more –images that continue to resonate in our hearts and

minds long after the page is shut. With him, we move from the delicately sensate:

tired
I crouch in the grass-
wild camomile

to the dark reflection of:

the rain
heavier
than tears

before shifting to the wry humour of:

wish I'd said goodbye . . .
the key-ring
swings in the lock

and so to that final veridical image:

the sky
and all of the lake
in the lake

Both a literary stimulus and comfort for the soul.

wit of the staircase, Saradha Koirala. (Steele Roberts, 2009) RRP \$19.99 ISBN: 978-1-877448-42-3.

Liz Breslin

How do you approach a book of poetry? Chronologically? Randomly? Back to front? Flicking open Saradha Koirala's first collection, *wit of the staircase*, you'll be initially delighted - there's a poem printed on the back flyleaf:

Outlook

I pluck out stray hairs
like lost apostrophes
and watch the final comma-curl
of a caterpillar.

Tomorrow: showers
easing towards evening
but today: Six Suites
for Unaccompanied Cello.

Tea steeping at sea level
the harbour as asphalt
and the wind
an ampersand.

So the initial outlook for the book is promising.

The front fly has an equally appealing vignette work – 'The season' - and the body of the book is organised into four untitled sections. If there is a criticism of the collection, it is this: finding some sense and order in the flow and segmentation of these sections. But who reads poetry in order?

A constant theme seems to be journeys - journeys of time, journeys of place, snapshots of lives. Her own life has wide ranging roots; she has a Kiwi mother and a Nepali father. She also, for the chronological record, studied English literature at Otago University, trained as a secondary school teacher in Wellington and completed her Masters in Creative Writing at Victoria University in 2007.

Koirala notes in 'Quakers in Winter',

I think of Friends in vast cities, miles from home.
I hold us all in the light.

So Koirala casts her own light touch over Friends, friends and family from such diverse places as Nepal, where –

I rode an elephant, saw eight rhino
and had Christmas dysentery on a mountain top.

or Amsterdam –

where we rode the cliché
like a bicycle through thick traffic,
behind trams and into fields
where the tulips might have been.

or Rakiura, Queens Road, Courtenay Place.

Her sonnet for the latter won second prize in the Wellington Sonnet Competition 2008. It is obviously caringly crafted but doesn't sound at all forced. A well deserved placing. Some of the other work in this book has appeared in online and print publications including the *Lumiere Reader*, *Turbine* and *Sport*.

The title poem, 'Wit of the Staircase', tells us,

When the tui called out with the bellbird's song

I should have said
*If you take it, make it your own
be known for it.*

As I lie in the hut I think of paua
harvested delicacy
captured, expected to come up with pearls.

It's a nice take on the idea of the wit of the staircase, l'esprit d'escalier, that even nature gets to refine its offerings.

But, despite the recurring themes of birds, the seasons and the weather, all is not sweetness and light in this collection. In 'Witness', the repetition of "she said" leaves us in no doubt that there's a great gap between what she said and we know.

In a recent interview for the Arts on Sunday with Lynn Freeman, Koirala said that she struggled with writing poems about memories from her past, finding them obvious, but was encouraged in pursuing this by her classmates. She creates poignancy in supposedly ordinary moments in tree houses, in frames, and on adventures where

...the beach was a real beach: sweeping, grey,
washing up spume and skeletons onto dunes and tussocks,
not a walk-in-the-city pretend.

In 'Once a fort knight', she writes

Daddy's a magician; we can never work out his tricks,
even when we check at the back.
His girlfriends give me plastic jewellery
in plastic packets sometimes
and he took us to Rainbow's End.

My brother said it would be different
if we saw him more than once a fortnight.
I liked Fort Knight.
He told me it meant two weeks
but after dinner we leant the dining chairs together
and hid behind them anyway.

This, and others in the collection, show again how the wit of the staircase has magnified Koirala's musings. We cannot, as she says in 'Nonplussed',

Confine me to a shot glass
And serve me with a tiny spoon.

So a better idea would be to buy this book and dip into it like a tub of that delicious ice-cream with lots of different veins that you can open up and taste again and again.

James K. Baxter: Poems Selected & Introduced By Sam Hunt (Auckland University Press, 2009). RRP \$29.99. ISBN 978-186940-434-5

Rangi Faith.

There are few precedents set for an anthology such as this – poems written by one poet and chosen by another - but both of these poets, and the poems, are familiar to most New Zealanders. Sam Hunt has collected fifty of James K. Baxter's poems, putting them together into a slim, easily accessible volume.

Here are two writers who are hand in glove with each other. One is the selector, the admirer, the storyteller, the other is the writer, the 'hippy' (as Baxter was seen then), the social activist. This is one poet paying homage to another. Hunt has always wanted to do this, and it has come at a good point in his

writing journey. James K. Baxter influenced Hunt in a number of ways, and these poems are in a sense a personal, historical and emotional record of both poets - the poems reflecting the steps in their pathways through poetry.

Hunt's introduction to this book is essential reading for the insight it gives into his choice of the fifty poems. His recounting of the effect his recitation of 'Evidence at the Witch Trials' had on one of the Christian brothers at St Peter's College is hilarious. Baxter did invite Hunt to stay with him at Jerusalem. For a good number of reasons Hunt didn't go. He also says he thought Jerusalem was in the Middle East! His refusal was the sign of a poet who was developing his craft but who was very aware at a young age (19) that he was on a different and independent path.

In this book Hunt has assembled humorous poems, political comments, ballads, children's poems, and good descriptive pieces. The book begins with the iconic 'High Country Weather' (written when Baxter was about 19 and Sam was only one year old!):

Alone we are born
And die alone;
Yet see the red-gold cirrus
Over snow-mountain shine.

The book ends with 'He Waiata Mo Te Kare' – written by Baxter in his last year in Jerusalem. It echoes the losses he faced:

To you my love is a pendant
Of inanga greenstone,
Too hard to bite,
Cut from a boulder underground.
You can put it in a box
Or wear it over your heart.
One day it will grow warm...

In 'Kumara Poem (*for Sam Hunt*)' we get a glimpse of Baxter in his final days:

...my feet are nailed here to the ground
the house of words has fallen down
and this old kumara will rot
while the young red ones grow slowly...

Hunt was introduced to the work of Baxter with the publication of 'Howrah Bridge and other poems'. He also read with him, and a literary correspondence of various poems was developed between them. Baxter's 'Letter To Sam Hunt', page 84, was written in response to Hunt's own 'Reply to a Pig Island Letter'. Baxter died in 1972. Hunt received possibly one of Baxter's last poems in the post a week or two later. It was called 'Jerusalem Blues 2'. In the poem Baxter (aged 46) sees himself as:

An old man with a smoke
I sit in the transport shelter
where the flies buzz in and out
watching the crates and mailbags

For Hunt, the poems are like old friends. Each is a touchstone in the short path he has taken with one of our major writers. In some indefinable way he is linked to each poem, watching them going out and coming back again with each tide. Finally, a quote from Hunt in his introduction: "This is why I wanted to do this book, so that people can read some of the poems that may have slipped under the radar, to see some of the stars in the constellation of James K. Baxter."

Haiku NewZ

Please note: due to the continuing lack of a volunteer to collate the Haiku NewZ, this is the final appearance of this column. KiwiHaiku and Tanka Reflections will continue, thanks to the willing support of Patricia Prime.

CONGRATULATIONS

From *The Lyrical Passion Poetry E-zine*:

– the World Haiku Contest was won by **Ernest J. Berry**, who also tied for second place, while **Sandra Simpson** tied for third place. Ernie and Sandra both also received honourable mentions, as did our KiwiHaiku editor, **Patricia Prime**.

Ernie's winning haiku:

night rain
the down pipe
relieves itself

– the World Tanka Competition featured Patricia Prime and **André Surridge** in the Honourable Mention list.

– the Haiku Blossoms Contest was won by Ernie, who tied with himself for first place, and came third as well! The two winning haiku:

nude beach
she covers
her hairdo

katrina
he reels in
his fishing boat

Ernie and Patricia were in the Honourable Mention list, with one haiku each.

From Haiku Ireland's kukai #18, Ernest J. Berry in second place with:

baby's cradle
nothing to add
or take away

COMPETITIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Insect-themed Haiku Competition (USA)

Closing date: 29 March "We judge senryu, haiku, haiga, and any other 'one-breath' poems as equivalent, and as long as there is a reference to an insect or some related arthropod the poem is eligible. Anyone can submit up to three poems for free. There are small prizes (worth US\$15-20 each) for best in show, runner-up, and best from a poet under the age of 13. Details can be found at: <http://insectmuseum.org/haiku.php>

Call for submissions: *Haibun Today*, a literary blog devoted to the promotion of haibun since 2007, will become an online quarterly webzine in 2010 with issues in March, June, September and December. You are invited to submit haibun for consideration in the March 2010 issue. Submission guidelines on the website at www.haibuntoday.com; please email to the editor, at haibun.today@gmail.com

KiwiHaiku

Please send your KiwiHaiku submissions to Patricia Prime at pprime@ihug.co.nz, or post to: 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610.

at opposite ends
of the haiku pathway
young poets old poets
Kirsten Cliff

tapa-cloth room -
the old sailor
finally falls silent
Sandra Simpson
(RLS Museum, Samoa)

Tanka Reflections

- short songs of the human spirit -

Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka. Please send submissions to: pprime@ihug.co.nz, or post to: 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610

in your absence
I feed the two goldfish
both subdued
now in an email
you tell of your separation

Elaine Riddell

she licks the cork
& rubs it against the neck
of a wine bottle ...
squeaks answered
by a fantail

André Surridge

Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history.

Plato

Talk Poem

Helen Yong

Away and See

Away and see an ocean suck at a boiled sun
and say to someone things I'd blush even to dream.
Slip off your dress in a high room over the harbour.
Write to me soon.

New fruits sing on the flipside of night in a market
of language, light, a tune from the chapel nearby
stopping you dead, the peach in your palm respiring.
Taste it for me.

Away and see the things that words give a name to, the flight
of syllables, wingspan stretching a noun. Test words
wherever they live; listen and touch, smell, believe.
Spell them with love.

Skedaddle. Somebody chaps at the door at a year's end, hopeful.
Away and see who it is. Let in the new, the vivid,
horror and pity, passion, the stranger holding the future.
Ask him his name.

Nothing's the same as anything else. Away and see
for yourself. Walk. Fly. Take a boat till land reappears,
altered forever, ringing its bells, alive. Go on. G'on. Gon.
Away and see.

Carol Ann Duffy, from *Mean Time* (Anvil Press, 1993)

On one level this is a poem about exploration, about adventure, about travel and seeing the world in a new way. It's also about exploring language – its diversity, its unpredictability – about using language in exciting ways.

All the way through the poem, Duffy uses the imperative to encourage us to “let in the new, the vivid”. She uses phrases like “**Taste** it for me”, “**Test** words wherever they live”, “**Spell** them with love,”

“Ask him his name”. The instruction “away and see” is repeated five times, but it works to meld the excitement of travelling and exploring, both in language and in life, into the reader’s mind. Duffy is insistently sharing her passion for living with us.

The opening image of the poem, “see an ocean suck at a boiled sun”, reminds me of sucking on those boiled lollies of my childhood – the sweetness that lasted so long. But it also works in a visual way, giving a picture of the ocean itself tasting the tropical sun. Then there is the wonderful abandon of “things I’d blush even to dream”, and the sensuality of “slip off your dress in a high room over the harbour”.

I love the way she uses internal rhyme and slant rhyme – like *sun, dream, room* and *soon* – throughout the poem. The musicality and the flow add to the resonance. For example; “Test words/ wherever they live; listen and touch, smell, believe./ Spell them with love.”

In the second stanza, the metaphor “new fruits sing on the flipside of night in a market of language”, takes me back to my time in Malaysia, and the newness of the sights, sounds and tastes of the ‘pasar malam’ or ‘night market’. The fruits are not just colourful or sweet – they *sing*. The peach is not just held – it is *respiring*, breathing, alive. And we are instructed: “taste it for me”. Metaphors like “the flight of syllables” and “wingspan stretching a noun” work because they’re so unexpectedly right.

Duffy is well known for using colloquial language to give her poems an authentic voice. Here, for example, “skeddaddle”, which means *run, get away*; and “chaps at the door”, which means *waits impatiently*, as in *chaffing* at the door. How dull and uninventive, by comparison, would be “Run off. Somebody waits at the door at a year’s end ...”

The adventures she wants us to have mean that, when land appears again, it will be “altered forever, ringing its bells, alive”. We will have a whole new perspective. And to end the poem she returns to the vernacular, with the imperative *go on* changing to the slang “g’on”, to the statement, “gon”, and then into the final repeated urging – “away and see”.

This is a poem about the beauty and unexpected joy of life, but it also asks us to take risks. The poem pushes us out the door into a world of language, of living words, of “horror and pity” and “passion”. ‘Away and See’ is an invitation to live life and poetry in a new way, and not to be afraid of the future.

Ten Minutes with Stu Bagby:

Anne Harré

In 2000 Stu Bagby won the NZ Poetry Society’s International Poetry Competition with his poem ‘First Dance’. He has been anthologised in *New Poets II* (AUP 2002) and published in national and international publications. His first full collection, *As it was in the beginning* (Steele Roberts, 2005), is well worth looking at. It presents the work of a poet who is fully comfortable with the medium and not afraid to take risks. In 2008 Bagby edited and published *Just Another Fantastic Anthology: Auckland in Poetry* (Antediluvian Press) and edited *A Good Handful: Great New Zealand Poems About Sex* (AUP). I began by asking him: *what living writer do you most admire, and why?*

I tend to think of writing more than writers. So, some Auden, lots of Larkin and O’Sullivan and Smithyman, and many more. Forced to nominate a writer I would choose Clive James for his wit and erudition. He seems to be someone I wouldn’t mind being marooned with.

What is it that motivates you to write poetry – fear, ego, a desire to make something? And why poetry, not novels or other prose forms.

A desire to make something, something I vainly hope may still bring pleasure or be of use long after my life is over. Poetry for its brevity.

How easily do you come by poems – is it like the patience required for fishing (slow and contemplative) or is it like hacking out lumps of coal in the dark, underground?

Sometimes poems “arrive” almost in a finished state and I like “playing” with a poem once I am sure I have one, though this doesn’t happen often. The biggest hurdle I usually have to overcome is the *why*

bother one. That is, does the world need another poem? If yes, surely it needs to be a good one. What is a good poem? Jane Bowles said; "I must write but I can't write." Something of this applies to me, but somehow some words are scratched on to paper from time to time.

In your collection "As it was in the beginning" I see that you've used a quote from Kendrick Smithyman, "They said/ that I might be a poet, and excused me./ They were often kind." It's a great quote and I'm wondering why you chose to start your collection with it.

I guess I felt that I was someone trying to write what might be called poetry as opposed to someone who had earned the title of poet.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

No idea, but I could come up with what I might term "not a bad day".

I love the poem in your collection, "Benediction":

Good gravediggers behave themselves
when people are around,
but when they're not
the adrenaline of work

And its plain hardness
can give rise to dirty talk,
the sort you wouldn't care
to be caught out with.

Do you still work as a gravedigger? And how much did/ does that job inform your writing?

I don't work as a gravedigger any longer. The job didn't inform my writing as much as people might have supposed.

In 2008 you edited and published Just Another Fantastic Anthology: Auckland in Poetry as well as editing A Good Handful: Great New Zealand Poems About Sex. What are you working on at present? Is there another collection in the pipeline? More editing of anthologies?

I hope to have a book of my own poetry out early next year. Probable title – "As goes the dance". Possibly more anthologies but not in the near future.

And as always the culinary question, are you a coffee or tea man?

Black coffee although since I stopped smoking it doesn't taste as good as it used to.

Every New Year is the direct descendant, isn't it, of a long line of proven criminals?	Ogden Nash
--	------------

Mini Competition

There were some very fine parodies entered in this competition, but as usual there can only be one winner, and as always it was hard to decide. How do you choose between one poet and another? Even more so when the poets are not the originals, so to speak. So once more Eric Dodson of Tauranga has convinced me to reward his extraordinary talent of rising to any challenge, and will receive Paul Fussell's *Poetic Meter & Poetic Form (revised edition)*.

Simon Slim came a very close second with 'The Preludes of T.L.S.', and was only pipped at the post because the poem was so very long (appropriately so, given its debt to T.S. Eliot). An honourable mention goes to Kees Beentjes, for his tribute to Ogden Nash.

Annus Mirabilis

after Larkin

Sexual intercourse begun
before nineteen sixty three
(she had always baited me)
correlated with the birth of my son
this was well before DPB.

Up till then I'd never booked
or bargained with a girl
or gave a fling a whirl
or if you asked I often looked
and hoped I could unfurl.

Then all at once my savings shrunk
life would never be the same
and everyone became
a slave to a baby in a bunk
my near future in a frame.

So life was never any fun
through nineteen sixty three
(I was broke, no job you see)
after the birth of my oldest son
and well before DPB.

For our next competition, I'm going to take a leaf from my own book (my Second Prize Winning *Bravado* poem, actually) and ask you to write a poem based on a real or imagined conversation. The prize is another awesome donated book – *Rhyme's Reason, a Guide to English Verse*, by John Hollander (Yale University Press, 2000)– which I'd really quite like to keep for myself. Deadline: 14th February, so get writing.

MEMBERS' POEMS

Plagiarising Anon.

Curlylocks, Lankylocks, art thou still mine?
Thou shall not recycle, nor yet save up twine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam
And feed upon strawberries, peaches and cream.
No innovations, and keep up the old diet,
Some lines are too good to change – try it:
Repeated three times daily after cataract or bags
They perform modern miracles on anything that sags,
Mirrors grow gentle and sharp tongues soften.
Say them to your old lover, then, loudly, and often.

Julie Ryan

Why not a poem?

One

if you want to read
why not a poem?
they lodge in the mind
in a special corner
away from the throng
& rattle of words

Two

if you want to read
why not a poem?
they're quite small now
one or three lines only
like pegging out the washing
one peg, two peg
and it's done

Three

if you want to read
why not a poem?
memorise
shout it in the bath
say all of it to people
on bus or ferry

Four

if you want to read
why not a poem?
a long one
can occupy a whole trip
hearers may sleep through
its waves and breezes
sweetly dream
from Vladivostok to Moscow

Five

if you want to read
why not a poem?
Yes, read a poem
so much better than
being up all night
with 500 pages of a novel

Suzanne Vaassen

Grounded

measure the sun's height
you don't need to be
a bird, a probe, or
winged Icarus failing to scope
red-hot perplexity,
fallen to zero

Do as the wise men do
who nightly study stars,
the moon's cold certainties
emerging, pale, red-eyed,
to calculate sun's distance
where it strides:

meaning determined
with both feet on the ground.

Jenny Argante

Country Visit

We drive up through hills sliced fresh and deep
by sharp knives, precision-cut by man.
Wounded clay, gold and grey, like coarse flour,
clings to the hills. It still breathes through the hills' tissue,
mother all its life.
A few road-stones lie cast in delayed shock.

We drive down through smaller hills. They confront
like plump washerwomen, stilled in scrub and chatter,
clean from rain-wash and sun-bleach,
bellies aproned in patterned shadow.

The flat land invites like a poker player
laying a quick, winning hand, displaying uneven numbers
of gum trees reaching to the horizon,
white cattle and sheep on a dark canvas,
fists of sugar cane, a threading river.

We present gifts and ourselves at the home of friends.
We talk and walk on yellow earth down a creek
where dragonflies write invitations on the creek's black ink.

Behind our eyes lie the city's magic.
There we put on new dresses, new shoes,
and think we are princesses.
Nature doesn't care about dresses, shoes or princesses.
She says wear what you wish. Just come to me
with a noble and generous mind,
stripped of pretension.

Caroline Glen

the trouble with poetry

the man who chalks portraits
and the woman who teaches cello
to handicapped children, met
waiting for the toilet at the launch
of some semi obscure poet
at the Civic Centre
She remembered him from the street
admired the intent in the
way he scampered around his work
but she'd thought them both too shy ...
had passed by with a quick smile
missed,
the long lingering reply

one of the 'minor idiots'
as the bookseller would say
was bumped by the portly wife
of the banker (who of course
wasn't there) and knocked against
the up & coming publisher whose merlot
was dashed deeply
into the wheat coloured linen jacket
of the community rag's literary editor
she laughed it off
the publisher, who had more than one
secret design unwittingly on display, told the poet

he needn't bother sending any more manuscripts
the cellist, heard the perfect chord
in the chalk artist's breath
as he whispered *wanker* so forcefully
that it surely must reach
the other end of the room.
She had already decided
to save this artist
from that particular fate tonight
and still ...
the poet struggled
to find something to say.

Linzy Forbes

MARCH DEADLINE: 7th FEBRUARY



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