



a fine line

January 2008

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

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Society Inc.
PO Box 5283
Lambton Quay
Wellington 6145

Patrons

Dame Fiona Kidman
Vincent O'Sullivan

**National Coordinator &
President**

Laurice Gilbert

Contacts

info@poetrysociety.org.nz
www.poetrysociety.org.nz

JANUARY MEETING

Fleur Adcock, UK

Friday 18th January 2008 5.30 – 6.30pm

at Museum of Wellington (Sponsor)

The Bond Store, Queens Wharf

With thanks to Victoria University of Wellington

Entry by koha.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Johanna Aitchison

Monday 19th February 7.30pm

at the Paramount Lounge

25 Courtenay Place

Feature Article

Facing Pages

Tim Jones

Translation is a strange business. Take these two translations of a four-line poem by Osip Mandelstam:

Into the distance disappear the mounds of human heads
I dwindle – go unnoticed now
But in affectionate books, in children's games
I will rise from the dead to say: the sun!

(quoted as an epigraph to Gene Wolfe's novel *The Sword of the Lictor*)

Mounds of human heads are wandering into the distance.
I dwindle among them. Nobody sees me. But in books
much loved, and in children's games I shall rise
from the dead to say the sun is shining.

(from Osip Mandelstam, *Selected Poems*)

The first version is my favourite poem. The second – well, it's OK. Yet they are both translations of the same four lines of Russian poetry.

What's so special about poetry in translation? Well, for one, only the best poetry from other languages tends to be translated into English, so in picking up a volume of translated poetry, there's a reasonable assurance that there will be some good stuff inside. For another, I like poetry to surprise me, and I've found that there's more chance of being surprised by poets and poems from languages other than English. This isn't to claim that poets in English are unimaginative; but the poetic tradition in other languages differs from the poetic tradition in English, and a good translation will preserve the "otherness" of the source poem. Beauty and strangeness — the perfect combination!

When the Iraqi poet Basim Furat lived in Wellington, I attended several readings at which he read in Arabic, and Mark Pirie then read a translation of the Arabic poetry into English. Arabic poetry is about as far removed from the unrhetorical, conversational tone of most New Zealand poetry as it is possible to get. Arabic poetry is rich in extended metaphor, imagery, and rhetoric. I couldn't get the hang of it at all at first, but after hearing it a few times together with the translations, I have grown to appreciate the style. (Many of the translations into English of Basim's poems are included in *Here and There*, cited below, and you can find some on the Web at <http://www.geocities.jp/thedeadparrotssociety/Basim.html>)

My favourite format for books of translated poetry is to have the original and the English translation on facing pages. This goes both for languages that I can puzzle my way through armed with a dictionary and dim memories of language lessons (Russian, and to a lesser degree French, Spanish and Maori); and those I'm completely out of my depth in (German, Norwegian). It's like opening one Christmas present and finding another one inside: the poem in English on the right and, its riches less accessible, the original poem on the left.

Two of my favourite poets are Anna Akhmatova and Paul Celan. While Celan is notoriously cryptic, Akhmatova writes in clear, classical Russian. Nevertheless, her poetry presents the same problem for the translator as does most Russian poetry: to rhyme or not to rhyme. Russian is a very regular language, every bit as declined and conjugated as Latin, and sense does not depend on word order. This means that the rhyming resources available to the Russian poet are much greater than those available to the poet writing in English.

Many translators of Russian poetry attempt to preserve the rhyme scheme, or at least come up with an equivalent scheme. In even the most highly skilled hands, however, this creates the risk that the translation will stray too far from the sense of the original for the sake of finding rhymes. On the other hand, unrhymed translations are inherently less "Russian". It's a choice with no obvious right answer, and the translators of my Akhmatova *Selected Poems* have rhymed, or not rhymed, as seems best to them for each poem. It's a fine collection and a good introduction to a wonderful poet.

But if the translator of Akhmatova faces problems, these pale beside those faced by the translator of Celan, a poet who exudes difficulty and breathes paradox. I don't have space here to go into the remarkable and tragic circumstances of Celan's life and work, but the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Celan provides a good summary. Michael Hamburger's introduction to the Celan *Selected Poems* is a testament both to the difficulty of Hamburger's task as translator, and to the zeal and commitment with which he pursued this task.

The previous paragraph reads like a "Danger-Keep Out!" warning posted on the approach to Celan's poems, but I'm not trying to put you off. Despite their difficulty, these poems are wonderful: fascinating, endlessly inventive. I don't speak German, but as I look between the translation and the original, the German roots of English words start popping out at me, and I can begin to see why the translator has made the choices he has, and how he has attempted to translate what many would regard as the untranslatable.

I was given book tokens for Christmas. I've just used some of them to buy a copy of Jorge Luis Borges' *Selected Poems*. Facing pages again, this time Spanish and English. I open the book and my eyes flick from right to left and back again. In the space between the facing pages, a new poem grows.

Books cited:

Akhmatova, Anna *Selected Poems*, translated by Stanley Kunitz with Max Hayward (Collins Harvill, 1989)

Borges, Jorge Luis *Selected Poems*, edited by Alexander Coleman (Penguin, 2000)

Celan, Paul *Selected Poems*, translated by Michael Hamburger (Penguin, 1990)

Furat, Basim *Here and There*, edited by Mark Pirie (HeadworX, 2004)

Mandelstam, Osip *Selected Poems*, translated by Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin (Penguin, 1977)

Wolfe, Gene *The Sword of the Lictor*, Volume 3 of *The Book of the New Sun* (Arrow, 1992)

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

I am sad to report we have lost a valued committee member and long-time supporter of the NZPS and New Zealand writing in general. Bernard Gadd, whose health has been poor for some time, suffered a fatal heart attack on December 11. Bernie has judged our competitions, reviewed our books, selected our Tanka Moments, and been a vigorous and persistent promoter of all that's good in NZ poetry. I will miss his frequent suggestions and his unceasing encouragement. I wrote to his widow, Raewyn, on behalf of the Society, offering our communal condolences.

xmas card
wishing him all the best
- unsent

Ernie Berry

Our membership is increasing rapidly, and we are making good progress on expanding our reach beyond the Wellington region. Having been set up in 1973 as a way for Wellingtonians to share in the joys of poetry, the NZPS now has as its charitable aim: "to advance education by promoting, developing and supporting poets and poetry in New Zealand." I understand that to mean all of New Zealand, and I have been working to engage poets from all around the country with, I believe, some success. Our committee is now geographically spread, and while we still have lots of members in greater Wellington (73), more than twice as many of you live elsewhere: greater Auckland & the far north (44), the Waikato-Bay of Plenty axis (22), central North Island, and both capes (18), the north of the South Island (17), Canterbury (35), Otago and the deep south (18), and a sprinkling of other places, including seven other countries.

This development comes at a cost – my modest honorarium – which is not covered by grants. Funding available to arts organisations such as ours is available on a project-by-project basis, and no-one, it seems, wants to pay someone to do any actual ongoing administrative work. That was fine when the committee was centred in Wellington and entirely voluntary. My position was created, as you know, when our volunteer supply burned out, as has occurred within so many organisations.

I love this job. I love being in contact with you by emails and letters; I love bringing you the magazine every two months; I love being able to pay you to write for the magazine, and I love that you send me your poems for publication. I love finding competitions for you to enter, workshops for you to attend, and residencies for you to aspire to (as well as, in some cases, to actually achieve). I love seeing how everyone's work develops from year to year in the competition, and I love meeting you at the anthology launches and other events. I love getting your books reviewed and your successes celebrated, both in the magazine and on the website.

And yes, I love the occasional perk of representing you at official occasions such as the announcements of the Katherine Mansfield Fellowship and the Poet Laureate, to name the two most recent events I have attended.

I am committed to building the New Zealand Poetry Society into the major national organisation that specialises in poetry, and it is my deepest wish that I continue to work sustainably for the benefit of poets and poetry in New Zealand.

There isn't anything not to love in this work, except having to find the money to enable me to continue to do it – it's not my strong suit. We have two options: increase income / reduce expenditure. The obvious way to increase income is to charge membership fees that cover our costs – but we would have to ask you each for \$75 a year, and we're grateful that Creative New Zealand subsidises us so we don't have to go to that extreme. I recall that the subscription used to be \$30 a few years ago, when \$30 went further than it does now. Raising the membership fee has to be approved by the members at an AGM or Special General Meeting, and takes effect in the following financial year, so that won't help much in the immediate future, but it's something to prepare for.

In the meantime, the committee has taken a hard look at what we can achieve with the amount Creative New Zealand has granted us for the 2008-2009 financial year, by reducing expenses. Payments for contributions to this magazine will be reduced, and guest poets will be paid less for reading to Wellington audiences. We wish it could be otherwise.

And now for the good news: we are now officially a Registered Charity, thus preserving our tax-free status, and with the additional benefit that all donations over \$5 are tax-deductible.

This issue of the magazine ushers in a new year which I hope is kind to you all. I will be on reduced hours

in January (and looking forward to Fleur Adcock's reading on the 18th) and wish you all happy holidays.

About our Contributors

Nola Borrell is a Lower Hutt poet, practitioner of haiku, and past member of the NZPS committee. She regularly collates the Haiku NewZ.

Margaret Bradstock is a Sydney poet, editor and critic, with four published collections.

Bernard Gadd was an Auckland writer and NZPS committee member, who passed away on 11 December.

Tim Jones lives in Wellington. His second poetry collection, *All Blacks' Kitchen Gardens*, has recently been published by HeadworX.

Dora Malech taught the Iowa Workshop at the International Institute of Modern Letters in 2006, and shared the running of the Victoria University MA in Creative Writing in 2007.

Keith Nunes is a former journalist who quit in a fit of pique and decided to write poetry and fill shelves in a supermarket.

Pat White lives in the Wairarapa, and works as a poet and artist. He is currently working on *Living Local; a sense of place*.

A Warm Welcome to:

Angela Andrews Palmerston North

Sarah Blackburn Balclutha

Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle Auckland

Emma Furness Port Chalmers

Jeffrey Harpeng Qld, Australia

Dinah Hawken Kapiti

Tim Heath Auckland

Simon Leadley Hamilton

Ruth Linton Kaitia

Mary Moar Wellington

Jill Steadman Paeroa

Kirsten Warner Auckland

Neil Whitehead Lower Hutt

Rhonda Rendle Hamilton

Dean Watkins Wellington

Rosemary Wildblood Porirua

Marilyn Young Wellington

Congratulations

- to **Sue Wootton**, Dunedin, on her appointment as the next Robert Burns Fellow.

- to **Sandra Simpson**, Tauranga, the only Southern Hemisphere poet included in *A New Resonance 5*. See Publications, in HaikuNewZ for more details.

- to **Charlotte Trevella**, Rangiora, for inclusion in *Our Favourite Poems – New Zealanders choose their best-loved poems*.

- to **Mary Dennis**, Wellington, winner of the secondary school division of the Sunday Star-Times short story awards, judged by Owen Marshall.

- **Jessica Le Bas**, Nelson, was a finalist in the open division of the same competition, and **Charlotte Trevella**, Rangiora, was a finalist in the secondary division.

Obituaries

BERNARD GADD

Patricia Prime

the child flings
a stone - again
the wave tumbles

Bernard Gadd, poet, reviewer, editor and publisher, died on 11 December, 2007.

Bernie had a long career as a high school teacher and technical institute tutor in English as a second language (ESOL) and had short stories, novels, drama and non-fiction published. Many of his published works were aimed towards teenagers. His haiku, tanka and poetry have been published internationally both in print and online. His most recent collection of poetry was *End of the Snapshots* (Sudden Valley Press, 2007). He was also a small press publisher and anthologist, and most recently the editor of the Auckland anthology *Manukau in Poetry*.

Bernie also wrote many poems on historical and political themes. As Jeffrey Harpeng wrote in an email to me recently, "That many of Bernie's lyric poems took political/historical themes does not point away from the haiku heart, but back to it." He also says, "I believe that the ah of the finest haiku are a cry of pain – in the fog of that pain is the uncertain sigh of acceptance, the 'And so it is' which Bernie's haiku conveys so well."

For several years Bernie was co-editor with Catherine Mair of *WinterSpin* (which was renamed *Kokako* and is now co-edited by myself and Owen Bullock). I worked closely as co-editor with Bernie on both *WinterSpin* and *Kokako* after Catherine resigned from the position. The magazine was the 'sister' of the poetry magazine *Spin* until it became an independent production and it now concentrates on haiku and related forms of Japanese short poetry.

Bernie published my first poem when I began writing and he was mentor for many aspiring poets and authors. He was always available to proofread, criticise, give advice or help in any way he could. Ever since we first met in the 80s, we exchanged copies of magazines, usually accompanied by a letter or longer note commenting on the respective issues. This is Bernie's comment on the last issue of *Kokako* (September, 2007): "I thought this was a particularly good issue, full of interesting things. The magazine goes from strength to strength. Keep up the good work." We shared not only an enthusiasm for poetry, but also a more general and inclusive intention of a sense of community for young people with English as a second language. But, as Bernie so aptly put it, "there's a whole other world out there beyond the world of little magazines, beyond the world of literature. Life goes on, with or without us." Dear Bernie; sadly, I could not agree more.

These are Bernie's last tanka from *Modern English Tanka*, Volume 2, Number 2, Winter 2007.

in shock . . .
our young daughter
sees her name
on the list
of war dead

street lights,
headlights . . .
your skin
over and over
alters colour

intricate muscles
beautiful legs
in streams in snow
and now guiding patients
in the eye clinic

in the grove
your skin's like
a camouflage
I recall looking
for you tree by tree

MEG CAMPBELL

The New Zealand Poetry Society notes with sadness the death of poet Meg Campbell on Saturday 17th November. This is a great loss to the poetry community of New Zealand. Meg was a past patron of the New Zealand Poetry Society, along with her husband, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell. Meg's final poetry collection, *Poems Adrift*, sold out at its launch, the day after her death, and has since been reprinted. A letter of condolence was sent to Alistair on behalf of the Poetry Society.

DENNIS LIST 1946-2007

Niel Wright

Dennis List, a very early member of the New Zealand Poetry Society, died in Adelaide on 9 November 2007 unexpectedly, though he had battled cancer for a year.

Born in Rotorua of a professional family whose name was originally Liszt, Dennis arrived at Victoria University in 1963 and was immediately prominent as a writer and editor, with his work to be found in *Argot*, *Experiment*, *Frog's Legs*, *Salient*, *Poetry Broadsheet*, *Poetry New Zealand* and more widely nationally and internationally. Dennis was Bill Manhire's first editor and mentor. Dennis's first book of poems, *A Kitset of 26 Poems*, appeared in London in 1972 from Manhire's Amphedema Press. His second book of poems, *Pathways Into The Brain*, (1973) was one of the bestsellers of Cavemen Press. His third book of poems, *Falling Off Chairs* (Original Books) appeared in 1996. Dennis is prominently represented in the anthology *Big Smoke* (AUP 2000).

After an interesting and influential career in New Zealand, where he edited and largely wrote the first two NZ *Whole Earth Catalogues* in the late 1970s, Dennis and his family migrated to Australia. There he became head of market research for the ABC, operating out of Adelaide. He authored major marketing research guides for the ABC. When he took redundancy from the ABC half a decade or so ago, he became a freelance marketing guru, making several trips to south east Asia and Africa for the Swedish Aid organisation and publishing major marketing guides, one translated into Indonesian.

Dennis was also offered and took up a South Australian government scholarship to do a PhD at the University of South Australia, which he completed in 2006. After standing in for his Professor for several years he was taken on by Adelaide University and appointed head of their market research department, having already established an international reputation in such matters.

Dennis's first novel was published in *Salient* in 1968 and reprinted in 1996. From 1993 he worked on a series of novels, each to be set in an Australian state and in New Zealand, finishing three of them as well as two other novels. For some details and texts of Dennis's writings see his website www.dennislist.net His completed novels are held in safe keeping in New Zealand, and hopefully plans to publish them will come to fruition.

Dennis List is survived by his wife Katrina, son Morgan, daughters Ursula and Claudia, and grandchildren.

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

HELP WANTED

The New Zealand Poetry Society committee needs some assistance with fundraising. Applying for grants is a specialist business, and without it our membership fees would be significantly higher. We need people with the enthusiasm, time and energy to help find funding sources and fill out applications. Even better would be the engagement of a sponsor or generous benefactor who believes in our vision of the NZPS as the pre-eminent non-academic resource for poetry in New Zealand, and who is willing to specifically support the cost of labour.

We already have people willing to donate goods for auction, if someone familiar with Trade Me were willing to spend the time organising this.

Please contact the National Coordinator at info@poetrysociety.org.nz if you are willing to help, or have significant items to donate for auction.

PROSPECTIVE POETRY GROUP?

Are there any NZPS members in the Howick/Pakuranga area interested in holding regular meetings? Please email the National Coordinator: info@poetrysociety.org.nz if you are interested in being put in touch with each other.

Surfing the Web

<http://www.poetryproseandplays.co.uk/> A site for everyone. It includes ideas for writing poems, and some cool word games that invite readers to interact with the site.

<http://www.poetryresourcepage.com/> A comprehensive Canadian resource of the type that I would create, if I had the time! Includes a section with over 250 visual images for stimulating epiphastic poetry (ie poems written in response to art works).

<http://www.pmpoetry.com/> More poetry resources, gathered by the poet himself (Patrick Martin), whose poems also appear. Worth a look.

<http://www.poetrymagic.co.uk/index.html> A UK site with vast amounts of theory and articles of interest, including great introductions to international poets and poetry from cultures vastly different to our own.

<http://timjonesbooks.blogspot.com/> **Tim Jones'** second collection of poetry, *All Blacks' Kitchen Gardens*, has recently been published, and he has books forthcoming in two other genres. He's keeping track of it all in his new blog, "Books in the Trees". You can find more members' website and blog addresses on our website at:

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/node/68#mw>

<http://worthyofpublishing.com/> Ever wondered if anyone would read what you've written? Now you can put extracts from your potential books on the internet and invite comments. You can register as a writer and/or reader, so you can have a good look at what's there before committing yourself to joining the exposed.

Publications

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since the last issue:

Green Tea (Bearfax Publications; RRP \$27, incl p&p, from stacefamily@actrix.co.nz) by the late Jeanette Stace is her literary executor's and family's tribute to Jeanette's prolific production of verse and haiku over many years.

Making Lists For Frances Hodgkins by Paula Green (AUP; RRP not supplied) is a "poetic memoir" based on the Auckland City Gallery's 2005 exhibition of the artist .

Our Favourite Poems (Craig Potton, RRP \$29.99) is an anthology based on voting by the New Zealand public through the Sunday Star-Times.

Parts of the Moon - selected haiku & senryu 1988 - 2007 by **John O'Connor**. See Publications in *HaikuNewZ*.

Workshops & Residencies

SUMMER WRITING WORKSHOPS, WAIARIKI INSTITUTE, ROTORUA **22-24 January 2008**

Poetry Boot Camp ~ Owen Bullock

"How to tackle different forms and put pace and passion into poetry, and make rhyme work for you without forcing it, Whether you're writing for adults or children, this workshop will show you how to handle what's in the poem - observation, idea or emotion - so that message and meaning come over loud and clear." Contact Sue Emms, at semms7@gmail.com

THE MACDOWELL COLONY (USA)

This one is worth looking at for the website alone. Application Deadline for June 1 – September 30: **15 January** – application materials must be there by that date. Residency is free (though donations are welcome) and grants are available for travel and loss of income costs. <http://www.macdowellcolony.org>

RAGDALE (USA)

Ragdale is located 30 miles (one hour by train) from downtown Chicago. Application fee: \$US30, daily residence fee \$US25, for two to eight weeks. Deadline (postmarked): **January 15** for mid-June - December residencies. See:

<http://www.ragdale.org/>

WRITING THE LANDSCAPE, IIML, WELLINGTON

Application deadline: 29 January

"In a time when both the natural world and words themselves are often misused, writing about the landscape is an act of commitment and faith. This workshop, convened by poet **Dinah Hawken**, offers the chance to explore some of the landscapes around you and to develop your potential as a writer of poetry and creative non-fiction (such as travel accounts, journal entries and reflective essays). Workshops run in Trimester 1, 2008, and are limited to 12 participants." For further information contact the IIML, phone 04-463 6854, email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz or visit www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters

THE KINGI MCKINNON SCHOLARSHIP FOR EMERGING WRITERS

Application Deadline: 31 January

This scholarship is open to unpublished* writers who wish to develop their creative writing skills with a view to achieving publication, and will pay the fees of the Waiariki Certificate in Creative Writing for one year (25th

February - 2nd December). The successful applicant will be advised by 14 February 2008.

This is an on-line course, and applicants must have reliable access to a computer and internet connection. Applicants must not be currently employed in a field directly connected with fiction or non-fiction writing.

Please submit two pieces of writing up to 500 words in any two of the following genre: short story, poetry, review, comment, or essay. In addition, the application should include a piece of no more than 300 words on why they should be the recipient of the scholarship.

For further enquiries and for an application form, please contact Denize Coker, Waiariki Institute of Technology on 0800 Waiariki or email: Denize.Coker@waiariki.ac.nz

*For the purpose of this scholarship, 'unpublished' refers to paid writing, not to work published without payment. Applicants may have published up to three items for which they were paid minimum fees. Please advise details in application form.

THE ANDERSON CENTRE (USA)

Located in Red Wing, Minnesota, this venue offers short-term residencies of two weeks or one month from May-October to artists, writers, scholars, and scientists. For residencies during the months May-July, apply by **1st February**. For residencies during the months of September-October, apply by **1st March**. (August is reserved for emerging artists from New York and Minnesota.) See: <http://www.andersoncenter.org/resapp.htm>

TAU MAI E KAPITI MÄÖRI WRITER'S RESIDENCY, KAPITI ISLAND

Application Deadline: 6 February

Kapiti Island will host New Zealand's first ever Mäori writer's residency during Matariki, 2008 (June to July), allowing a Mäori writer to live and work on the northern end of the island for eight weeks. The writer will also be paid a stipend of \$4,800. For an application form, write to: Mei Hill, Project Manager, 'Tau mai e Kapiti', Maori Writer's Residency 2008, P O Box 47, Paekakariki, Kapiti 5258 or email: taumaiekapiti@pl.net The selection panel's decision will be announced 10 April 2008.

THE SCHOOL OF ENGLISH & MEDIA STUDIES, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, PALMERSTON NORTH

Semester 1 applications close 15 February 2008

Massey University offers a broad array of creative writing and performance papers: poetry, fiction, plays, media script writing, travel writing, life writing, creative non-fiction, writing for children, drama in performance, creative processes. Full course details are available on the website, <http://ems.massey.ac.nz/>

THE VERMONT STUDIO CENTRE (USA)

Deadline: 15 February

4 week international residencies are available, and while there is a hefty fee (\$US3750), there are partial and full fellowships available to cover this cost, depending on how much you want to contribute to the running of the community. See: <http://www.vermontstudiocenter.org/>

Competitions & Submissions

NB For those without on-line access, submission guidelines can be obtained by sending a SAE to the National Coordinator, stating which competition or journal details are required.

Anvil - Deadline: 31 January

Anvil is a new magazine currently calling for submissions. Poetry, short fiction, essays, visual works and other things will be considered. Email submissions to anvil.editors@gmail.com. Please include contact details and a short contributor note.

Poetry in the Pews (UK) - Deadline: 31 January

Tavistock Parish Church, St Eustachius, will possibly be the first church in the World to try to fill all its pews with poetry: they expect to display 688 mini poems on the theme of 'Love', from St. Valentine's Day 2008 until Sunday the 24th of February. Three adult prizes and three prizes for contributors up to the age of 18. Adults who send in poems contribute 50p if they can afford it, to cover the cost of printing and laminating. Length of poem: 4 lines (10 words maximum on each line). Address your contributions to:

Poetry In The Pews. Tavistock Parish Church Centre, 5a Plymouth Road, United Kingdom PL19 8AU

The Strokestown International Poetry Competition (Ireland) Deadline: 31 January

The entry fee is €5 (or £4 sterling, or \$US5) per poem. Prizes of €4,000 (approximately £2,500 sterling), €2000 and €1000 for an unpublished poem in English not exceeding 70 lines. For conditions and entry form see:

<http://www.strokestownpoetry.org/compinfo.htm> **Snorkel7 - Closing date: 15 February**

Snorkel6 featured writing from New Zealand, Australia and beyond. Contributors to the mix included Chris Price, **Kerrin P. Sharpe**, Mary Cresswell, and **Sue Fitchett**. Snorkel is currently accepting submissions for Snorkel7. For guidelines, visit <http://snorkel.org.au>

Best New Zealand Poems 2007

Auckland poet Paula Green is reading every poem she can find to make her selection of the best New Zealand poems published in 2007. While every effort is made to ensure that no poetical treasure remains undiscovered, it's always possible that there are books or individual poems that haven't found their way to Paula. Check with your publisher to see if they have supplied a copy of your book. If there are poems you've published in a magazine or online journal you'd like to be sure of having considered, please send copies to Best New Zealand Poems, c/- IIML, Victoria University, PO Box 600 Wellington, for forwarding to the editor. (IIML)

The Lumière Reader is looking for submissions

The Lumière Reader (www.lumiere.net.nz/reader) is currently seeking submissions of previously unpublished short fiction and poetry "of all styles and subject matter" for a regular creative writing feature. Fiction submissions should be no longer than 2000 words, and poetry submissions no more than five poems. The Lumière Reader's books section is edited by 2006 MA graduate Amy Brown. Email amycbrown@myfastmail.com with any questions or submissions. (IIML)

Regional Reports

Readers are invited to submit reports on local events as they occur. Email to editor@poetrysociety.org.nz

WINDRIFT

Bevan Greenslade

Eight regulars met at Kerry Popplewell's Ngaio home in October. Bevan Greenslade provided a useful summary of 'Notes' on haiku history and translation from Robert Hass's *The Essential Haiku* (1994). We workshoped our own haiku: open theme, spring, new life. Here's something of the variety offered:

Hiroshima Park
named roses bloom side-by-side
'Peace' and 'Blue Moon'
Neil Whitehead

lying next to you sleeping
my thoughts are too loud
Sally Holmes Midgley

in our ward of broken bones
a strong orchid stalk
carries twelve blooms
Veronica Haughey

come to France, ye mighty
brag at my feasting table
- Ozymandias
Bevan Greenslade

after the storm
two blackbirds pull straw
from a fallen nest
Karen Peterson Butterworth

every day
sweeping up dog hair
spring
Kerry Popplewell

a shower
of golden lucerne
perfumes the rain
Penny Pruden

golden kowhai
busy tui in the tree
nectar collector
Annette de Jonge

package tour
the octogenarians get
the honeymoon suite
Nola Borrell

Windrift contact: Nola Borrell. Ph: 586 7287. Email: nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz

Reviews

Cold Comfort, Cold Concrete: Poems & Satires, Scott Kendrick, 180pp, \$25, Seraph Press, Wellington.
Bernard Gadd

Most of these are rap-style “rant” performance poems, in which Kendrick displays a deft competence with rhyme and rhythm. He’s a useful writer for the times, his satires and barbs often being aimed at the nonsense that’s in our minds courtesy of corporate-dominated media. Readers may find themselves even reeling back in horror or shock at some of the things to be found here. And that’s as it should be ... there’s plenty in our world to be horrified about.

The Happy Cancer Song is a tour de force. It captures the swirl of opposing ideas and images, rational and irrational, that rush about our minds in response to the very word: fear, defeatism, plus courage and humour that can assume the blasé:

My family dies of Cancer; it’s traditional - no way
We’d deign to die of anything less;
What would the neighbours say?
It’s not for us the car crash, Alzheimer’s, or aids.
No suicides. No cardiacs. no rest home lemonades.

and the horror:

Have you ever spoken with the dead and watched them force a grin?

And a fitting finale:

Sing a song of all our cancers,
Sing a raucous, dirty tune -
Then topple every empty bottle
And scream curses at the moon.

He’s equally devastating on the war in Iraq and more particularly how it’s being used to turn the whole world into a war zone:

We were in the process of executing the men
When a child escaped his detention zone

...

Concerned for the child, I clubbed him
To the ground with my rifle, continuing

To do so until his lack of movement
Showed he no longer posed a threat to himself
(Debrief)

There are the everyday things, too, like *The Song of the Student Loan*, and the *Bedtime* advice from father to child:

you're going to learn I can't protect you
from your fears
which you will find
are first & foremost in your mind

...

I guess what I'm trying to tell you
is it's a fucked up world you live in

and even hard-edge lyricism, as in *If the Patches on Her Jeans Could Speak*

They were a cubist manifesto,
random patches loosely strewn
In a collage, a kaleidoscope,
A chequered quilt of colour hewn
From curtains, shirts, godawful ties ...

... let this truth be read -
Space is curved and time is torn.
And there's also good humoured laughter at the archetypical Kiwi joker:

And how's the missus?
You still together?
Yeah still together
She's alright
Few ups and downs
You know how it is mate
Yeah mate
Yeah mate
Well mate
Spose

(Mating Call)

One or two of these performances ramble on a bit. But it's an enjoyable collection with some well directed jabs. Poems can use the rough crude language that's common enough in pop song culture and day-to-day culture.

This is a review of only the first half of the book. Turn it upside down and there's a collection of selections from what the blurb describes as an "underground political satire newspaper, *The Babylon Express*".

Che in Verse, (eds.) Gavin O'Toole & Georgina Jimenez, Aflame Books (info@aflamebooks.com), 335pp, £11.95
Bernard Gadd

This anthology presents 135 poets and poems or songs from 53 countries referring one way or another to Che Guevara, nearly half of them from the Americas, most of course in translation. The editors tell us that "The aim is to shed some light on what it is about this historical figure that has been of such enduring cultural appeal" so that Guevara has "became the first truly global icon of the modern era." This collection and the thoughtful introductory examination of what the poems suggest about the making of an icon make this a reference book for specialist study as well as a poetry resource for a general readership. Three Kiwis are included: Mark Pirie: "Now around the city I go, and recurring is an image of Che: / you'll see him out there, 'living it up', he's a punk on / good income" (*City walk*), Michael O'Leary: "Che, murdered on Lennon's birthday, his last words can / Be for both of them, 'Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man'". (*A Sonnet to Che Guevara*), and **Bernard Gadd**: "optimist, that's the poet I was" (*Che Guevara's lyric*).

Most of these poems express in way or another support for Che or grief at his killing or guilt: "he was doing what we knew had to done but were not doing" (Jorge Enrique Adoum, *Che: the fleetingness of his death*). But not all: "I've got a feeling that if I'd met you, / I might have found you arrogant or mad" (John McGrath *An impersonal note*)

to Che Guevara); "her red / nipple-tight t-shirt / sang the praises / of che guevara" (Cliff Wedgbury *my love sold revolutionary newspapers*);

And I looked into Che's black eyes all
night while I lay in those beds,
ignored
Now these guys have names on doors on the 18th floor of
towers in Encino
They have ex-wives and dope connections
(La Loca, *Why I choose black men for my lovers*)

There is rant, posturing, political rhetoric, but also much genuine grief and anger and some works of considerable poetic interest: "Comandante Guevara entered death / and wanders thereabouts they say / beautiful / with stones under his arm" (Juan Gelman, *Conversations*); "Sorry Mum, can't come for dinner / you see Che Guevara's last bodyguard is in town / and I really can't miss him" (Duncan Richardson, *Che Guevara's Last Body Guard*); "But it's not for me to tell you who he was, / and this is not a poem" (Floridor Pérez *The hands*); "I see that there would be: / 'the God with 5 heads / the Star with 5 heads / of the Rebellion'" (André Benedito, *The Stranger Left on the Terraces of Baalbeck*); "your glowing eyes ... transforming my hospital ward into the / middle of the mountains of Bolivia" (Renji Ono *Ernesto Che Guevara*); "Wake up, my child, / Ernesto is close, / howling at the poor / that this world is ours" (Victor Arbeloa, *Scary lullabies with Che Guevara in the background*).

This is a collection of hugely varied poetry, ranging in length from an effective haiku to epics of many pages. How about this in Scots dialect?

As lang as Che Guevara lives
in harns o haufin laddies,
there's aye a stallion, willsome, wud,
in herds o couthie cuddies
(Alexander Scott *Hero*)

Any review can only suggest the richness of this unusual anthology. After all, the contributions come from as diverse places as Japan, China, Egypt, Finland, Iran, Turkey, Zimbabwe. The editors have sought to give a genuine sampling of the mass of material available, so "this collection also includes some works that – by poetic standards – may seem naïve, over-optimistic, or ill-judged". The preface also includes a salutary reminder to New Zealanders of the price some poets pay even for trying to publish poems like those included in this volume: arrest, prosecution, censorship. The editors are meticulous in their acknowledgements of poets, publications and any who gave assistance - they acknowledge Laurice Gilbert on behalf on the NZ Poetry Society, and Vaughan Gunson.

The collection is strikingly different from most contemporary New Zealand volumes of poetry in that the people in these poems are set within their societies and within international networks of shared political or cultural ideas; they are not fictions of self-creating egos; they are not primarily consumers of feelings and perceptions but are minds with principles, ideals, consciences, hopes and disappointments beyond the merely personal. These are poems which point beyond themselves, are about things that matter even when they are being ironic or detached, and are by writers dissatisfied with just being clever or with proposing poetry as another purchase.

This is a book to encourage your local libraries to get copies of. It's purchasable on-line from the publishers.

It's not usual for someone included in an anthology to review the book, but there are so far as I know only the contributors' three copies in this country.

Just Poetry, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, HeadworX, September 2007, 60pp, \$19.99
Bernard Gadd

In his 80s Campbell keeps writing the poetry. This little collection is a microcosm of his favoured themes: love, partings, humour (especially 'The Brigadier's Secret Weapon' about a drunken member of the Maori battalion), people he's known, observations on the living, memories. It's a varied collection, including a long poem on Parihaka, an elegy for Lauris Edmond, and a ramble about people he worked with in School Publications, as well as some crisp short lyrics. This is the contemporary, relaxed Campbell, still the perpetual Romantic,

spring surprises
with new pain,
poems wrung from

despair ...
(Fairy Tale)

though it's seen to better effect in other poems:

She whose limbs are waters letting
Lights through smiles to my kiss,
(The Question)

yet with a 21st century mind set:

No, I'm not
Tennyson and I don't want to understand you
as he wanted to understand his 'flower
in the crannied wall', 'root and all, and all
and all', because I'm not anxious to know
'what God and man is'. It's enough to lie
in the sun and enjoy it while it lasts.
(Shepherd's Purse)

Campbell retains his fondness for the rhymed stanza. But he's so competent it would be a curmudgeon who groaned at:

Now I am old my thoughts oppress me,
The girls no longer cry, 'Undress me.'
The good, the naughty, and a nun
Are shadows in the winter sun.
(Casanova)

But once again the poems that sparkle most are those of his childhood in the Cook Islands, and of Maori and Cook Islands legends. The collection opens with 'A Childhood in the Islands' and 'Cook Islands Rhapsodies:

and Atiu coming into view, small,
bush-clad, its two villages
clustered at the summit

...

I wanted silence,
to recall the feel of the place,
secretive, gloomy, guarded
by gigantic trees
(Darkness of Atiu)

and links to his past:

two young girls
on a flood-lit lawn dancing the hula

...

I thought of my father
and the effect my mother must have had
dancing the hula for him.
(Young Hula Dancers)

For me the best sequence was 'Utu, A Legend of Pukerua Bay' retold in contemporary colloquial speech:

Haunui's the name - Big Wind,
at your service. Caught them
at it, didn't I? my woman
and Weku, my best mate
(1 Haunui)

This is an enjoyable book, quintessentially Campbell. There's an air of the elegiac about it ... though we must hope that this is not at all a final collection:

This is my last poem.
It's out there on the beach
For the first high tide to turn,
And float it out of reach.

(Tidal)

A poet can survive everything but a misprint.

Oscar Wilde

Cold Snack, Janet Charman, Auckland University Press, 2007. \$25. ISBN 9781869403805

Keith Nunes

Respected Auckland poet Janet Charman's sixth book of poetry, *Cold Snack*, is an appealing and absorbing work.

The charming Charman approaches her poetry with zest and skill. She is not afraid to allow you into her life and thoughts and takes time out to show you she is contemplating her next move and arriving at imperfect answers to fathomless questions. She is relaxed with her art – no wonder, her first work was published in 1985 and she has continued to impress ever since.

This latest collection is laid out in three parts showing the reader – if you like – a three dimensional character. Each part is a singular look into her realm. Part one deals with the trials and tribulations of her new life as a school teacher; her daily routines and the emotions that she is sometimes saddled with. A trained nurse, she changed to teaching mid-life and this first section throws light onto what it means to take a gamble.

Part two is a one long poem-look at a part of New Zealand history (the 1980s) from the unusual and interesting standpoint of a TV newsroom's telephone receptionist. This is an often amusing and jaunty view of the underbelly of Kiwi life: "During the Springbok tour demonstrations/because I had to get to work/I could leave all the action before any arrestable offence/was asked of me/which was a huge relief." (*televisioner*)

Part three – arguably the most intimate and progressive of the three – is where Charman really lets her imagination go and it contains a number of powerful works including the poem which gives its name to the book – "a hint of blue/through the egg's white coat/runs golden on the plate/under foot the sodden turf/gulls above/in the weather/a winter palace/with spoke trees/and granite steps/i'll break a hip/one day/ascending these/in time/the hours come/in dark/in in." (*cold snack*) In *the sock of the self* she deals with loss: "I get up/unmasked/and dress/in my get ups/yet find/in the casual progress/of death/a piece of myself/unknit."

She is often subtle and understated and possesses a finely tuned sense of humour. Her imagery is tantalizing and can sweep you up with its momentum. In *fish and chips* she says: "Let me be old/and wear my bones/inside out/as if they/were journeying/somewhere/without/me."

Like a quality poet, in *Wake Up To Yourself* she conjures up two distinct images in quick succession and makes them work together: "Darkness/dispersing/the sky/fills/with/light/the heavy weight/of a hollow boat/leaves/my heart."

Cold Snack is a fine collection of works penned by one of NZ's leading poets. I enjoyed it immensely.

a long girl ago Johanna Aitchison, Victoria University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-86473-569-0

Dora Malech

Ed. note: this was Dora's introduction at the book's launch.

It is difficult to describe Johanna Aitchison's poems in *a long girl ago* without sounding like I'm describing Johanna herself. The poems are fearless. They aren't afraid to go fast, flex their muscles, or make some noise. They aren't afraid to wink and sparkle, to rip their stockings and break a nail. They aren't afraid to feel things. In the poem 'kick the thing you can', the reader finds herself "slipping on gloves/a plastic face protector" for a "black belt jump start/inside a glass fist/ripe with the possibility/of smash." Elsewhere she is "skating" and "singing" and "stretched across golden tacks." Everyday details are charged with their physicality – pulling the legs off a roast chicken, unscrewing a neck that may be the light bulb's and may be our own.

These are full-contact poems, poems in touch with their own vulnerability as they navigate the poet's

relationships with family members, with friends and lovers, with strangers and students and with herself. The language thrives on the friction between communication and miscommunication, exists in a space where every connection harbors a latent collision. Our language, our mind, our relationships are all that "glass fist."

In the book's middle section 'Japanese poems in English', there is certainly humor to be found in the stilted language, but there is also the sensation that all of us are, at times, lost in translation, struggling to communicate, unable to make ourselves understood even in our so-called native tongue. The tongue itself appears again and again throughout the collection, as does the heart. They don't appear simply as two-dimensional symbols of speech and emotion, they appear as physical entities, parts of our self become other, foreign, parts with which we must reckon, wrestle, and come to terms.

One of the gutsiest things that these poems do is ask to be heard. "Seagulls scream for a close-up," "Hey, look at me!" a voice says, "I know you!" it calls. Through the miscommunications, through the collisions, is a dynamic sense of communication and connection, a voice that demands our engagement. "It's me!" cries the voice in the poem "take it away, love." Johanna, it IS you. That's why we're listening.

Haiku NewZ

Nola Borrell

CONGRATULATIONS

- To **Andre Surridge** who won a Kyoto Museum for World Peace Award in the A-Bomb Memorial Haiku Contest (Japan).

- To **Sandra Simpson** who received an Honourable Mention for 3 haiku in the Chicago Cicada Contest.

- To **Barbara Strang** for a 2nd and 3rd in the Kusamakura Contest 2007.

To **Ernest J. Berry** for the following:

- 1st prize in the R. H. Blyth Award 2007.

- 3rd in the Portland Japanese Garden Haiku Contest 2007. His prize includes credit at a gift shop!

- 2nd= & 3rd= in Kukai 8.

COMPETITIONS AND SUBMISSIONS (See NZPS website for a more detailed list.)

January 31. Paper Wasp Jack Stamm Haiku Award. Cost: \$A12 (from NZ if paid in Australian currency) or \$US10 for each sheet of 3 haiku. Publication in a competition anthology (June). Cash prizes. Results in *paper wasp*, May 2008. Send to: paper wasp, 14 Fig Tree Pocket Road, Chapel Hill, Qld, 4069, Australia.

January 31. Anita Sadler Weiss Memorial Haiku Awards. Limit of 15 haiku. Cost: \$US1 per poem. Publication and cash prizes. Winners named in April. Send entries to: Haiku Poets of Central Maryland, c/o Elizabeth Fanto, 51 Gerard Avenue, Timonium, MD 21093 USA..

February 14. Pinewood Haiku Contest. Limit of 3 haiku. Cost: \$US2/poem or 3 poems for \$US5. Publication and cash prizes. Winners named in April. Send to: Wisteria, 2008 Pinewood Haiku Contest, PO Box 150932, Lufkin, Texas 75915.

February 14. The Betty Drevniok Award. Limit of 3 haiku. Cost: \$US5 (outside Canada) for up to 3 haiku. Winners announced in May. Publication for top 10 haiku, cash prizes. Send entries to The Betty Drevniok Award, c/o Ann Goldring, PO Box 97, 5 Cooks Drive, Leaskdale, Ontario, Canada L0C 1C0.

February 29. Ito En Oi Ocha New Haiku Contest. Limit of 6 haiku. Cost: Free. Email via the website. (Use Google.) Results in July. Publication, cash prizes, green tea products.

HAIKU ANTHOLOGY 2008

Thanks to the many poets who submitted haiku for consideration. The 4 selectors - **Ernest J Berry**, **Cyril Childs**, **Catherine Mair** and **Barbara Strang** - have sent in their recommendations. Now it's over to editors **Karen Butterworth** and **Nola Borrell**, and designer Briar Whitehead

HAIBUN TODAY

A new website edited by Jeffrey Woodward with **Patricia Prime** as Correspondent for New Zealand and Australia. Accepts both unpublished and published work Also has notes to haibun, book reviews and essays. The Editor indicates a very open definition of haibun. <http://haibuntoday.blogspot.com/>

JEANETTE STACE

Green Tea, a book of 'haiku and other poetry' by Jeanette Stace, was launched at 58 Cecil Road, Wadestown, Wellington on November 18. It was compiled by Jane Shallcrass, Jeanette's literary executor, in consultation with family members, and is beautifully designed by Hamish Thompson. It is a limited edition distributed mainly among family and friends.

Part of Jeanette's prize for an award in the 16th Ito En 'Oh-I, Ocha!' New Haiku Contest arrived after her death: Bottles of green tea with her haiku on them:

in the park
looking up at the tree
the same age as me

But! Try Unity Books, Wellington. Ph: 04 499 4245. You might be lucky. Jeanette's book was on the 'Poet du jour' stand on December 7.

PUBLICATIONS

Parts of the Moon - selected haiku & senryu 1988 - 2007 by **John O'Connor** (Post Pressed, Queensland, 40 pp). 120 haiku plus a short essay from this widely published Christchurch writer, a pioneer of NZ haiku.

from post to post morepork morepork

garage sale -
in the dressing-table mirror
a stranger's face

\$15 from Madras Cafe/Books, 165 Madras St., Christchurch; \$16 includes post.

A New Resonance 5 (2007), Red Moon Press (US) includes several pages by **Sandra Simpson** (Tauranga). It showcases 17 "emerging voices in haiku" from around the English-speaking world. Beautifully presented. Cost: \$25 (incl p&p).

tangi-
outside the wharenuī
kids mixing shoes

Order from: Sandra, 82 Grace Rd, Tauranga 3112. Inquiries by email: nzhaiku@gmail.com

Stepping Stones by Janice Bostok (Australia) contains prose, poems and a couple of haiku and has been loosely termed an "extended haibun". Cost: \$A15 + p&p. Order from: *Post Pressed*, 324/50 Macquarie St., Teneriffe, Qld, 4005. Email: wk@powerup.com.au

The Haiku Calendar 2008. \$US17. Also: *Stepping Stones: A way into haiku* by Martin Lucas. (Correct title!) 388 haiku by 71 poets. \$US30 + \$4 postage. Both available from: Snapshot Press, PO Box 132, Waterloo, Liverpool, L22 8WZ, UK Or order via: salessnapshotpress.co.uk

HAIKU AOTEAROA 2008

Barbara Strang

Haiku Aotearoa 2008, a conference for writers of haiku and related forms, takes place at Bishop Julius Hostel, 90 Waimairi Road, Christchurch, the weekend of 18-20th April, 2008. We are finalising a programme to appeal to beginners and experts, which will enable us to learn, mingle and celebrate together. Highlights include Richard von Sturmer's Tanka Film presentation and the launch of the third New Zealand Haiku Anthology.

The venue is a modern student hostel, with gardens and a park adjacent, and close to Christchurch Airport. There will be a choice of living in or attending during the day for some or all of the conference. Price for the conference is \$90, or \$22 for a half day session, and full board at Bishop Julius will cost \$201.

For the brochure and enrolment form containing full details please email: Barbara Strang at: haikunz08@gmail.com Alternatively you can secure a place by sending \$100 deposit to Judith Walsh, 44 Bentley St, Christchurch 8042, before 31st Jan, 2008. Places are limited so don't delay. Cheques to be made out to Small White Teapot Group. Conference website: <http://www.haiku2008.com/>

REVIEW

Spinifex Beverley George, Pardalote Press, Australia ISBN 0 9578436090 RRP \$18.50

Margaret Bradstock

As a mainstream poet, not a practitioner of haiku, I faced the prospect of this review with some trepidation, that I would not be able to do *Spinifex* justice. However, the distillation of words and experience that is the essence of haiku and is common to all poets in differing degrees provides the necessary connection.

Beverley George is a multi award-winner for her haiku, both nationally and internationally, and “the foremost champion of haiku, tanka and haibun in Australia and New Zealand” (Patricia Prime, *Simply Haiku*). As President of HaikuOz, George is a traditionalist, and the form and style of her writing “is current international best practice for haiku-in-English” (John Bird, Preface, *Spinifex*).

Her haiku celebrate the natural world and, in particular, an Australian landscape:

cracking earth -
a cow bellows
from the sale yard

magpie warble -
the stream bubbles
between stones

Interestingly, while *spinifex* features on the book’s cover, and as a recurring motif on each ensuing page, the word itself is not mentioned in the haiku. In a recent review, Vanessa Proctor has said, “like the strands of the *spinifex*, the haiku are bold and strong, presenting the reader with potent imagery” (*Five Bells*). As with the haiku themselves, it is perhaps what is unstated that is of paramount importance.

A *kigo* is a season word, and many of these poems feature a *kigo*, establishing the scene and a seasonal mood:

sweltering heat -
shouting *the same to you*
to a crow

sultry night -
the smell of jasmine
and old oranges

autumn chill -
a rusted hull noses
into mangroves

Haiku sequences, or linked haiku, provide a progression from the single haiku in the direction of extended lyrical form. ‘Scorched Garden’ thus gives us, in miniature detail, the “bushfire aftermath”, concluding with:

leafless stem -
I prune above
a green bud

‘Village Hall, April 25 2006’ and ‘The Bucketts Way’ belong to the Australian outback, creating scenarios and suggesting the emotional reactions of the nameless protagonists. A sense of nostalgia overlays these sequences, in part as a response to the autumnal setting and association with endings:

sudden chill
a swirl of fallen leaves
among the wreaths

Proctor has suggested that the further sequences, ‘Saihoji Temple’ and ‘White Pebbles’, “while successful works in their own right, transport us to Japanese settings which seem at odds with the Australian theme of *Spinifex*.” I’m inclined to disagree, as these two sequences recalled for me the provenance of haiku, a spirit which is sustained in the Australian variations. And I’d suggest that ‘White Pebbles’ might well refer to the Japanese Gardens in Australia, an oasis of peace and contentment:

under the curved bridge
the roll and tumble
of bright koi

Occasional haiku, striking in their capture of the poetic moment, include a number describing water (another feature of the book's cover):

tidal pool
a white-faced heron
stirs the weed

light rain
a spoonbill strides
across the lagoon

twilight -
a yellow canoe
drifts across the bay

Spinifex provides us with many haunting images of ephemerality and, paradoxically, continuity and permanence. This, despite an overwhelming sentiment of transience and loss. Haiku such as :

autumn chill -
a rusted hull noses
into mangroves

mist-shrouded river -
the faint line
of oyster beds

grey sky
a pelican tilts its wing
into the light

remind us of the fleeting nature of experience and of our mortality. Yet the natural world endures, and is self-perpetuating:

old forest -
a winged seed spirals
through warm air

As John Bird states in the Preface, "*Spinifex* assumes the status, albeit unsought, of a benchmark in Australian haiku", thereby serving "as an exemplar for the novice haiku writer" as well as succeeding in its own right. Haiku connoisseurs and mainstream poetry readers alike will welcome these small epiphanies.

KiwiHaiku

a summer guest
brings plums
each in Gladwrap
Suzanne Vaassen

earthquake -
jammed in the doorway
the whole family
Karen Peterson Butterworth

Please send your KiwiHaiku submissions to Richard von Sturmer, 18 Crocus Place, Remuera, Auckland 1050. Email address: rvonsturmer@yahoo.com The next issue of *a fine line* will be Richard's last as selector.

Tanka Moments

how many times
have I sat by the ocean
watched the tide's cycle
over rocks
before and after our love?

when you come home
to the house that is no longer mine
I'm writing a poem
on the verandah
for our son

Owen Bullock

Catherine Mair has kindly agreed to succeed Bernie Gadd in selecting Tanka Moments. Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka, even if you've never tried one before. Please send your submissions to: C Mair, PO Box 62, Katikati, Bay of Plenty 3166 or email c.mair@clear.net.nz "The essence of classical tanka was 'aware', a feeling evoked by things which are transient, finding beauty in fleeting existence." (Hisashi Nakamura).

Mini Competition

The Homeopath's Journey

He walks into the desert without a hat
but the sun having experience knows that
evaporation from a body will feed the air
and later some little cloud hovering where
his bleached bones lay on the map below
remembers its birth where it started to grow
and returns a potion by way of a shower
enough to propagate a single flower.

Congratulations to **Eric Dodson**, Tauranga, for submitting the winning poem, paying homage to both rhyme and rhythm. Bryan James' *E. Mervyn Taylor* (Steele Roberts, 2006) is on its way to you.

Next issue's competition poem will be a pantoum on the subject of 'Friendship'. The prize is Harvey McQueen's *the earth's deep breathing – garden poems by New Zealand poets*, courtesy of Random House. Please post to: Mini Competition, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145, to arrive by February 7th. The winning poem will be published in the March issue. For how to write a pantoum, see: www.absolutewrite.com/specialty_writing/pantoum.htm

Talk Poem

Pat White

Let Evening Come

by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through the chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned

in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

We go through stages in life and among friends roughly my age at the moment they may have just lost a parent or parents; alternatively parents are aged and soon to die. We have collectively entered the 'zone', the age for that particular passage. Only to be avoided by one's own premature demise it seems. Titles come to mind of poets who have used this stage as a work site; Dylan Thomas' 'Do not go gentle into that good night', Peter Hooper's 'Huia Villa', and so many more.

The next step is facing our own mortality, and it is a brave poet who works where the shadows lengthen. In 1995 poet Jane Kenyon, aged 47, had already had a brush with cancer. Her husband Donald Hall, also a poet, had been through two major cancer operations. His cancer had metastasized as liver cancer, so he lost pieces of his liver as he described it, "to the wolves following his sled". In the presence of that collective shadow, after a lifetime dogged by her own clinical depression, Jane Kenyon managed to write what I consider to be one of the great poems of acceptance.

She believes, as she told Bill Moyers in a 1995 interview, the poem was a gift from the Holy Ghost. I admit to having difficulty with that concept, not having her straight-forward Methodist 'Sunday morning at church' faith. But I do see the poem as reward for courage in letting the mind travel into the shadowed corners of fear, of being human in the face of an uncertain future. 'Let Evening Come' turns acceptance away from the passive, into something positive, an experience to be grasped for what it can teach. Kenyon doesn't just have faith, she breathes it. She wants to take part fully, in what is on offer. She grew up in a rural area, and writing of the natural world is an obvious place for her language, familiar and comfortable as an old jersey would be. By referencing the rural, cycles of life are inferred - day and night, the seasons, the comings and goings of life around us, and our own lives.

There are subtle technical skills at use; the layering of items that evoke a specific situation, the measured repetition of "let evening come". Lines go with the breath, phrases hang on the impetus needed to read through the end of the line, to finish the phrase or sentence. "Let the shed/go black inside". These short, seemingly simple sentences accumulate a sense of loss, a rising intensity. There is loss; "the hoe abandoned/in long grass", and neglect, "the bottle in the ditch ..." but always balanced by the presence of ongoing chores, the multitude of tasks that keep a farming wife's way of life functional; "the scoop/ is in the oats, the woman takes up her needles/ and her yarn". Individuals may pass on, yet the necessity of continuity ensures the daily round will be picked up by others in their turn. The fox is still out there, very much alive and going about her business. Life will go on.

This is also a poem without irony. It deals in plain speaking, and tells how things are. There is no throw away line. Close observation, carefully gathered detail, allow balance, a being present in the moment. The poem reads like a chat over morning coffee with an old acquaintance, someone who knows too much to be just a friend. Maybe that is what death had become for Kenyon by this stage? There is no self pity in this poem, and a removal of the 'I' (from its demanding sentimentality and egotism), allows lines to claim intimacy without intrusion. The reader can let their own needs settle among these words. There is something quiet but wholesome going on here, where life means something. One gets the sense that Kenyon has reached somewhere that each breath can be seen as a gift in its own right; "to air in the lung/let evening come".

If 'Let Evening Come' resonates, then another Kenyon poem may be worth spending time with. 'Otherwise' is mining the same lode in a similar understated fashion. What was she familiar with, that others of us may still be waiting to learn? Jane Kenyon died before her husband in 1996. Before another twelve months had passed after the Bill Moyers interview in 1995, she was dead from leukemia. Donald Hall, by his own estimate against the odds, lives on and continues to write.

MEMBERS' POEMS

Watch it

in the bush
terrorism
squads drilling with rifles,
napalm, *haangi* stones

could be

gardeners among the peppers
estimating the combustive force
of mulch

might be

*dear fellow citizens
we can't give facts
of those remanded in cells ...
it's privacy and security, you see,
but be assured you are safely
on our surveillance cams*

Bernard Gadd

The Quickest Thing

There was this one time, we were all jumping
off the William Pettie Bridge.
That's the one, goes over at the Waimata River.
Yeah. That one.
There was this kid with us and his name was Elvis,
cos his grandparents were into Elvis
in a big way, way back when.
And that Elvis - our one -
he got up on the railing all sweet,
and sure, he'd done the river jump before,
and he knew to swing out fast with his feet -
to the deep bit - so you don't break your neck
if you smackdown in the mud.
But this one time?
Elvis slipped.
He flicked himself out to the river and -

the quickest thing

- his head snapped back like
it wanted to kiss metal, like it was magnetic,
and he hit it on the railing, glinting silver,
and what we heard was him whacking the river,
weighty, like a load of wet washing.
Yeah.
We all ended up going to that funeral.

Kathy McVey

Finding My Way

Footsteps echo through my corridor
The open tunnel to my mind

And somewhere a bird sings

The rain drumming its fingernails on my roof
Dances in time with the fan of my air conditioning
One sound difficult to separate from the other
Filling my silent house with noise

The trees loom blackly outside my window
And somewhere a bird sings

The sky still light with early darkness
Yet dimmed since last I looked
Hangs glumly
As the rain falls through its open fingers

The footsteps turn to gumboot splashes
The bird no longer sings
Too dark perhaps to read the words
Beneath a leaf umbrella

The sky now black has drawn in close
And rests against my window

While here I sit in emptiness
Picking up the breadcrumbs
Dropped by scattered thought
Leading to the forest of a poem
That scratches at my arms
Until I reach the clearing

Wondering where the time went
And how I found the pathway once again

Jill Steadman

Vineyard in Spring

green fringe
teased out
on tensioned wires

womb of wine
embryos
of reds and whites

Bett Angel-Stawarz

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