



a fine line

January 2009

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Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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FEBRUARY MEETING

Kate Camp

Monday 16 February, 7.30pm
The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington
Meeting begins with Open Mic.

MARCH MEETING

Richard Langston

Monday 16 March, 7.30pm
The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington
Meeting begins with Open Mic.

SONNET EVENING

Wellington Sonnet Competition 2008

Monday 30 March, 7.30pm
The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington
The Wellington Writers' Walk Trust, in conjunction with the NZPS, brings you the winners;
other entrants may read in open mic.

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From The National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

No doubt you've noticed there isn't a Feature Article this month. This is mainly because I have a lot more to say than usual, but also because in the lead-up to the anthology publication and launch I just ran out of oomph and didn't commission one.

My most pressing issue at the moment is the declining of our grant application by Creative New Zealand for the 2009-2010 financial year. The good news is that the Society will not need immediately to close down. In view of the reduced grant we were awarded for the current financial year, the committee had already discussed, and the membership voted for, an increase in the sub fees.

This is always a sticky question. Some of our members (the minority, to be sure) think our subs are way too low, and we should be asking for more. Others, that we should have a reduced sub for unwaged members, which many of you are. I like to think we've struck a balance: it's still affordable for those on limited incomes, as well as those with multiple subs to cover (eg members of the NZ Society of Authors, whose sub has also just been raised); yet we receive enough income to cover our basic operating costs.

And therein lies the dilemma. The subs will cover the tangible costs of printing and distribution of the magazine, the honorarium for our Treasurer (a service that has been out-sourced since the defrauding of the Society by a volunteer Treasurer some years back), secretarial consumables, and auditing, as well as covering the biannual Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Distinguished Contribution to Poetry, due for presentation in 2009. We could even still be able to pay guest poets so we can continue to have regular monthly poetry readings and open mics, open to everyone, including prospective new members.

What the subs will not cover is a living income for someone (ie, me) to carry out all the Society's activities, including the work that goes into producing the magazine (print and electronic versions), answering emails, keeping the website up-to-date and informative, monitoring and maintaining membership details, complying with Incorporated Society rules and regulations, supervising the production, distribution and launching of the anthology, liaising with the Treasurer and checking her work each month, writing quarterly reports to the committee, keeping records of committee decisions, applying for funding and ensuring the Poetry Society is represented in literary networks and has a presence in the arts culture of New Zealand. (I haven't included the running of the Competition in this list, as it pays for itself on a separate contract to the National Coordinator, and is therefore extra work.)

I really want to keep this job. I'm totally committed to building the NZ Poetry Society into the national organisation that specifically benefits poets and poetry, a function to which no other NZ organisation can lay claim. More selfishly, I love both what I do and the work/life balance it gives me, whereby I can stay at home to work, spend time with my animals, share my family's interests and keep up my own writing (not always in that order). I don't even mind that it doesn't pay very well (\$10,000 before tax this year). But it needs to pay me something, or I will have to get a 'real' job (ie one that makes

sense financially but without the same level of personal satisfaction).

The committee has met to discuss the situation, and has come up with some good fundraising ideas. Some of them mean more work for me, which isn't a thrill, but others are readily do-able. The 2008 Editor of our magazine, Joanna Preston, has generously donated a significant proportion of her editor's fee back to the Society, and our generous and very much involved Patron, Dame Fiona Kidman, has offered a further donation to support the fundraising efforts. I humbly request that you consider doing likewise, as your means allow. As we are a Registered Charity I can provide an official receipt for the purpose of claiming a tax deduction for your donation.

As well, I have met with a Creative New Zealand Advisor, to look at how best to apply for funds in the next funding round in February, and have learned much about how to present our case, and what help I can get with the process.

In the meantime, it's business as usual, as the budget allows me to work at least until the end of the financial year in March 2009. That said, I have been accepted for entry into the Iowa summer poetry course run by the International Institute of Modern Letters (at Victoria University – I don't get a trip to Iowa, sadly) and the committee has kindly approved leave to enable me to immerse myself in poetry for the duration of the course. It will be my first break since I started work in September 2006.

This issue of *a fine line* is coming to you before the holiday period, containing more reviews than usual, to keep you going over the break and to tempt you to spend your Christmas book vouchers. I'm grateful to our dedicated panel of reviewers, who answered the call and got their copy to me in a much shorter than usual time frame.

Many festive wishes to you all, and I look forward to hearing from you through emails and poetry submissions in the new year.

About our Contributors

Jenny Argante is a member of the *Bravado* Editorial Collective and of Tauranga Writers.

Jenny Clay is an Auckland-based poet, who was challenged by a year at Whitireia Community Polytechnic to make her poetry interests public.

Nancy Loader lives in Christchurch and finds reading poetry easier than writing it.

Harvey Molloy is a Wellington poet who recently published his first collection, *Moonshot*.

Margaret Vos is a Wellington poet and editor, currently engaged in full-time parenting.

A Warm Welcome to:

Ann Beard Pukekohe

Laura Close Nelson

Meg Davies Hamilton

Catherine Fitchett Christchurch

Jane Griffin Auckland

Monique Le Roux North Shore City

Robynanne Milford Christchurch

Letter to The NZ Poetry Society

I am sorry I can't make a personal approach to thank you for the extraordinary job you have done for New Zealand through the Arts. It has been a privilege to be the Associate Minister of Arts and to work with such passionate and dedicated people.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Hon Judith Tizard MP (*Auckland Central*)

Congratulations

Joanna Preston has won the inaugural Kathleen Grattan Award, judged by Fleur Adcock, for her collection of poetry *The Summer King*. Joanna will receive \$16,000 and have her book published by Otago University Press.

Ginny Sullivan won the Indigo Dreams Press (UK) poetry competition in August 2008, with 'The Long Goodbye'. Great going, Ginny - it's good to see NZPS members making their mark internationally.

Emily Adlam and **Pat White** were finalists in the Manhire Prize for Creative Science Writing. Emily's story, 'Five', in the Fiction section, and Pat's work, 'The New Dam; Story of an Intervention', in the Non-fiction section.

Laurice Gilbert (cheesy grin) had her poem 'Island Bay' selected as the Dominion Post Wednesday Poem on 26 November. The poem was first published in *JAAM 26*, ed **Tim Jones**. Thanks to Tim and **Rosemary Wildblood** for telling me.

Publications

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since the last issue

JAAM 26 ed by **Tim Jones** (JAAM Collective, 2008) An awesome issue, not least because it contains 2 poems by yours truly, but also work from NZPS members: **Anne Harré**, **Barbara Strang**, **David Gregory**, **Eric Dodson**, **Harvey Molloy**, **Helen Lowe** (poetry and prose), **Janis Freegard**, **Jenny Powell**, **Jo Thorpe**, **John O'Connor**, **Keith Westwater**, **Kerry Popplewell**, **Robin Fry**, **Sue Reidy** and **Sugu Pillay**.

Moonshot by **Harvey Molloy**, (Steele Roberts, 2008) is Harvey's first collection, against a background of poems published in *NZ Listener*, *JAAM* and *Takahe*. Harvey won the Open Section of the NZPS international poetry competition in 2004.

Before the Sirocco ed by **Joanna Preston** (NZPS, 2008) RRP \$25; \$22 to NZPS members. Let me remind you what a superb book this is, and what a great Christmas present it makes: The 2008 NZPS anthology collects the best poems and haiku from the thousands entered into this year's annual international poetry competition. Poems about love and loss, about impending disaster, about tragedies public and private. From elegies to acrostics, villanelles to vers libre. Cats, hats, sparrows and winos, moon landings, sons, and seaside musings. See for yourself what 123 poets from eight countries have made of the world we live in today. It's selling quickly, and will be out of print once the remaining copies (fewer than 50) are sold.

Noticeboard

For a complete list of regional events, and to find the poetry meeting in your town, please go to our website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz

THE BLACK DOG

"I am writing a book about depression - something that often manifests in writers. I would very much appreciate the chance to interview or hear from fellow writers who have also suffered from this condition. I understand this is a sensitive and personal issue and will respect your wish to remain anonymous if this is something you would prefer. I am looking at issues such as attempted suicide, medications, use of alcohol or other drugs to deal with the problem, psychotherapy, and the relationship between depression and writing. If you are a writer who has suffered from depression, I would appreciate your input. Please contact me on (09) 820-0672 or email: michael.morrissey@pl.net."

POETS WANTED

If any poet will be visiting Christchurch from mid-March to end April, and would like to take part in the Canterbury Poets Collective autumn series of readings, please contact Judith Walsh at: njw@clear.net.nz

UPDATE – FROGPOND EDITORS' VISIT TO NZ

Thursday 5th February 2009, 1 pm. George Swede, well known North American haiku poet, and editor of the Haiku Society of America's journal *Frogpond*, will be visiting New Zealand with his wife Anita Krumins, *Frogpond's* Assistant Editor. Wellington's Windrift Haiku Group is hosting them at their February meeting. Most of the meeting will take the form of a question and answer forum with George and Anita. Windrift invites any interested NZPS members to join them at the meeting. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Karen or Nola by **24th January**, to find out the venue. Karen Butterworth, 29 Kirk St Otaki 5512, ph 06 364 5810 karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz Nola Borrell, 177A Miromiro Rd., Normandale, Lower Hutt. Ph: 04 586 7287 nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz

The visitors' full NZ itinerary, which includes Auckland, Katikati, Tauranga, Wellington, Picton and Christchurch, is available from Ernie Berry: 03 5737774; bluberry@xtra.co.nz

VERSE IN OUR EAR

On the subject of poetry readings, Bill Manhire writes, "One of the pleasures of hearing poets read their work is a sense of intimacy that isn't always there on the page – we are let into secrets of tone and feeling that the page can't easily divulge. Equally, on the page poems can go far too fast: the eye speeds up and summarises. The ear, however can only hear words at the rate which the voice releases them: so when we listen to poems there is a strange kind of narrative excitement as well as music." (*IIML e-newsletter*)

Workshops & Residencies

Courses at Otago School of Media:

Certificate in Creative Writing 2009 This 34 week part-time programme runs from Feb. to Nov. and is for those who wish to develop their skills in creative writing. Course content is broad-based, covering fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction. Emphasis is on peer and tutor feedback on workshops and set exercises in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. A comprehensive workbook is provided covering all aspects of the craft. Well-known professional writers evaluate two of the four writing assignments. Current writing can be incorporated into assignment work. This course involves 300 hours of face-to-face teaching and will be taught primarily on two mornings a week.

Certificate in Creative Writing for Publication 2009 This workshop-based programme allows students to apply the professional tools required to plan, develop, and critically reflect on a major writing project (i.e. a novel, collection of short stories, poems, or a memoir) which will allow them to complete a body of work to a publishable standard. Entrance into this course is based on having passed the Certificate in Creative Writing, or having a body of published writing. This course involves 120 hours of face-to-face teaching and will be taught primarily on one afternoon a week. Course co-ordinator and tutor is Diane Brown, poet, novelist and memoirist. 0800 DUNEDIN PHONE (03) 471 7628 FAX: (03) 471 7629 Email: studydunedin@aoraki.ac.nz or diane@b@aoraki.ac.nz Website: <http://www.aoraki.ac.nz>

The Kingi McKinnon Scholarship for Emerging Writers. Applications close: 18 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. The Certificate programme begins 23rd February 2009 and ends early December.

Entry criteria for applicants are as follows: Unpublished* writer; No age limit, but you must be a New Zealand Citizen or Permanent Resident; Teaching is online, so you must have reliable access to a computer and internet connection; Submit two pieces of writing up to 500 words in any two of the following genre: short story, poetry, review, comment, or essay. Then include a statement of 300 words max. on why you should be the recipient; Work must be your original work, and you must apply personally; If you're under 18, attach signed parental/guardian approval attached to your application; You must not be currently employed in a field directly connected with fiction or non-fiction writing; The successful applicant will be advised by 1st February 2009, and will be expected to complete course work

on time and pass all courses, and to acknowledge the Scholarship in their future CV. For info. & application form, contact Denize Coker, Waiariki IT, ph 0800 Waiariki or e-mail:

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 the application form.

Competitions & Submissions

A substantial list of competitions & submissions is available in the Members Only section of our website.

Best New Zealand Poems, 2008. Closing date: 22 December Editor: James Brown. Poems need to have been published in the 2008 calendar year, and may have appeared in books, journals or online publications (editions of selected poems will not be considered). We recommend that writers check with their publisher before sending books in, to avoid double-ups. Work should be addressed to: BNZP Editor, c/- International Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington.

Landfall 217 - Call for Submissions. Deadline: 10 January Flung: The Expatriate Issue, edited by Paula Morris. *Landfall 217* explores the creative work New Zealand writers and artists are producing in or about other places, as well as the ways travelling and living elsewhere informs our work when (and if) we return home. Send fiction, poetry, personal essays, and other non-fiction as Word documents to pjkmorris@gmail.com. Write the words LANDFALL SUBMISSION in the subject line. Please include relevant personal information in the e-mail, and complete contact details. Other correspondence and art portfolios to: Landfall, Otago University Press, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Snorkel #9 – Call for Submissions. Closing date: 15 February Submissions to *Snorkel* are by email. Only previously unpublished work is considered. Send up to 5 poems and/or 2 prose pieces as attachments in either Microsoft Word or RTF, or as text included in the body of the email, to snorkel@snorkel.org.au. Please allow 8 weeks from the closing date for notification of acceptance or rejection. *Snorkel* is unable to offer payment for submissions, or engage in correspondence regarding individual submissions. For accepted work, copyright reverts to the author upon publication.

Website: <http://snorkel.org.au/008/>

a fine line - Call for Submissions. Deadline: 20 February. The editor welcomes your contributions. We currently pay a small fee for Feature Articles, book reviews, and Talk Poems. See publication guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines> We also welcome submissions of poems from members, though there is currently no payment available for these. For that reason, we do not insist on First Publishing Rights. However, if you submit a previously published poem, please advise so that correct attribution of the original publication details can be made.

Wily Publications – Call for Submissions. Submissions must be received by 28 February.

Poetry and short prose (up to 2000 words) for an anthology featuring writings about Canterbury, New Zealand - coast, plains and high country. Fiction and non-fiction, current and historical works are welcomed, but copyright must be held by the person submitting the work. Work may be previously published, but not anthologised.

Submissions must be typed, double spaced (poetry may be single spaced), on one side of A4. Please ensure that name, postal and email addresses are included, a statement of ownership of copyright, as well as a stamped self-addressed envelope (for notification and payment, if applicable). Submissions will not be returned, and unaccepted work will be destroyed. Please send submissions to: Canterbury Anthology, 37A Holly Road, Christchurch 8014. The anthology will be edited by **Karen Zelas**, a writer of poetry and fiction and Fiction Editor of *Takahe*.

upstreet **Call for Submissions (USA)** Postmark Deadline: 1 March *upstreet*, an independent literary annual, is seeking quality submissions - with an edge - of short fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, for its fifth issue. Payment is in author copies. For sample content and to submit, [visit http://www.upstreet-mag.org](http://www.upstreet-mag.org). For news about *upstreet* and its authors, visit <http://www.upstreetfanclub.blogspot.com/>

The Electronic Poetry Network (USA) – Call for Submissions. No specific deadline. If you wish to have your poems considered for The Electronic Poetry Network, please send 5-10 short poems (no longer than about 50 words each) to ccolon@shreve-lib.org The poems do not need to be haiku. They just need to be short and suitable for the general public. Previously published poems are acceptable. The poetry on the EPN is displayed all day or all weekend long on an electronic message board, which is located on the first floor of the Main Branch of Shreve Memorial Library, Shreveport, Louisiana. They also post the poems on their web site: <http://www.shreve-lib.org/images/Poem.htm> The site features a week's worth of poems. In addition, the "Poem of the Day" is e-mailed to poetry lovers in the 20-branch library system. <http://www.shreve-lib.org/poemofday.htm>

Surfing the Web

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz> A gentle reminder that our own website is packed with information on local events and opportunities, which are updated daily (Monday to Friday) by your dedicated National Coordinator. The Members' section has archived magazines, additional competition and submission listings not available in the public pages, and Society records such as the Constitution, Minutes of the AGM, and the annual budget.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5347993997> This is the Facebook home page of the Oxford University Poetry Society. No doubt there are others (thanks to Linzy Forbes for bringing this one to my attention). We'll have one of our own soon.

<http://www.webook.com/> Another online self-publishing site, with a difference. Members can work on their publishing project on the site, workshopping the writing, receiving feedback as they go, and even collaborating with other writers if they want to, then move the book into the site shop.

<http://newzealandpoetryforum.yuku.com/directory> A little-used (so far) poetry posting forum just for NZ poets. Interesting challenge: post a poem a day for as long as you can keep it up.

Regional Reports

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

NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE NZPS, WELLINGTON

Tim Jones

The November 2008 meeting of the New Zealand Poetry Society was the first to be held in the new premises that we'll be using for all our Wellington meetings in 2009: an upstairs meeting room at the Thistle Inn.

The Thistle Inn is Wellington's oldest pub, dating from 1845. It used to be on the waterfront, and in its earliest days, Te Rauparaha was recorded to have popped in by sea for a drink. Now it has answered the Poetry Society's prayers, and rewarded Laurice Gilbert's tireless efforts, by becoming the new regular venue for our monthly meetings.

It's perfectly placed for the job, as it's located on the corner of Kate Sheppard Place and Mulgrave St, about two minutes from Wellington Railway Station and the bus depot. (It's not to be confused with Thistle Hall, in Te Aro, where we met earlier this year.) Our meetings are upstairs, but many of the 25 people who attended took advantage of the opportunity to buy drinks and/or a meal at the bar downstairs and bring them to the meeting room. Turnout at Poetry Society meetings has been increasing during 2008, and this turnout bodes well for 2009.

The meeting started, as usual, with an open reading session. The open readers included **Harvey Molloy, Alan Wells, Nola Borrell, Robin Fry, Saradha Koirala, Janis Freegard**, Isle Park, and **Lora Mountjoy**. Isle runs a poetry programme on Access Radio — if you're interested in being involved in this, National Coordinator Laurice Gilbert has Isle's contact details.

After a short break, that mysterious body, 'The Academy', revealed itself to the world. 'The Academy' consists of five poets: **Laurice Gilbert, Anne Harré, Gillian Cameron, Margaret Vos, and Sugu Pillay**. Each Academician (not a name they call themselves, as far as I'm aware) read for about five minutes, and I enjoyed hearing each member's work. Some of the poems read had recently appeared in issue 26 of *JAAM* magazine, which I guest-edited, so hearing these live was especially enjoyable for me.

All in all, this meeting, coming as it did a couple of weeks after the well-attended launch of the 2008 NZPS Anthology *Before the Sirocco*, was a good way to finish 2008 and a pointer to a successful 2009.

WINDRIFT, WELLINGTON

Correction and Apology

The report for Windrift (*a fine line*, November '08) stated that Irene Ruth had contributed the haiku -

southerly change -
don't shatter with each breath
my mid-winter dreaming

- when it was actually penned by Penny Pruden - and of course only Penny could pen a Wellington southerly.

WINDRIFT — OCTOBER MEETING

Nola Borrell

This workshop was particularly non-conformist. We wrote to three themes: open, spring, and silence/noise and produced: 2- and 4-liners, free syllabary, and puns (even Nola Borrell this time). Neil Whitehead submitted a slip blank on both sides - his take on zen 'silence'? Bevan Greenslade offered a musical whole bar rest in his 'silence' (shades of John Cage). And the heaped plate of well-risen muffins provided by host Kerry Popplewell prompted a new collective noun — "a popple of muffins".

We discussed whether and when work from our workshops should be reported to, and so perhaps published in, *a fine line*, because at that point it is legally 'published'. We agreed that the 'reporter' could use any haiku presented in the group "unless the writer specifically withdrew the work as 'not for publication' ". The workshoping practice is reflected in several of the following haiku.

Open theme:

Trapped rat
Saddleback sings
Neil Whitehead

baby sparrows
nestling in line
in corrugations of the roof
Sally Holmes

Spring:

the colour of spring
wattle kowhai lucerne
even gorse blossoms defiantly
Penny Pruden

- Thought to be a good poem, but not yet a haiku.

Silence / Noise:

autumn
the altered colour
of thought
Ernie Berry

- An outstanding, profound haiku; best of the day; most were envious.

never the two:
the sea -
and silence
Kerry Popplewell

The group workshopped:

birdsong ring tone:
a grey warbler answers
the cell phone
Karen Butterworth

into simply:

birdsong ring tone
a grey warbler answers

Contact: Nola Borrell. Ph: 04 586 7287. Email: nolaborrell@extra.co.nz

You've got to love libraries. You've got to love books. You've got to love poetry. You've got to love everything about literature. Then, you can pick the one thing you love most and write about it.

Ray Bradbury

Reviews

The Rocky Shore Jenny Bornholdt (VUP, 2008)

RRP \$25 ISBN 9780864735805

Margaret Vos

First, let me confess that I've been a Jenny Bornholdt fan since a friend gave me *Miss New Zealand*. I immediately felt a connection with, and an ease about, Bornholdt's work, and it was apparent why she is a well-regarded poet.

Second, let me complain that the cover design and font of her new collection *The Rocky Shore* does a disservice to the collection. The ocean-themed fabric-look cover and needlepoint font went beyond domesticity into chintz. I see the connection with her "domestic" themes, but it devalues her work by tethering her to home and family when her poems go well beyond these themes.

Third, let me commend the content. Once again, her work speaks to me as both a poet and a person.

Six poems comprise the collection; they connect and resonate with each other across the six years that they were written, although I doubt they neatly sum up one year each. Autobiographical in nature, the poems reveal Bornholdt's approach to poetry, family, and daily life. It seems an honest glimpse into how a poet finds or receives inspiration, converts observations into poetry, and still manages a complex if ordinary family life.

The Rocky Shore made me think about how you select – and alter – which memories (and skeletons) to share with others, and how to determine what is fitting for a poem. She is able to be personal without being confessional (in spite of the first poem's title). Bornholdt questions "what is poetry?" throughout the collection, in poems like 'Fitter Turner':

...At this point I remember someone commenting on an earlier poem of mine, which resembles this one, saying some people might think it's not poetry. Well ...

Later, in 'Big Minty Nose' (read the notes at the end of the book), she aptly and ably advocates the source of her work, her life, and her poetry:

... I think the garden
Is as much poem as this poem is. And the washing and the coffee
are also poem. The men next door with hammers and
saws, they have become poem, along with
the steps and the stick insects - one red, one green-
stuck to the shed window, looking in.

In fact those lines describe up a good poet's existence as well as the sphere of Bornholdt's poetry (think Emily Dickinson). She elevates the mundane into poetry and reminds me that inspiration is found where you look for it. She merges the questions "what is poetry" with "what is garden" and "what is life" – big themes that cross geographic, social, and gender boundaries.

One feature I did not enjoy was the two-line stanza structure of most of her poems. I felt this was too artificial, and it didn't add to the meaning or rhythm of the work for me. Perhaps it was meant to create borders and enforce consideration of her words? Yet I found myself reading past the structure.

Finally, I wonder why she didn't select her garden as a title and the basis for a cover design. Her garden provide a unifying motif and theme, and makes a better metaphor for her life and her poetry, certainly in the context of this collection.

The best poets are ones you can grow with, and with *The Rocky Shore* Bornholdt will continue to be a New Zealand favourite. I look forward to seeing where her garden leads her next.

Spark Emma Neale (Steele Roberts, 2008), 78 pp ISBN 978-1-877448-19-5 RRP \$24.99
Jenny Clay

Emma Neale has written four novels, and *Spark* is her third book of poetry. She recently edited a collection of poems on parenthood, *Swings and Roundabouts*, and in her introduction to this she said the biggest adjustments in her life were to her father's death, and to becoming a parent.

Spark consists of two parts. The poems in Part 1, also called 'Spark', follow Neale's transition into parenthood, the development of her child, and interactions with her son, Abe. The collection starts with 'Real pregnancy tales' of twenty-four women – "Mary could only eat jet planes jubes and aniseed balls for three whole months", and: "Trudy just had to clean around all the tap rims with sewing needles". It moves on to poems such as 'Broken nights' and 'And are you still writing?' where the author is trying to form "small, tight-skinned" poems "in the spaces in between" soothing, feeding, and changing the baby. In the 'Fourth trimester', the first three being inside the mother, the parents are still "pushing him into the world".

The title of the book comes from Abe's first word, "A-lie-uh-duh", as he points to where the sunlight falls, the spark of an idea and light.

'That's right!' we say, 'A light, a light.'

When he points to a “hyacinth, door, cat” his parents say “No” until they look again:

it gathers in thick cones, rods of bee caves
dozens of lilac oboe mouths...

and they see the shapes of light everywhere as their son does.

Abe has Emma wrap the ordinary, an “egg-cup, snack-stained book” and a “chopping board”, in ‘Lucky Dip’. He gives her the package, and is delighted at her “pantomime surprise”:

Wrap it, tape it, ribbon it
Open it. What have we got?
Look at him. A gift.

Neale enters the child’s world. In the poem ‘Ogre’, the person encountered in the supermarket has a stare that is “black ice”, and whose jersey stitches “gape like the broken ribs of a phantom ship”. Her son wonders, “Might that really be a pirate?” At the checkout counter Neale looks in his basket and she discovers “Captain Terror” to be an ordinary, isolated man.

Her images are evocative. In ‘Going to Sleep’ she compares Abe to a “small, cold, metal dinghy” that needs “someone first to hold it...then to push it firmly off the shingle into the shallows of a lake.” In ‘Two’ her son clings, licks, and nips his mother:

Like he’s testing her for gold - or tin
or practising to haul her
by the scruff of her skin
to save her from the flood of herself.

There are many poems based around sounds. In ‘Aubade’ Abe begins to talk, trying out vowels: “Oh! ooh. Oh”, like an oboe practising arpeggios and scales; and in ‘Renewal’ he mimics a bird he hears “Be-deep! Be-deep!”, singing ‘the barcode scanner song’. In ‘Mirror’ there is the cat purring. The mirror is broken after the door slams:

silver threads fine as baby hair
that would lacerate the skin like wire

“Stand back”, Emma gasps at her son, as he goes to clasp each “pretty, glistening trinket”, when the cat pads in and over “glassy coals”, purring “a mantra Om Mani Padmi Hum”.

‘Buzz Track’, in the second half of the book, is from the recording of a room’s sounds, without dialogue, when putting together a film scene. It has the obvious: “the sizzle and crackle of an oil heater”; and less obvious:

The slow flow of old windows
as the panes sink into themselves.

‘Exposure’, the poem which takes the title of Part 2, shows the gradual building up of resistance by increasing levels of exposure to fears. It begins with spiders, then heights, and finally loss. For spiders the first exposure is to, “Look at a picture of a spider”, and the last is, “Allow a spider to remain in the palm of your hand”. There is an effective build-up in each, finishing with loss, “Allow the absence to remain in the palms of your hands”.

In ‘Open Home’ Neale and her husband are looking for a larger house. They are “weekend voyagers” and come to homes where “long incisions” have been made and half the wall of “family portraits” are “dumbly blank”. The agent is an undertaker dealing with “a settlement property”, a “herd of haunts”, and although the house is perfect, “We won’t take it”.

Part 2 contains several poems about Marc Chagall under "Chagallerie": 'The early life of Marc Chagall', 'Yellow Opus', and 'Night feeds'. Most of the poems in the second part appear less personal than the first, but not all. Neale's husband is a mountain guide, and one of the poems is called 'Loving a mountaineer', where "your absence a white vista" with "no welcome ledge".

'Reversal' seems to be going backwards from the knowledge of Neale's father's death. It tells the sequence of events in reverse, ending with:

as if he knew
of no turning back
our father opened his door.

There are poems in Neale's first book of poetry, *Sleevenotes*, published in 1999, which also refer to this event: 'Personal Best' begins: "Every Sunday our father trained", and finishes with "grief sees him outpace and leave us once again".

Emma Neale's poems in *Spark* are generally very accessible, putting her personal experience into poetic form, particularly around the journey into parenthood with her young son.

The Lakes of Mars by Chris Orsman (AUP, 2008) 58pp RRP \$24.99 ISBN 978 186940 408 6

Jenny Clay

This book is divided into two parts. Many of the poems in the first part were previously in Pemmican publication *White Wind*, a hand-bound, letterpress poetry book. (Pemmican Press was founded by Orsman along with Harry Ricketts and Brendan O'Brien in 1998.) The second part of the collection was inspired by Antarctica, where Chris Orsman travelled on an Artists in Antarctica grant in 1998 with Bill Manhire and painter Nigel Brown. Orsman has previously written about the Antarctic in *South: An Antarctic Journey*, recreating Scott's expedition in a sequence of voices. *South* was his second poetry book, published in 1996, after *Ornamental Gorse* (1994) won Best First Book of Poetry at the Montana Book Awards.

The third poem of the second half of *The Lakes of Mars* takes the title of the collection, where the lake described

neatly simulates: an ice-bound
port to the solar system,
a mirror to the lakes of Mars.

Orsman is concerned about geographies. He talks in the book about landscape, mindscape and perspective. In the first poem of Part 1 he asks,

what do we know
of hidden topographies.
'Grass'

He explores the world through the lens of the camera in 'Instamatic'. It is based around his old plastic Kodak 133, which had two settings that covered all weathers, cloudy and sunny. A "whole century moves until you stop it", the early photos "resisting focus", yet he is charmed by inaccuracy:

the kitchen in a previous incarnation
with its round-shouldered refrigerator.

The images are stalled in time, such as his grandparents "in a plain bungalow" in 'Blenheim; the first house in the subdivision', "a bottle display", and his brother Derek reading "Tintin on a bed".

There are links to family in several poems. 'Volunteer' is about his great-grandfather, William Orsman, who at nineteen was one of the men advancing on Parihaka. He previously featured in poems in *Ornamental Gorse*. 'Volunteer' starts with the "we" of the men advancing:

We met no resistance throughout that country,
everything we carried was a dead weight

The poet then changes from “we” to “you”, and talks about:

The enemy
lodged within, crouched and defensive
behind the heart’s palisades

and challenges the “you”, or tries to understand his ancestor’s perspective:

Bequeath to me
your clear sight on that morning, whatever
is necessary in your ignorance...

‘Mappa’ takes a completely different perspective, the chart “translated from a satellite’s bland stare”, yet Orsman says,

we have no internal GPS
to navigate the portals of the wind

The wind runs through many of the poems. A “white wind scourges the harbour” as a man “jokes with someone out of view” in the ‘White Wind’. It is the “last year of Victoria’s reign”, and the couple on the pier,

mouth a dialogue still audible
over ninety years, as distance squints back
from the false horizon.

At the end of the poem we find “the picture frame’s a natural division of the wind”. We are looking at a picture framed as Orsman carefully frames his poems.

Horizons are also a feature of his poems. In ‘Primer of Ice and Stone’:

diagonals, that lunging...
of the linear
...works its way somehow
into each horizon

He wrote this poem for an exhibition of ceramic works by Raewyn Atkinson, *Terra Nova*, inspired by her 2002 Antarctic experience.

In the second part of *The Lakes of Mars* Chris Orsman explores the landscape of Antarctica. In ‘Into the Taylor Valley’ there are:

walls of rock, jutting outcrops,
a vertical thrust that tilts the mind
off balance

In ‘What the Camera Missed’ we are again looking at the perspective of the camera. The camera is:

collecting most of it for you
to scavenge later - bits and pieces
missed ... at the edge of the film.

Yet “the camera misses everything really” - the scent of the released “meltwater stream” buried alive in antiquity, “the taste of a glacier”. Smells and sounds are also an aspect of the ‘Book of the Dead’,

the second sequence of poems in this section, where Orsman shows the relics of previous explorers to Antarctica, particularly of Scott and his men. In 'Cape Evans' there is within the roofed space of the hut the "smell of a whole century...of blubber, ponies, harness oil...old meals, pungent cigar smoke", and a "book shut tight for eight decades". In 'The Beach' an Edwardian march, "timing the systole of sea and shore", "grinds out of the brass gorge of a phonograph".

Orsman uses careful juxtaposition of words to craft his images and evoke the landscape. At times I was challenged to explore the dictionary for meanings, such as the "katabatic", a wind common in Antarctica, and present in several poems. He plays with perspective and horizons, looking through the lens of the camera, through art, maps and assembled objects of the past, knowing that the landscape and mindscape may be glimpsed, but not captured. He provides a frame and yet allows us to see around this frame. He does what he describes in relation to the *Terra Nova* exhibition in 'Primer of Ice and Stone':

returns
through conscious art
what has been felt and seen

with layers of found history and his own translation.

In Continents by Richard Reeve (AUP, 2008) 72pp. RRP \$25 ISBN 978-1-86940-406-2

Nancy Loader

Richard Reeve was born in 1976 and brought up in Dunedin. He has a doctorate in New Zealand poetic reality and twentieth century continental philosophy. He has had poems published internationally and has won academic prizes for his writing. He is a reviewer and editor for Otago University Press and literary magazine *Glottis: New Writing*. In keeping with his concerns for the environment he is Chair of The Upland Landscape Protection Society. This is his third collection of poems.

Reeve is highly skilled at writing the closed form, making the techniques look easy and this collection is filled with examples of his ability. It's divided into three parts with a 'Proem' by way of introduction and ends with a series of notes that help to illuminate some of the poems. From 'Proem':

Unheeding any language, past thought perhaps,
More powerful than any love, the land moves.
The mountains build, an ice shawl of their caps
Translating in the trillion bed-rock grooves
Into god-sized rivers, working wide the gaps.

And we like bits of lint, pass through all of this
(Almost without a thought for what will come).
Sometimes the plates will shiver in their kiss,
And thousands scream, but generally we 'um'
And get on with our work. Such agelessness,

Or something like that, yes, they dream it so,
Such weight of time that drags the crust beyond ...

It's difficult to discern a pattern of subject matter across the three parts of the book although historical figures and environmental issues have a significant role. In part 1 'Five Songs for Edward III', 'Tupaia', 'The Occupation of Tiberius' and 'The Baptism of Guthrum' are carefully wrought:

Dour, obtuse - though at Villa Jovis sick
With the sour employments of far-off Rome -
He held court with the sea. Would sometimes flick
A prisoner from the tooth-steep rag of rock
He slept out on like a vulture. His home,
Capri, its girls fresh, each plum with its charm,

Spoke more of truth to his evicting heart
Than lords who pestered him to play his part..
from 'The Occupation of Tiberius'

In part II Reeve engages in a series of very long poems, some of which are about poetry itself. 'Formalist MP Confesses' has 17 eight line stanzas and I have to confess that my eyelids started to close around stanza number ten. This may be due to my poor concentration span, but the subject matter was also a touch esoteric which is according to the publisher "the role of poetry as revelation of the ethical horizon of human existence and how as a species the human race willfully neglects to act in accordance with this revelation." 'Phenotypical' resembles a contemporary sestina with its repetition of phrases throughout its 20 stanzas but it also adheres to end-rhyme in an ababcc pattern and has seven lines not six. No doubt it has a name!

I
Quite normal for the time: not less her joy
At having viewed some inauspicious birth
Than that of kings, who sweated to destroy
The mountain faith of granite, pious men,
Then woke one morning to a godless earth.
So she lived gently, harkening to when
Some inauspicious life might seize her pen ...

II
Quite normal for the time: not less some man
Who might have been a president perhaps,
However he was not. Though owned a van,
Admired his beer, yet could not find a soul
To lift the life that peered beyond the taps -
So he lived poorly, watched the barflies crawl,
And then one morning shot away his skull ...

Part III contains 'Rumour', a villanelle, and 'Seven Songs for Islands', which relates to islands off the South Island of NZ and their histories. 'El Dorado' and 'Technology and Barbarism' cover environmental issues.

Overall Reeves' grasp of language and form is formidable. It's the kind of poetry that's probably best read aloud by one of those great Shakespearean actors sitting round an enormous open fire in a stone-walled mansion with drifts of snow outside.

However his open verse, where it occurs, appears a little weak juxtaposed with the closed forms and I found some of his poems incomprehensible or too verbose.

Definitely for those who love the language of highly accomplished poetry with meter and rhyme and those who like to take their poems long and slow.

New New Zealand Poets in Performance Eds Jack Ross & Jan Kemp. (Auckland University Press, 2008).
RRP \$45.00 ISBN 978 1 86940 409 3

Harvey Molloy

I've greatly enjoyed the previous two books in this series, *Classic New Zealand Poets in Performance* and *Contemporary New Zealand Poets in Performance*. Each book in the series features two CDs of the poets reading their works. This means that you can, as I did, listen to the poems whilst you're driving around and then check out the printed poems in the book. Each book is attractively designed with an excellent cover-- the cover of wild, fractal paisley designs from Sarah Hughes' *Never Let Me Go* shows the very good visual taste of the editors which has run through the series.

I don't particular suffer from selection anxiety, so I'm looking for a good anthology with some enjoyable poems, rather than a clever introduction, and this selection from poets such as Jack Ross, James

Brown, Kapka Kassabova, Mark Pirie, Olivia Macassey and Richard Reeve, delivers. The “New New Zealand poets” are the new already greying kids on the block and includes anyone who is 'young or mid-career' and born after 1959.

I had a lot of fun listening blind to the CDs. I played them three times on the car stereo before I read the book. The poems seem to flow into one another, as if they were one great long poem spoken by different voices. But some voices did stand out over others.

So, given that these are poets in performance, who are the poets that stood out as I listened to the CD while driving to and from work?

In the first CD it's Andrew Johnston. In his quiet, understated delivery, Johnston shows his mastery as a reader: I dare anyone to listen to the restrained emotion of 'The Present' and not be moved. I'd previously read a smattering of Johnston, but after hearing him read I plan to spend the summer reading more of his work. He's a marvellous reader.

On the second CD three voices stayed with me longer than others: Tusiata Avia, Kate Camp and Nick Ascroft. Avia's Samoan English poem 'Bingo' never fails to delight even after at least ten listenings. I've played it to secondary school students who warm to its dark humour. Kate Camp's 'Documentaries' reminds me a little of Fleur Adcock but her unapologetic confidence in her kiwi accent gives the poem a particular strength. I found an almost beat confessional sensibility in Nick Ascroft's 'All of the other Ascrofts are Dead' but it's his deadpan dry delivery that really springs the poem to life. All three of these poems flirt with the comic without ever falling into the trap of being exercises in a self-reflexive, coy, hyper-ironic 'talking about nothing' mode. They are all in their own way (hopeless romantic that I am) moving.

The three books provide a good picture of New Zealand poetry since World War II and there seems to be a finality to this volume, as if the project has come to an end.

So what next for the editors? Could there be a fourth in the series? I think that based on my experience as a teacher using the anthology in the classroom, a smaller combined volume 'New Zealand Poets in Performance' could be produced explicitly for classroom use, with the usual Teachers notes, discussion questions and creative writing exercises thrown in for the overworked teacher. Given recent Creative New Zealand funding cuts to supporting poetry and *The Listener's* [subsequently revised – Ed.] decision to give poetry the chop, teachers advocating poetry in New Zealand schools need all the help they can get.

Collected Poems 1951-2006 C.K. Stead (AUP, 2008) RRP \$60 ISBN 978-1-86940-418-5

Laurice Gilbert

A collection that covers 55 years and 519 pages of poetry (plus another 14 pp of notes and a 9-page index of first lines) is not really amenable to the usual form of review. I freely confess I haven't read it all – that's going to take me a while – and most of the components will have been reviewed at the time of publication anyway. The best I can do for now is start the process, and continue in a future issue of *a fine line*, when I have time to get into it a bit further.

I believe this is one of the most important records of a New Zealand poet we have, and it deserves a place in the NZ Poetry Society library, along with the Collected Works of James K. Baxter (which I'm still looking for at an affordable price). What this book does in a comprehensive way is to plot the development of Stead the Poet. He is, of course, a great deal more than that, and the list of awards and honours takes up most of the back flap, culminating in our highest honour, the Order of New Zealand.

The collection opens with the 1964 publication *Whether the Will is Free: Poems 1954-62*, works its way through the ensuing 13 poetry collections up to and including *The Black River* (2007), and finishes with 'Some Early Uncollected Poems, 1951-1961', which he allowed himself to revise, "to dress them better and tidy their hair".

Early Stead was in the main formal and structured, dealing with the traditional themes, as in 'Carpe Diem':

Since Juliet's on ice, and Joan
Staked her chips on a high throne

Sing a waste of dreams that are
Caressing, moist, familiar;

...

Love keeps a cuckoo on his clock
And death's the hammer makes the stroke.

from, *Whether the Will is Free: Poems 1954-62*

I particularly enjoyed sampling the second book, *Crossing the Bar* (1972), as the poems were more personal, more narrative, yet with no shortage of topical allusions. 'A Small Registry of Births and Deaths', chronicles the birth of a child:

All night it bullied you.
When it shook you hard enough
They took you away.
I was shaken too. I walked
The frantic corridor praying
Representing
My terror so minutely
It went unnoticed.

Later in the same poem:

Six months ago a free bomb fell on a school.
Forty-five children were changed.
They became a job for the cleaners.

...

Lyndon, if ever a missile
Blows one of your Birds to bits
Don't hate it, Lyndon –
It was only misguided.
It wanted to make you free.
Take heart that in Detroit
Every three seconds
A car is born.

That the President in charge was Lyndon B. Johnson, and not George W. Bush, merely reinforces the timelessness of the poet's concern for the future of his children.

Quesada: Poems 1972-74 was Stead's own experiment at self-publishing, partly as a result of six months in Menton, France, and it won the first ever New Zealand Book Award for Poetry. We should all be so lucky. It's shorter, almost chapbook length, but most of the poems are longer ones. 'The Swan' was an attempt at translation of Baudelaire's 'Le Cygne' while maintaining the formal rhyme scheme, and, paradoxically, is the only visually constrained poem in a collection that establishes a more relaxed approach to structure.

By 1979 (*Walking Westward*) Stead has lightened up enough to include humour before settling in to the 'Twenty-two Sonnets':

Ode

A Shelley
held to the ear –
listen! It's
the west wind.

and:

'Now is the month of maying...'

The sky has gone dead.
The park crunches underfoot.
The English trees are going to pieces again.
from, 'Breaking the Neck: an Autumn Sketchbook'

The Sonnets embrace the period from Spring 1974 (the death of Norman Kirk) to Autumn 1978 (post-Bastion Point), and are intensely personal, frequently referring to friends and acquaintances now dead. These are some of my favourite Stead poems, for their profound simplicity, and for the compassion they inspire. From Sonnet 2:

... that morning four-year-old Michele Fox
Sat at our table painting shapes she said were flowers

When we listened to the news: a coaster missing up North,
...

... I kept that painting –

It was the world she saw believing she had a father.
He was a third engineer, A Scotsman, a good neighbour lost.

"Spring is a recurring astonishment, like poetry" opens Sonnet 9, a reflection on the poet's forty-second birthday, when a visit from a young man who was jailed for refusing the US draft echoes the birthday gift of Solzhenitsyn's *"The Gulag Archipelago"*. It finishes with:

... The quarrel of sparrows
Fills the silence of God that has lasted for forty-two years.

The title poem has a touch of 'The Wasteland' to it, containing as it does multiple literary allusions, personal stories, topical references and even Venn diagrams. It deserves much closer examination than I have been able to give it so far.

And so it goes on. There's more, but I've run up against my own deadline. Watch this space.

get some Sonja Yelich (AUP, 2008) RRP \$25 ISBN 978 1 86940 423 9

Jenny Argante

Yelich established a fine reputation for herself with *Clung* (AUP, 2004) which won the 2005 NZSA Jessie McKay Award for Best First Book of Poetry. Her poems appears regularly in *Turbine*, *Trout* and *Snorkel*, and she has featured in *Best NZ Poems Online* and in the *New Zealand Poets in Performance* (book and CD) published by AUP in July 2008.

get some loosely relates the story of Edgar from his boyhood in the USA to the war in Iraq. Yelich says, "As I am not an American, I wanted to retain my own voice - and to a certain extent the language is a blend of tongues and vernaculars." ('Get some' is Marine slang for 'go get some kill'.)

Here is 'The Visual Person' (complete) observing the action, the observer who:

Has an eye out for the pictures. They are right there
for the roadkill. They are in the rubble looking for a leg.
The more blood on the shop window & the toes of a child
the better. The Marine kitted out. The gas mask. The Visual
Person thinks best in colour with one sentence underneath.

Combat, neatly captioned. (Yelich has a 'Smell' and an 'Audio' Person, too, among the poems.)

Why does anyone choose to enlist - to make a career out of the military? I am a soldier's daughter,

and a pacifist, and it is a question I can't answer. She notes that 'Edgar was in line for many careers ...'

But because of the guy from Brooklyn & the assault rifle
he thought about the regimental military A LOT and about setting goals.
And what the desert might look like at night under the stars & date palms.
The interior of a Humvee & the hunting of soldiers intrigued him immensely.

If only it were that simple. Yelich's poems are like watching photos deepen in a flat pan of developer. Gradually things become clearer and sharper; leap into focus and make sense. I particularly liked the portrait in 'Foxholes - Nooses'.

With her strong words, Yelich shows us how precisely the imagination of the poet can create a tested reality.

Later they told me the cold was shock & soon not too far
off I would be feeling heat in my stump. I would wait for the
Dial Tone to tell my folks - I am now *less*.

After you have pumped your brains for thoughts and verses, there is a better poetry hinted in whistling a tune on your walk.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Haiku NewZ

CONGRATULATIONS

- Ernest J Berry for second place in kukai #14:

no mail
only blossoms
from the storm

- Ernest J Berry for third prize in The Irish Haiku Society Haiku Competition:

early frost
the fragrance of pine
on fire

- Ernest J Berry for 3rd place in the 5th International Klostara Ivancic Contest.

waterfall –
all I want is
to pass water

- Pat Prime for a commended haiku in the same contest.

COMPETITIONS AND SUBMISSIONS

See NZPS [website](#) for a detailed list.

NOTICES

If you're not already on Beverley George's mailing list, re. *Eucalypt* & tanka generally then sign up with Beverley at beverleygeorge@idx.com.au

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.

she lights incense
for ambience
then sprays a cockroach
John Irvine

sanctuary
round the water table
a chorus of bellbirds
Nola Borrell

Mini Competition

Sorry folks. Once again there were too few sports poems submitted to justify awarding the prize : *As if Running on Air – The Journals of Jack Lovelock* edited by David Colquhoun (Craig Potton, 2008). So now you have a chance to do some writing over the summer. The book is gorgeous – give it a go. (Note: I can tell if you've just dashed off any old thing!)

A poem is never finished, only abandoned.

Paul Valéry

March Deadline: 20th February

MEMBERS' POEMS

The Stars and Stripes

Imprisoned by The Land of the Free
'The Stars and Stripes' every morning
Serves as my call to prayer.

My father came from Michigan
To see me chained to the floor,
Hair grown to a curtain
My only privacy.

He weeps and says
"Get a haircut, boy.
Your Grandmother is OK,"
And "Everyone hates the war."

- Herman Emerick

Julie Ryan

The Red Beads

After lunch at a swanky
bar near that great Szechwan hot
pot place, your friend gives
her beads to you, suggests
you gift them to your wife; these
strands of red agate. Removes

them from her own neck, removes
them without disturbing her
side of the conversation
or her hair, lays them on the
white tablecloth and sweeps them
towards you with crimson finger-
nails. And you lift them,

heft them, feel the warmth from her
body, stored in each stone.
'Agate brings strength and also
banishes fear,' she says. In
that same second, you know you
will never make love to her.
Never again. You place the
beads in your jacket pocket.
You thank her, offer to pay

for lunch. And you stand up then,
to kiss her. Splay wide hands on
her shoulders, press your thumbs hard
under her clavicles. Now
the red beads curl in your desk's
bottom drawer, not secret - just
a riddle unintended -
but they live there, sleeping with
paper-clips and tax receipts.

Kathy McVey

the useful dining table

my father worked with cloth
tipping up on toes nervously
as he chatted up buyers in shops
or factories: we often measured
bolts yard by yard across the length
of our six foot kauri dining table

Suzanne Vaassen

On a photo of a Southern Beech

I don't know this tree in a photo in the Southern Hemisphere,
this tree misnamed 'beech' by a young Swedish botanist
Daniel Solander, best friend of Joseph Banks on Cook's Endeavour.
I am an immigrant, which can be misheard as ignorant or innocent
in my beautiful adopted country .

But I know another beech in a wood
cross a stream by well worn stepping stones
up a hill, over a stile, walk for half a mile
a beech old and strong-bound,
breathing in and out with the seasons
carved with the names of lovers long past
who pressed their bodies together
beneath generous boughs
and climbed the frenzied rocks of lust
to glimpse the sweet calm valley of love below
and not caring for the route down
turned aside,
like squirrels in Autumn
to collect up spiky
beechnuts.

Nancy Loader