



# a fine line

July 2011

The Magazine of The New Zealand Poetry Society

*Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa*

With the assistance of Creative New Zealand

We are grateful to our sponsors: Signify <http://www.signify.co.nz/>

Creative Communities / Wellington City Council

The Thistle Inn; Community Post

ISSN 1178-3931

The New Zealand Poetry 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](mailto:info@poetrysociety.org.nz)

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

## Poetry @ The Thistle Inn, Wellington

### JULY MEETING

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July, 6pm – free entry

Book Launch (downstairs): *This City* Jennifer Compton (Australia)

followed by NZPS AGM at 7.30pm

(no open mic)

then our Guest Poet: Vivienne Plumb (Auckland)

### AUGUST MEETING

Monday 15th August, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Kay McKenzie Cooke (Dunedin)

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington. Open mic. \$3 entry for members.

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities Wellington Local Funding Scheme.

## Contents

- 2) Feature Article: A Haiku Journey *Kirsten Cliff*
- 3) From the National Coordinator *Laurice Gilbert*  
About our Contributors
- 4) A Warm Welcome to...  
Congratulations
- 5) Publications:  
Noticeboard
- 6) Competitions & Submissions
- 8) Poetry Opportunities with Loose Deadlines  
Surfing the Net
- 9) American Life in Poetry
- 10) Featured Poet: Charmaine Thomson
- 14) Reviews: *The Pop Artist's Garland: Selected Poems 1959-2009* Ed Mark Pirie *Gill Ward*
- 15) *VIET NAM: a Poem Journey* Jenny Powell *Gill Ward*  
*Watching for Smoke* Helen Heath *Laurice Gilbert*

- 16) *Leaving the Tableland* Kerry Popplewell Liz Breslin  
18) Regional Report: Windrift, Wellington Bevan Greenslade  
19) Mini Competition  
21) Members' Poems: Ruth Arnison, Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle, Deryn Pittar, John Ross, Maureen Sudlow, Karen Zelas

## **Feature Article**

### **A Haiku Journey**

*Kirsten Cliff*

I walked unannounced into the world of haiku. I'd never encountered it before, never been taught it at school. Even when living in Japan for six months I never crossed paths with haiku.

Haiku for me now is like an old friend: comfortable to be with, always there for me through the good times and the bad, with an honest heart which will still challenge me when I need it.

My haiku journey began when I moved to Bay of Plenty in 2005, joined Tauranga Writers a year later and heard about the Katikati Haiku Pathway.

On New Year's Day 2007, I was alone with a longing to begin my year with something new. I felt a need to discover the external world, yet at the same time explore the world deep within myself. So when everyone else was heading to the beach hung over, I drove 45 minutes to the calmness of the Katikati Haiku Pathway.

I strolled, I sat, I listened, I looked, I touched, I smelled: I wrote my first haiku. I absorbed all that was on offer that day and found what I'd been searching for: a new way to express myself. Haiku just seemed to 'fit' me. It was concise, to the point; I felt I knew where I stood with it. There were no long descriptions, no flowery language to get lost in. Just good honest observations, where every word and line break was important, and carried a depth that would reward the present reader.

Most of my poetry at that time stemmed from observations: moments in time that stayed with me and begged to be created into something. Sights, sounds, and sensations that enticed my body to grasp pen and paper, and then record the occasion in its rawest and truest form. Haiku allowed me the opportunity, gave me the tools to do justice to my experiences.

I read all I could about haiku in print and on-line. It wasn't long before my first haiku were published. Then six months after my visit to the Katikati Haiku Pathway, I set myself a challenge: from my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday on 31 July I would write one haiku, every day, for a year. It was this huge task that really taught me the craft of haiku, and elevated all my writing to the next level.

It did this in two main ways: honing my observation skills, and refining my ability to clearly convey what I wanted to say.

Writing haiku means living life using all your senses. Not just listening to what a person says, for example, but looking at the way their eyes light up over certain topics, the way the sunlight picks up different colours in their hair, the smell of their perfume, the temperature of the room, the background noises. Taking in all these aspects when interviewing someone for an article (which is what makes up half of my prose writing work) brings to life your experience of your time with that person. The reader gets a more rounded view of the interviewee, and your article is more enjoyable to read as it is richer, deeper. Working and playing with haiku has made me become more observant to the world around me, and this can't help but enrich all of my writing.

Writing haiku involves capturing the beauty and fullness of a moment, in about 10 words or less. Working with haiku has improved my ability to convey what I want via the written word. I enjoy wordplay more since reading and writing haiku: it's taught me the value of each word and it has expanded my vocabulary as I've searched for the right words, in sound and in meaning, to form those few short lines. The challenge of writing haiku has led me to an uncluttered writing style, in both my poetry and prose.

I've only been writing creatively for six years but much of that time has been spent on the art of haiku.

I see so many possibilities with this form and I'm experimenting with it and extending my knowledge all the time. My latest project is developing a collection of collage-style haiga (haiku with images) about my experiences of going through treatment for leukaemia. Yes, my old friend haiku was there for me then, too.

## ***From the National Coordinator***

*Laurice Gilbert*

It's that time of the year again – the AGM is coming up. As noted in a previous editorial, the Committee took pity on me this year and agreed to delay it until July, so I didn't have to get straight on it as soon as the competition entries were out the door and on the way to the judges. That's meant a bit of a breather, and I've been using it to catch up on sleep, after the late nights involved in recording and coding just over 2000 assorted poems and haiku.

A very minor side-effect of the Christchurch earthquake is a reduction in entries this year, particularly from the legions of young Christchurch students who are normally exposed to the fine art of haiku in time for their entries to count. This is not a complaint – Christchurch residents deserve nothing but compassion for the ongoing trials of aftershocks, newly discovered fault lines and insurance delays – though it does mean that Christchurch poets might not dominate our annual anthology to the extent they have in recent years.

On a completely different subject, wanting to set a good example for new (and other) writers developing a poetry life, I am finally working on a first collection, with the intention of launching it in December. It's taken me 15 years to summon up the confidence. I've gathered a bunch of my favourite poems together and asked some colleagues to run an eye over the manuscript for anything that doesn't work. I hope others of you don't have to wait so long. It's no less scary than it was; I've simply reached a stage where I want a collection in my hands, and it no longer matters if others buy it or not. I've even learned a new word to cover what I'm doing: autotelic. This describes an activity carried out because the thing itself is worth doing, not for any hope or expectation or reward. As I brought my children up to respect the intrinsic pleasure in doing stuff, rather than using rewards or punishment, it's time I followed my own prescription. So there it is. I've announced it, so I have to follow it through.

Consider volunteering for committee work (which is predominantly done by email, so not terribly arduous) and enjoy the reviews and poetry we've got lined up for you in this issue.

## ***About our Contributors***

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

**Kirsten Cliff** lives on the noisiest street in Papamoa and has written several poems about it. She blogs at *Swimming in Lines of Haiku*: <http://kirstencliffwrites.blogspot.com/>

**John O'Connor** is a Christchurch poet and critic.

**Charmaine Thomson** lives in Wellington, and studied poetry through the online programme at Whitireia Polytechnic in 2007. She has been published in New Zealand and the United States, including the *4<sup>th</sup> Floor Literary Journal*, *a fine line*, *The Shot Glass Journal* and the *Fib Review*.

**Gill Ward** lives on the Kapiti Coast. She organises the Kapiti poetry café monthly event 'Poets to the People', and is widely published.

If there's a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.

*Toni Morrison*

## ***A Warm Welcome to ...***

**Dawn Bruce** Australia  
**Judith Clearwater** Wellington  
**Jennifer Curtis** Christchurch  
**Robert Fixter** Woodville  
**Suzanne Herschell** Lower Hutt  
**Rosie Jones** Ohaupo  
**Mary McCallum** Lower Hutt  
**Heather McNair** Waitakere  
**Steve McNeil** Red Beach  
**Philip Morgan** Christchurch  
**Will Pike** Temuka  
**Michael Rudd** Wellsford  
**Vivienne Smith** Christchurch  
**Krystal Volney** Trinidad & Tobago  
**Alan Woodside** Porirua

## ***Congratulations***

**Michele Amas** received Second Prize in the Caselberg Trust International Poetry Prize for 2011, judged by Bernadette Hall.

**Ernest J Berry** came second in the 2011 J. Franklyn Dew Award (The Poetry Society of Virginia), and received an Honourable Mention in the Kaji Asi Studio's 23rd annual haiku contest (Boston).

**Nicola Easthope** was a finalist in the World Wildlife Fund's Ocean:Views contest. You can read her entry at: [http://assets.wwf.org.nz/downloads/beach\\_walk\\_nicola\\_easthope.pdf](http://assets.wwf.org.nz/downloads/beach_walk_nicola_easthope.pdf) (I hope - my browser won't open pdfs, so I can't check.)

**Maris O'Rourke** received a Highly Commended in the Caselberg Trust International Poetry Prize, and won the SIWA (South Island Writers Association) 2010 Short Story Competition.

**Derryn Pittar** and **Charmaine Thomson** have fibs in [Fib Review #9](#) and Derryn also has work in [Shot Glass Journal #4](#), along with **Ruth Arnison**, **Laurice Gilbert** and **Keith Nunes**. Furthermore, Derryn came Third in the semi-annual *Lucidity Poetry Journal* Clarity contest, which also featured **Jack Wood** in the Highly Commended list.

**Harvey Molloy**, **Kerrin P. Sharpe** and **Janet Newman** have work in trans-Tasman online journal *Snorkel* 13.

**Sandra Simpson** has recently:

- won the Shoreless River Haiku Contest (although still waiting with bated breath to find out if the prize money will be forthcoming ...);
- placed as a runner-up in the contemporary category of the HaikuNow! Contest run by The Haiku Foundation;
- placed Second in the Robert Spiess Memorial Haiku Award (US);
- and placed Third in the Haiku Magazine Contest (Romania).

## ***Publications***

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since last time:

*The Hill of Wool*, Jenny Bornholdt (VUP, 2011)

*The Best of Best New Zealand Poems*, ed. Bill Manhire and Damien Wilkins (VUP, 2011)

*Thicket*, Anna Jackson (AUP, 2011)

*The movie may be slightly different*, Vincent O'Sullivan (VUP, 2011)

*The Corrosion Zone*, Barbara Strang (HeadworX, 2011)

## ***Noticeboard***

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The NZPS AGM will be held in Wellington on Monday 18 July (see below). All current committee members are required to resign at the end of their term, so nominations are now being accepted. Nominations may be sent by post or email, and need to be made and seconded by financial members of the NZPS. All nominations need to be made immediately. (Sorry – my fault for not doing it in the May issue.) Post to: The National Coordinator, NZPS, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145, or email to:

[info@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:info@poetrysociety.org.nz)

Nominations will also be taken from the floor on the night.

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The New Zealand Poetry Society Incorporated will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 18 July 2011, upstairs at the Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington.

#### Agenda:

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2010 AGM  
– These are available on the Members' pages of the website, or by sending a SSAE to the National Coordinator. Copies will also be provided at the meeting.
- 3) Matters arising from the 2010 AGM Minutes
- 4) President's Report
- 5) Financial Report
- 6) Proposed Budget for 2011-2012
- 7) Election of Officers –
  - President
  - Vice-President
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Committee Members
- 8) General Business

The AGM will be followed by a reading by Vivienne Plumb, past NZPS President, poet, playwright and short story writer extraordinaire. There will be no open mic and no entry fee, though donations will still be gratefully accepted.

### POETRY BOOKS IN PRISONS

Patricia Morrison has been upgrading the libraries of 22 prisons all over the country, and noted a particular lack of poetry books. She says it is a popular genre in the prison population. I delivered a pile of books recently, mostly back copies of unsold NZPS anthologies, and received the following message from Patricia:

“Thank you so much for the wonderful donation of 200 books of poetry for the prison libraries. Poetry is a well used section of the library stock and some new books are always appreciated. Please thank all of

your membership and assure them of our gratitude.”

Patricia is happy to hear from anyone with more donations to make, particularly of New Zealand books in good condition. You can contact her at: [peachmorrison@gmail.com](mailto:peachmorrison@gmail.com)



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
School of English and Media Studies

**2011 WRITERS READ SERIES**  
**TWO POETRY READINGS**

**Brian Turner**

7 p.m. Friday 22 July  
National Poetry Day  
Palmerston North City Library

**Three Poets: Lynn Davidson,**  
**Lynn Jenner & Selina Tusitala Marsh**

6 p.m. Thursday 4 August  
Theatrette 10A02, Museum Building,  
Wellington Campus

*All Writers Read events are free and open to the public.  
Refreshments provided.*

Paid advertisement.

## *Competitions & Submissions*

*a fine line* - call for submissions. **Deadline: 7 August** Thanks to Creative New Zealand we are able to pay a reasonable fee for Feature Articles, and a small amount for reviews. See guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines>

**Montreal International Poetry Prize (International) Deadline: 8 July** The Montreal Prize is a first-of-its-kind global poetry competition awarding \$50,000 for one poem. An international jury of ten poets from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas will select the top 50 entries. This shortlist will be published in a global poetry anthology, and from the shortlist the prize judge, Andrew Motion, will select the winner of the 2011 prize. Entering your poems is easy and secure using the online entry form. All details are on the website at: <http://montrealprize.com/>

**Tenby Arts Festival Writing Competition (UK) Closing Date: 15 July** For poems up to 40 lines. 1<sup>st</sup>: £150, 2<sup>nd</sup>: £70, 3<sup>rd</sup>: £50. Entry Fee: £4 for one poem; £6 for two; £8 for three. Entry forms and rules at [www.tenbyartsfest.co.uk](http://www.tenbyartsfest.co.uk)

**Writers' Forum (UK) Rolling Deadline: 15th of every month** Every month Writers' Forum awards £800 in prizes and publishes the winners of their short story, poetry and young writers contests. Poetry contest: Enter online at <http://www.writers-forum.com/poetrycomp.html> Entry fee is £5 (approx. NZ\$10 at the date of pub.) for the first poem, £3 (approx. NZ\$6) for subsequent poems in the same entry. Competitions have a rolling deadline: a poem that misses the cut-off point for one issue will be included in the next contest. All entries must be original and previously unpublished. You can resubmit a previous entry to Writers' Forum after editing unless it is printed or commended in the magazine. Usual fees apply. The competitions are open to all nationalities worldwide, but entries must be in English.

**Msllexia Women's Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 18 July** 1st Prize: £2,000 plus a week at the poets' retreat of Cove Park and a mentoring afternoon with the editor of *Poetry Review*; 2nd: £400; 3<sup>rd</sup>: £200. 20 other finalists: £25 each. All winning poems will appear in issue 51 of *Msllexia*, published in

October 2011. Entry Fee: £7.00 for up to three poems. Online entries at [www.mslexia.co.uk/poetrycompetition](http://www.mslexia.co.uk/poetrycompetition) For inspiration or a starting point for your entry into the competition they've prepared a set of writing exercises. Go to: [http://www.mslexia.co.uk/magazine/workshops/workshop\\_pcomp1.php](http://www.mslexia.co.uk/magazine/workshops/workshop_pcomp1.php)

**Essex Poetry Festival 11th Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 30 July** Prizes - 1<sup>st</sup>: £500, 2<sup>nd</sup>: £250, 3<sup>rd</sup>: £100; 4 runners-up of £25. Prize giving will be in October at the Essex Poetry Festival. Winners & runners-up will be invited to read their winning poems at the festival. Prize winning poems will be published on website. Entry Fee: £3 per poem or £10 for 4 poems. See Essex Poetry Festival website for full details: [www.essex-poetry-festival.co.uk](http://www.essex-poetry-festival.co.uk)

**Accents Publishing International Poetry Book Contest (USA) Deadline: 31 July**

<http://www.accents-publishing.com/contest.html> \$20 Entry fee. 2 winners will be selected - one by an independent judge, and one by the Senior Editor and founder of Accents Publishing. Each winner will have his/her submission published and receive a \$500 cash prize. All contest entries will be considered for regular publication with Accents Publishing, as well. Open to any poet writing in English. Submit 60-120 pages.

**Buzzwords Open Poetry Competition 2011 (UK) Closing Date: 31 July** Prizes: 1st, £600; Runner-up, £300; Highly Commended (x5), £50. For poems up to 70 lines. Entry fee: Postal - £4 per poem or £10 for 3 poems, e-mail - £4.35 per poem for £10 for 3 poems. E-mail: [buzzwords.poetry@gmail.com](mailto:buzzwords.poetry@gmail.com) For entry conditions and form, visit [www.tinyurl.com/poetrycompetition](http://www.tinyurl.com/poetrycompetition)

**Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest (USA) Deadline: 31 July** Poem: 30 lines or fewer on any subject and/or short story, 5 pages max. on any theme, single or double line spacing, neatly hand printed or typed. Cash prizes. Visit <http://www.dreamquestone.com> for details.

**The John Betjeman Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 July** The competition seeks to foster a love of poetry in young people and aims to encourage children aged 10-13 to explore the world they see around them through rhythm and language. Each child is invited to send in (by post or online) one poem on the theme of 'place'. All entries must be attached to a completed entry form. Winners of the poetry competition will be invited to read their poems aloud to an audience of judges, entrants, teachers and parents as well as sponsors and press, at a prize giving held in October on the concourse of St Pancras station, next to the bronze statue of John Betjeman. First prize of £1,000 will be presented by Patron, Joanna Lumley. Five runner-up prizes of £50 book tokens donated by Foyles Bookshop. Free entry. Entry forms at [www.betjemanpoetrycompetition.com](http://www.betjemanpoetrycompetition.com)

**Wells Festival of Literature Poetry and Short Story Competition Closing Date: 31 July**

Poetry category: poems of up to 40 lines on any subject. 1st: £500, 2<sup>nd</sup>: £200, 3<sup>rd</sup>: £100. £50 to be announced at the prize-giving event, for the most popular poem. Entry Fee: £5.00 Website: [www.wellslitfest.org.uk](http://www.wellslitfest.org.uk)

**ScotsCare Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 August** Open to all styles of poetry with the only guideline that it is based on the theme 'A Scot in London'. £1,000 top prize and top 5 entries will go on permanent display in the ScotsCare offices. Free entry. Email your entry including full contact details and a short description of your piece to [ross@scotscare.com](mailto:ross@scotscare.com) marked 'Poetry Competition' OR post to 'FREEPOST License RSLK-KBRR-AGCK', Poetry competition, ScotsCare, Ground Floor, 22 City Rd, London EC1Y 2AJ More details at [www.scotscare.com](http://www.scotscare.com)

**Salopian Poetry Society's 35th Annual Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 August** Open to anyone over the age of 15 years. Maximum 40 lines. 1st: £200; 2nd: £100; 3rd: £50. Six consolation prizes of £30. Entry Fee: £3 per poem or 4 poems for £10 (non-members) [www.thesalopianpoetrysociety.webeden.co.uk](http://www.thesalopianpoetrysociety.webeden.co.uk)

**Short Poems Anthology; Deadline: 31 August** Looking for very short poems: the length of a text message (exactly 160 characters including punctuation), with correct spelling and punctuation, for an anthology of 160 poems. Poems can be on any topic. We will be looking for a publisher once submissions have been received. Please send up to 3 poems and a 75-word (max.) bio with contact information. All submissions and bios should be attached as a Word document (.doc or .docx). Send enquiries and submissions to [mia.retep@gmail.com](mailto:mia.retep@gmail.com)

## *Poetry Opportunities with Loose Deadlines*

**Best New Zealand Poems 2011, Ongoing (Final deadline: 19 December)** Bernadette Hall, the editor of this year's *Best NZ Poems* (2011), is asking poets to send her a copy of any poems that are published in the year, January to early December. Please send the material as an attachment, Word document. Include the location of its publication, title, date, page number, ISBN number etc (as appropriate). E:

[bernadette.hall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:bernadette.hall@vuw.ac.nz)

**(MAI) Maori and Indigenous Review Journal** [www.review.mai.ac.nz](http://www.review.mai.ac.nz) Register onsite and submit – looking for poems that contribute to the "development of Maori and Indigenous peoples". These are welcomed year round. Poetry Editor: **Vaughan Rapatahana**, whose third book *Home Away Elsewhere* is forthcoming from Proverse Press (Hong Kong).

**Tyneside Poets - Call for submissions from New Zealand Poets.** UK Poet Dave Freeman, in association with the NZPS, invites New Zealand poets to submit to the Tyneside Poets blog: "The 'we' is me and fellow blog editor Keith Armstrong. We met back in the mid-1970s through a group of writers styling themselves as the Tyneside poets. We produced a reasonably regular journal, *Poetry North East*, and performed readings in pubs, clubs, at festivals and on local radio. The group ran its course and we all moved on to other things. A few of us continued writing and maintained informal links. Then a couple of years ago [www.poetrytyneside.blogspot.com](http://www.poetrytyneside.blogspot.com) was born, initially to archive on-line material from *PNE*, copies of which are archived at Durham University. However, we soon began to use the blog as a vehicle for former Tyneside Poets to post current work as well.

"From the 1970s onwards the TP had international connections in Europe, so as I was going to NZ it seemed a good idea to form links there as well. Thus our invitation for submissions. Hopefully it will be fruitful collaboration."

Send 2 or 3 poems in a Word attachment to: [tynesidesubs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tynesidesubs@hotmail.co.uk) As always, we advise you to visit the site before submitting, to see what kind of poetry they publish.

## *Surfing the Net*

<http://onestoppoetry.com/poetry-forms> A series of writings on an interesting variety of forms. If you've ever had a burning ambition to write a shadorma (Spanish) or an ottava rima (14<sup>th</sup> Century, Italian) and didn't know where to start, try here. An active poetry site.

[http://www.writingforward.com/category/writing\\_exercises/poetry-writing-exercises](http://www.writingforward.com/category/writing_exercises/poetry-writing-exercises) Some excellent tips on memorising poetry for recital.

<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/terrible-poetry-jokes> What it says. They really are terrible, but somehow compelling. Don't blame me if you waste time on this site. I warned you.

<http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/09/sadrist-verse-poetry-contest-celebratesiraqi-resistance/>

The other end of the spectrum - a poetry contest with a difference: "... the first-ever Poetry Competition of the Iraqi Resistance, dedicated to rewarding the most lyrical broadsides against the eight-year war and the footprints left by American forces."

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-lundberg/raising-the-bar-for-digit\\_b\\_874764.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-lundberg/raising-the-bar-for-digit_b_874764.html) Why you need an iPad.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/7606367.html> Making poetry pay - an inspiring story about a Texan woman who takes her poetry to the people.

<http://www.rachellegardner.com/2011/05/poetry-contest-winners/> Some humorous poems about the experience of having your writing rejected. The contest was run by a literary agent.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/patrick-pressl/post\\_2030\\_b\\_861934.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/patrick-pressl/post_2030_b_861934.html) A poet reviews the evening of poetry hosted by First Lady Obama at the White House on May 11. With a YouTube clip of the event.

<http://www.psfk.com/2011/05/acoustic-poetry-soundscapes-for-the-hearing-impaired.html> What it says. Impressive.

[http://host.madison.com/wsj/entertainment/arts\\_and\\_theatre/books/article\\_9cc64905-fe03-518d-8676-30562f149dd9.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/entertainment/arts_and_theatre/books/article_9cc64905-fe03-518d-8676-30562f149dd9.html) Interview with the marvellous Billy Collins, who talks as beautifully as he writes. (But I could be biased.)

## ***American Life in Poetry: Column 264***

*By Ted Kooser, US Poet Laureate, 2004-2006*

Wendy Videlock lives in western Colorado, where a person can stop to study what an owl has left behind without being run over by a taxi.

### **The Owl**

Beneath her nest,  
a shrew's head,  
a finch's beak  
and the bones  
of a quail attest

the owl devours  
the hour,  
and disregards  
the rest.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Reprinted from *Poetry*, January 2009, by permission of Wendy Videlock and the publisher.

A writer's problem does not change. It is always how to write truly and having found out what is true to project it in such a way that it becomes part of the experience of the person who reads it.

*Ernest Hemingway*

## ***Featured Poet: Charmaine Thomson***

### **Panama St**

Someone may need a stapler later  
It is possible that there is work to be done  
but highly unlikely  
Given the weather forecast,  
The economic crisis,  
And the broken window across the street.  
But the residents don't seem to mind  
They decorate their apartment with celebutantes  
To keep out the drafts  
practicing amateur nudity despite the cold  
Smoking precariously on the balcony  
Playing skittles with beer bottles.  
Commuters are easy targets  
It serves them right for being so grim  
Mushroomed under umbrellas  
passing the corner baristas  
Soliciting caffeine addicts  
Cheaper and more disposable than  
any assignation  
Hurry up and wait  
until 5pm

### **My Green Coat**

My parrot coat is much admired  
People speculate that it was expensive  
I just bought it to keep my kidneys warm  
To barricade my neck on the walk to work

It is an exuberant piece  
That elicits conversation  
When none existed  
A personality hanging off my chair

My other coats are less forthcoming  
The trench coat is too martial  
My candy floss coat is too frivolous  
The puffer jacket is trying too hard

This woolen torso is alive,  
A living sculpture  
It frames my boots  
As a grand drape.

## How to long for the moon

*After Rumi*

Suddenly you appeared on the corner  
Incandescent with words  
We drank too much in.

Fantail hands in the air and lips dancing  
As if your eyes were mine  
And your hands were rivulets in my hair.

## Año Nuevo

The yachts have fallen asleep  
Waiting for that midnight union  
that never happens.  
They slumber as companions  
lulled by the sinuous waves  
and the inarticulate dark.

This unstable island  
held by the sea  
Leaves regrets  
and delicate tremors  
Diminishing  
beneath the passing year.

The stars have all scattered  
leaving only asphalt  
and shadows  
Enfolding each quiet house.  
No shimmers of dreams  
or revelations.

## Como la lluvia

*i.m. Hone Tuwhare, 1922 - 2008*

The  
hands  
are deft  
delicate  
pure incantations.  
The hands are subtle, disciplined  
Not easily distracted, his hands are just perfect.  
The hands are surprisingly small  
and nest well in palms  
The hands are  
refined  
like  
rain.

## **Paper planes**

Paper planes are the dreams of small boys  
unfettered at the weekends.

Sneakers are negative prints for Popsicle toes  
taking the corners for a ride.

Marbles are bagatelles  
rolling like snakes.

Trampolines are charcoal nets  
catching broken arms and collarbones.

Paddocks are green compasses  
pointing to water pistols.

Handstands are how the world should be;  
inversions with collapsible laughter.

Granddads are old like statues  
but good for three stories.

Bikes are for hurling shadows  
until the sun turns off.

## **El puente se lamenta**

The bridge is lamenting  
Bending to reach the other side of the tracks  
Beyond rain, beyond the cocoa dust  
That drapes the subterranean cars

Bending to reach the other side of the tracks  
The fences guard against pedestrians  
Seeking safe passage above the everyday  
To reach their quiet rooms

The fences guard against pedestrians  
With wild umbrellas and unsuitable shoes  
Striding out against the clock  
For some inexplicable reward

With wild umbrellas and unsuitable shoes  
The bridge collects secrets like a raven  
And decorates each curve  
with departures.

## **Heliotrope**

Belongs on the eyelids of infants  
or smudged in books  
and streamed across arcs  
Coalescing three times  
in the soluble dreams  
of the bruised  
and the addicts  
Staying up till dawn

*Based on Heliotrope, by John Psathas, for clarinet and electroacoustic, Rattle Records 2011*

## **In the Corners**

It was in the corner  
That your watch timed out  
Raising the silence to your mouth  
and the minutes fell open

Gathering up silk  
under the weight of dark water  
Only the pressed corners  
felt the fibres of you

Something shivered over the earth  
The car slept outside your door  
Leaving only shadow and scent  
and breath

## **Sustained silent reading**

He  
sat  
silent  
Breathing in  
all that had gone right  
Consuming far flung memories  
of ice blocks, and diving into aquamarine skies  
Solar freckled days that stretched out  
endlessly for weeks  
Volcanic  
shadows  
burnt  
sand

*Published in Fib Review #9*

## Reviews

*The Pop Artist's Garland: Selected Poems 1952-2009* by F W N Wright ed. Mark Pirie (HeadworX, 2010)  
103pp ISBN 978-0-473-16871-1

Gill Ward

This volume of poetry, just over 100 pages, initially hit me as more of a kaleidoscope than a garland. Mark Pirie has put together a showcase of Niel Wright's poetry from 1952 – 2009. On deeper reading, these poems are indeed a garland of a myriad shapes and forms. To his great credit Pirie has completed a worthy undertaking in representing Wright's poetry in its many forms. To name a few of these – epigrams, triolets, odes, pop songs, sonnets, narrative verse, lyrics, elegies and ballads. He has 'done Wright proud'.

Niel Wright has not only written over 3000 poems in his writing life, but also critical writings, essays on N.Z. writers and British authors, plays, novels, short stories and more. Further research into Wright, and the important writers he has documented, will take your breath away. You will ponder that Wright has lived about his age – surely he must be at least 210 years old to have written so prolifically?

But back to this important poetical selection. Pirie has attempted to select work that is "readily accessible to the public". It is a brave attempt and he must have found it an enormous task. The range is so wide that some of these poems will appeal more to some readers than others. Don't expect any kind of conformity of style. The old adage 'you cannot please all of the people all of the time' applies here. Niel Wright forges his own path. His poems feel important but also challenging. At times they seem random and esoteric, but the impression remains that the words, lines, and shape of each poem are deliberate and assiduously chosen. They are rich in history and ancient reference. They owe allegiance to many literary and classical sources and poets. They also draw on the past and present New Zealand scene. Some are humorous /ironic ('Youth and Age II') and some poignant ('Midsummer IV'). Many made me smile; some puzzled me. At times I felt disadvantaged by being unfamiliar with some literary and historical references – although many times I fled to my computer to help close the gap.

Wright names Denis List as one of his important references and there are two moving poems for the late List. There were times when I wished I was reviewing List – I find his poetry less challenging!

Before you read this volume I direct you, as Pirie does, to Niel Wright's entry on Wikipedia, where I suspect Pirie is the primary source. You will get the feel of this important and prolific poet who is largely unrepresented in New Zealand anthologies. Pirie has done Wright and his readers a brave justice in bringing so much of Wright's work to our attention by publishing this selection. It is a volume which will sit well in the recently formed Poetry Archive in Wellington.

To finish with an example:

### WORDS II

Boy with such music in his head  
I match with insight too prophetic.  
Was filled with fear for? what he heard,  
Boy with such music in his head.

No less in old age than boyhood,  
I relish words creative, vatic.  
Boy with such music in his head,  
I match with insight too prophetic  
(2009)

**VIET NAM: a poem journey** Jenny Powell (HeadworX, 2010) RRP \$24.99 ISBN 978-0-473-14361-9

Gill Ward

Jenny Powell is an established New Zealand poet with 5 previous collections. She is well skilled at her art and this book of poems is tight and strong. It is a nicely presented book with photos interspersed to give a pictorial reference to her words.

When I first read about this collection I thought it was peculiar to write a whole book describing a country you had 'only visited in your imagination', as Powell wrote in her introduction. Although the book did nothing to disabuse me of this notion, I did enjoy the poems. I liked the way Jenny mapped her imaginary journey. She chose her words carefully and thoughtfully to convey her love (and should I say longing?) for a country to which she had never been.

It is stylish and at times emotional volume, always balancing energy with peace and a narrative of colour and movement, vegetation, crowds, heat, bustle and the smells and sights of a country new and strange but somehow *known*.

I felt it was all there, Viet Nam and a smattering of Aotearoa.

The section of the book that drew me in most convincingly was our introduction to the arrival of a Vietnamese music teacher, Hao, who came to live with Jenny for his stay in New Zealand. The description of a somewhat bewildered stranger in a strange land is gentle and moving.

This whole book is two things: first it is a love song for Viet Nam, meticulously set on each page, and secondly it is indisputably a travel book. If you have visited Viet Nam you will identify strongly with each poem. They will take you back there. Having said that, I found it hard to separate myself from the impression that I was watching a slide show with Jenny telling me these things from her slide show – not from her visit. She set herself a hard task. I feel that she achieved it for the most part because of her delicate writing and her light touch with words. She did not overwrite these poems; they are a lovely tribute to Viet Nam, its beauty and its people. I am certain that Hao would have been affected when he read them. It is a poignant and sensitive piece of work and I admire Jenny for completing such a brave assignment.

Jenny Powell is a strong figure in the New Zealand poetry scene. I hope she comes to Wellington some time soon and gives us fair warning so we can suggest she reads for poetry lovers in the capital. And I hope she gets a chance to visit Viet Nam soon.

This is a book of poetry you will want to read more than once.

**Watching for Smoke** Helen Heath (Seraph Press, 2009) RRP \$20 ISBN: 978-0-473-15379-3

Laurice Gilbert

The first thing you notice about this delicious hand-bound chapbook, fastened with a recycled knitting needle, is the intensely sensuous nature of the book itself. Its textured cover and creamy paper stock are highly appropriate for the sensory nature of the 11 poems held within.

In a limited edition of only 100 (mine is number 87), this is the first collection by an accomplished poet, prior to studying for an MA in Creative Writing from the IIML, who has been building her poetry credentials for some years. Helen Heath was the administrator of the NZPS before the committee positions were combined in the job of National Coordinator, and she has a modest publishing history.

The opening poem is an old friend; I was present when she wrote it at a Victoria University poetry workshop with the grand title, 'Sex, Religion and Politics'. 'Spilt' explores the first of these:

The touch of your hand on my  
breast brings little needles and  
I let down first just a drop, another drop ...

– an apt start to a collection that covers love and parenthood, home and family, not always happily. From 'I killed my mother':

... and wishing  
her away, cutting her out  
of photos with a pair  
of nail scissors...

'Infallible father' suggests the paternal relationship was more satisfying: "Every question had an answer/ even in chaos."

The poems are commentaries on the important details in the poet's life, with universal resonance, as good poems often are. In 'Diving' she notices,

wild oregano fresh from rain,  
and iris flowers the size  
of your smallest fingernail,  
the goats bleating: *maa*.

as she waits at the foot of a death bed, "laid out flat,/ eyes open."

Having travelled from reproduction to end-of-life, the collection ends with 'How we disappear', a series of 3-line thoughts, memories, observations, rather like that writing exercise where you read through what you've written and underline particularly interesting or reverberant fragments, for use as source material. Nevertheless, they make a sort of chronological sense that neatly sums up the loss of self that sometimes accompanies family life.

Such a short collection almost asks to be quoted in full; the first read-through is very quick. But it rewards re-reading, like watching a favourite movie – there's still more to see the second time round.

Heath's first full collection, *Graft*, her MA project, has been accepted by VUP for publication in 2012. I can't wait.

A true poet does not bother to be poetical. Nor does a nursery gardener scent his roses.

Jean Cocteau, 1889 – 1963

*Leaving the tableland* Kerry Popplewell (Steele Roberts, 2010) ISBN: 978-1-877448-95-9

Liz Breslin

Notes in a poetry collection are a good sign of meatiness, along with the need to reach for a dictionary.

*Leaving the Tableland* has both these attributes going for it. Encomiums, anyone?

This book is separated into four sections: *Acclimatisation*, *The Constancy of Water*, *Making It* and *Leaving the Tableland*. It's Kerry Popplewell's first collection, which she acknowledges "would have happened sooner had she not been distracted by grandchildren and her interest in tramping." These twin loves make their way into her recollections and recreations of the everyday throughout the pages.

'Harvest' sits next to the title poem of the first section. There's something of the Seamus Heaney about it, and not just the digging, the potatoes and the Irish ancestors. Popplewell writes,

In the past I have noodled -  
with stealth - for undersized loot,  
the leaves still juicy and green.

But today I am digging potatoes

The words of the Offertory work neatly as her conclusion – "the fruit of the earth,/ the work of human hands. "

'Portrait: Paihiatua 1942' is more than just that; deeper than the snapshot the husband carries. The war is absent/ present also in the pregnant tones of 'Summer, 1943' and makes a guest appearance in 'Curve', dedicated, presumably, to a granddaughter, Ava. 'Gifts for a Granddaughter, for Grace' muses on the

gifts passed on through the generations. Genes, heirlooms, jewellery? And, more personally,

my copy of Dorothy  
Wordsworth's journal? This was a present  
from a dear friend who died ten years ago.  
But how explain the solace given me  
by those unguarded entries, so translucent  
and brief? I have read them over and over.

The second section – *The Constancy of Water* – runs from the light-hearted (if over-blown) title poem,  
through the light intrigue of 'Ghost child' to the bleak strength of 'After the funeral':

Now the necessary estrangement begins;  
and, though we would resist,  
the sun insists on rising,  
the cat on being fed.

(That, incidentally, was the poem that necessitated the dictionary. Encomiums. They're eulogies. )

A couple of other nice discoveries happen in this section. The 'Princessa della Medici', found in the  
Uffizi, and a quiet grave found in the 'Cimitero Acattolico', quoted here in full:

I went, of course,  
to see the other graves:

Keats first, then Shelley -  
Severn and Trelawny

in seemly proximity;  
and the cats, the wonderful pines...

Then, Diane Rosemary Hardimann,  
I discovered you.

When you died in 1967  
you had just reached thirty-two.

Paul preached in this city:  
he called for commitment.

Your stone stated yours  
in a single word.

'Artist,' it said.  
No more.

Nice. But why the dot dot dot after pines? It distracts a few times through this collection. Aren't ellipses  
assumed in poetry anyway?

*Making it* seems a more constructed section. 'Legacy' is nice, and the women standing strong against  
the wind in 'Grit' could be the Pahiatua wife many years on and freed from her headscarf:

White hair awry, the women  
are thrust forward by a tail wind.  
They cannot turn around

and it will not stop blowing.  
They brace, dig in their heels.  
They refuse to be moved.

'Letter for Juliet' stands out as an exercise in catharsis; a personal tale told.

The final section contains fifteen poems from "memory's ragtag store" ('Leaving the Tableland'). 'Seeing the Red Hills again' is a lament for these Fiordland hills,

irresistible  
irrefragable rock,  
bare resonance of red,  
their ultramafic slopes held no  
snow grass or herb bed.

As a girl of seventeen, she meant to climb them "some later day" but now they are

...only for others to cross.  
This loss I must wear

as emblem of all things  
once possible, now  
not. How fugitive  
those futures, stowed with care  
in some high attic of the mind's  
cold, unkind, dry air.

'On Pakihore Ridge' and 'This moment' provide some short, sweet windy vistas.

'Outback' contains some memorable descriptions – "Roads straight as a perspective line...a hoarse ululation...a magpie provides national coverage". Lovely.

'Memory, for John', is, well, memorable; the uncertainty of different recollections juxtaposed with death on the tops and a collapsed bridge. It says a lot more than it says, and doesn't need that ellipsis again to emphasise that.

The final poem, 'Song in another country', may,

dream on the lenient sand  
where gum trees guard, tall sentinels,  
the margins of the land.

but the voice is the familiar same, recognisable through the collection. Tender, earthy, grounded. Nice.

## ***Regional Report***

WINDRIFT, WELLINGTON (April 2011)

*Bevan Greenslade*

Contributions were received from five attending and three corresponding members.

We addressed 3 themes: wood; calm; ruffle/s/d. Contributions included:

### 1. wood

the smell  
of woodchips  
from the paper mill  
a delightful memory  
from my childhood

Harumi Hasegawa

today's meal  
on kauri mats  
two thousand years old

Karen Butterworth

2. calm

willow  
washing her hair  
in the Waikato  
Ernie Berry

Mt Cook lily  
its calm stirs  
tourists pass  
Neil Whitehead

3. ruffle

earthquake  
'The Virgin Mary'  
in the basilica ruins  
Nola Borrell

strange little hospital noises  
the night-nurse's torch  
ruffling curtains  
Penny Pruden

Karen offered 'Lake Matheson' themed haiku in two categories and felt stuck on the Lake for the third, generating this tongue-in-cheek exclamation, which was received with appreciative and sympathetic laughter:

seeking a kigo for 'calm'  
i keep returning to  
bloody lake Matheson.  
Karen Butterworth

### ***Mini Competition***

Even with the main poetry competition out of my hands for the time being, the entries having been despatched to the mercies of the judges and editor, I'm letting the ever-resourceful and inventive John O'Connor dictate the form of this issue's competition. The prize is *Slipstream*, by Paula Green (AUP, 2010) (co-author, with Harry Ricketts, of *99 Ways into New Zealand Poetry*).

#### **TWO BIRD BOXES**

*John O'Connor*

There's no need for me to outline the nature of Two Bird Boxes, its six (writing) guidelines are enough to do that:

#### **GUIDELINES**

- 1) Each verse to be one of a set of two.
- 2) Verses within and between sets may have different forms.
- 3) Each verse to name a bird or birds of some type. (The same type of bird doesn't have to appear in each of the two verses of a set.)
- 4) Each verse to have at least one end rhyme.
- 5) Verses may be one to six lines long.
- 6) The second verse (per set) uses *a different form of* either of the first verse's rhyme words as one of its own rhyme words.

A few examples:

(1) BLACK BIRD POEM

While the fox has a hole  
& the eagle an aerie  
                                  the mid-winter black bird  
                                  does not have a berry.

(2) CANARY POEM

Shopping for jail birds, juffers & berries,  
doodle bombs, sling shots & chirpie canaries!

(1) SPARROW POEM

Scruffy, indulgent, nit-picky, narrow /  
                                  the hoppy, licentious, ½-witted sparrow!

(2) GULL POEM

                                  The haughty gull  
                                  (not quite regal)  
dives with a confident swish  
you couldn't call sparrowish.

(1) GRAY TEAL POEM

The gray teal  
is for real;  
more than one can say  
of the ibis, gray.

(2) YELLOWHAMMER POEM

Really  
they're just too "touchy feely" —  
*yellowhammer, redpoll,*  
*chaffinch.*

One could go on. But, "Why bother?" Well, there are several reasons. The first is highly practical, if conjectural. Suppose you're a teacher and have lost that wonderful book on/ of verse forms that students love to mess around with . . . You can see where I'm going. Naturally the guidelines (demands) will have to be simplified for younger pupils and birds can be replaced by anything you (or they) happen to fancy: Two Car Boxes, Two Dress Boxes, Two Flower Boxes, Two Band Boxes and so on.

Then again there doesn't always have to have an obvious reason/ use. So, what better way to spend a wet Sunday afternoon yourself — flipping through your favourite bird books, idling away on the computer now and then? After all, to tediously repeat the point, poetry/ verse doesn't *have* to be serious

&/ or purpose serving. It can just be fun, or done for its own sake, and additionally, what greater satisfaction can there be than imagining your relatives (hopefully on a far off day) going through your papers and remarking (not altogether unkindly) what a thoroughly odd fellow you were?

SEPTEMBER DEADLINE IS 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST

## MEMBERS' POEMS

### Jean

At last the waka  
pulls from clinging clay  
rides the wild water  
soars the rainbow spray.

Heave, heave  
the anchor stone.  
Te wairua  
fly swiftly.  
See the plume  
of huia brightness  
pierce the gloom of night.

Rise, rise  
the paddles  
to the sea.

*Maureen Sudlow*

### Diagnosis

What has to wait grows heavy.  
Rows of chairs in submission. Salt-early,  
it is easy to hope. I prefer to stand,  
listening, pretending to be a fish.  
When I look at stones I don't exist. Instead of  
running, it is better to float. Until the event occurs,  
if it does. Strangers are statements, pretending  
to be questions, pretending to know me  
because they have my name and my birth day.  
You must say my name twice, three times,  
like speaking into a seashell. All the buttons  
on my coat are gone. It is not uncommon but  
I'm tired. I can't anymore.

*Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle*

## Winter Moon

She dresses the buildings and strokes the shiny bitumen,  
her light bathes the city in lurex,  
the shadows make holes in her cloak.

Within these holes bad acts are hatched  
as theft steals towards his quarry  
and murder murmurs indecent thoughts.

Beyond the city the moon walks softly  
amongst the herds and flocks and hedges  
the shadow holes are smaller here,  
the water mirrors her silver tread,  
theft is less visible  
and murder hides in houses while neighbours sleep

At sea the moon walks her path on water  
to bobbing crucibles,  
floating in their horizon-bound pools  
theft is contained within each craft,  
and murder frolics...  
with the fish below.

*Derryn Pittar*

## Interface

Janus-like, the poet seeks a muse:  
facing inwards scours memory banks,  
the way gumbooted children at the edge  
of a river poke sticks in muddy holes  
to surprise creatures that delight and frighten,  
then, squealing, run for cover, or for something  
– some person, or a memory of a person, or a time  
when it was safe to feel, to say whatever  
came into their heads, to be alone without  
being lonely. Because there was the past, held  
gently in two chubby hands, like that duckling  
we found, all fluff and cheep, until  
the real world caught up with it – the outward  
gaze: the clang, the clash, the reason, the butt,  
the buttoning-up, that meaning-giving thread  
intertwined, twisted sometimes. Tangled.  
Taut knots, not the predictable reefs,  
nor the bowlines I never mastered.

Cousies and cossies, while shifting sands whisper  
of a tsunami building off South America.

*Karen Zelas*

## Goodwill to all men

Elbows adrift he cleared the way to the  
raspberry stall ignoring the line of women.  
Goodwill to all men but stuff if he was gonna  
queue up behind this tinsel of females.

He had other things to do on a Christmas  
eve, only the wife always counted on him  
for the berries and no wardrobe of women  
was gonna make him muck around all day.

Bloke refused to serve him 'cos he jumped  
the queue. Hell he'd never managed leapfrog  
at school so what sort of fantasy saw him  
jumping this load of lovelies.

Blowing a raspberry in the stallholder's face  
he headed off to face trolleys trundled  
in time to Silent Night or whatever music  
enticed customers to part with their cash.

Bing was crooning about the snow  
falling, so even he tossed in a pack of  
mincemeat pies and shivered  
as he passed the freezers.

The blond kid on checkout picked up his  
vibes along with the raspberries and pies.  
She bagged the lot before venturing, be  
goodwill to all men when it's over sir.

*Ruth Arnison*

*Published in the Otago Daily Times*

## Ratatouille

Casting her eye over the meal  
the youngest gathered a forkful  
and asked

if this, redirecting her eyebrows  
to perform an indicative trick,  
had a name

When her Father answered Ratatouille  
she replied, all the cast or just  
the main characters?

*Ruth Arnison*

*Published in Off the Coast, Fall 2009*

## A Bofors Gun

When we were kids we played on a Bofors gun  
grey and stark it perched on a flattened hilltop  
meant to confuse Jap planes the hidden gun fired at

Back in the real-fear time it had its troops  
busy looking convincing playing at gunnery  
- our mother boiled their tea-water in her copper

A seaplane flew over Wellington once for a look-see  
then scrambled back to its sub, and no-one noticed  
- it may have been impressed, since no more came

After the real gun left the other lingered  
came in useful again for playing on  
- few now to remember its real wood

*John C. Ross*