

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

JULY 2012

ISBN 1178-3931



NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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WELLINGTON MEETINGS
Poetry @ The Thistle Inn
3 Mulgrave St, Wellington Central
Starts at 7.30pm with open mic.

Monday 16 July, 7.30pm

AGM, followed by:

Guest Poet: Jenny Powell (Dunedin)
- there will be no open mic

Monday 13 August, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Richard Langston
(Wellington)

*Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities
Wellington Local Funding Scheme.*

a lame, embarrassing, rhyming thing

Liz Breslin

Primary school kids and poetry go together like Tim Tams and a cup of tea. My two estimate that about half their writing time is spent on poems; that doesn't include reading them. Lucky, lucky things. But fast forward to High School and poetry is less of a daily art form and more of a 'lame, embarrassing rhyming thing, right?' Not my words, those ...

At our 2011 Poetic Justice Youth Slam there were double figures in the under-nines, an impressive line-up in the 9-14 year olds and one single solitary player in the 15-19 age group. An easy win for Eleanor. So what happens? Does puberty bring a poetry bypass? To be fair, I cringe when I revisit most of the teenage poems I wrote, but it was a great outlet at the time.

Last year I spent some interesting weeks teaching poetry at high schools. Teaching in the loosest sense: I was working with the gifted and talented, or especially differently smart classes, or however they're named these days. I get confused. They were great kids. And I was greatly relieved not to have to be a proper teacher. My challenge: to get them to write a complete formal poem.

Things they already knew about poems were put on the board (hence the lame, embarrassing, rhyming business) and so to work. It would've been easy for me to write all the rules of sonneteering or villanellation on the board and ready, steady, go, but with a large majority of engineering-brained boys in the class I took a different approach. I gave out copies of two of my formal poems and got them to unpick them for any structural order they could find. I don't suppose it hurt that the poems were about wanting to dress up as Luke Skywalker at school and "my butt too big, my tits too small/ my mirror, mirror on the wall".

So after we'd got over the tangents of May the Fourth being Star Wars day (as in May the Fourth be with you) and when and whether it's appropriate to swear or say butt in a poem, we ended up with a fairly tidy list of formal poetry facts on the board. I have to say it worked way better with the Skywalker Sonnet than the Mirror Villanelle and so given the chance to do it all over again, I'd concentrate on just the one.

They noticed these things: 14 lines, 10 syllables in each. A rhyme of every other line in groups of four. Two lines that rhyme at the end. None of them knew the word couplet. But some happy souls remembered this thing called iambic pentameter and even recalled how to gallop around the room to test your lines for iambs. So we did that for a while. And then wrote sonnets in small groups; write a line and pass it on. It's actually horribly difficult, that. To get a juicy rhythm going and have someone else interrupt it. So their homework – to write a whole, actual, total complete sonnet themselves – came as a light relief to some. And a few of the resulting poems ended up in more than homework books: in the local paper, on stage with Sam Hunt and even in the 2011 NZPS Anthology, *ice diver*. Not bad for a lame, embarrassing, rhyming thing, right?

Poetry as Performance

Greg O'Connell

The joy of poetry as performance is simply to do it – anyone, any age, any time, any form, anywhere, any how.

I learnt very young that anyone can perform poetry because my mother did. At bedtime, if I was lucky, she would sit on the edge of my bed and read stories and poems. Mostly poems. She would really go for it. Her features would morph into all manner of familiar or surprising characters. She introduced me to the names of Robert Louis Stevenson, Ogden Nash, Banjo Paterson, Walter de la Mare, James K. Baxter, and many more. Her voice would pitch and toss, creep and race. Without music, she would make the words sing for her willing audience of one. I laughed, savoured, thought, discussed, requested and coaxed. I was mesmerised and delighted. And a poetry fan for life.

Then, as soon as I began to interpret print on a page, I had a go at the same things – voicing words for the sheer joy of it and to hear my mother's thrilled response and to discover just what the language could do. Already, I knew by heart nursery rhymes and songs – which, to me, all seemed to be poetry with a twist. Even at Sunday mass, the priest was projecting poems from the pulpit, straight out of *The Psalms* and *The Song of Songs*. At fifteen, there was the teenage elation of meeting my first girlfriend. In a state of post-pubescent bliss, we revelled in the lyrics of Cat Stevens and Don McLean. We wrote poems and whispered them to one another.

In our house in Oamaru, the annual Christmas concert involved all six kids presenting items for our parents and grandparents in the front lounge. The girls tended to sing. The boys tended to recite. One year, Grandad set up a tabletop microphone to record the event, and the resulting cassette tape has been raising laughs ever since. When my teenage daughter was still a toddler, her favourite picture books included rhyming texts like *Esio Trot* by Roald Dahl, and *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* by Eve Sutton. I would do my best to read animatedly, often with weary and stinging eyes at the end of a busy day. But the look on Ruby's face and the signs of cognitive cogs whirring in her rapidly-developing brain were well worth it.

Now, as a published poet, I'm always reassured to see the range of poetry accepted by the editors of our iconic *School Journal*. Whatever categories we assign to the seemingly endless varieties of poetry, the editors appear willing to embrace them all. Audiences do the same. I know from experience that an audience or workshop in any school will respond enthusiastically to the power of performed words. This next generation of poetry fans is completely receptive to the many platforms of intellectual and emotional stimulation being made available for them.

Beyond institutions of learning, a host of everyday opportunities present themselves to enjoy poetry as performance. On my laptop is a striking photo gallery of images taken at a local surf contest, where I was invited to perform. The picnic area, at a scenic beach south of Punakaiki, is packed with surfers in their wetsuits, joining in with the actions. And smiling and laughing. This bunch of very athletic, very adventurous, very cool individuals embraced the poems with exactly the same spirit of fun as do the preschoolers at the local library.

Everywhere I turn, there seems to be a poetry revolution going on. People are creating poetry blogs. People are joining our monthly poetry group. People are posting poetry videos on YouTube. People are offering poetry courses. People are showcasing poetry at all manner of venues. People are donating to poetry. People are featuring poets in magazines and on television. And people are signing up to the New Zealand Poetry Society. Poets and poetry fans are everywhere. There's no great mystery, no big secret. The seeds of this sprouting renewal are the poems themselves, the power of words to bring us joy. And the joy of poetry as performance is in the hearing, the seeing – and the doing.

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

Lucky me – I've just attended the third Haiku Festival Aotearoa, in Tauranga. Meticulously organised by Sandra Simpson and Margaret Beverland, the Festival took place over a winter weekend that was sure to spark some splendid writing. It included a bus trip to the Katikati Haiku Pathway for a walk in cool but welcome sunshine (followed by a quiet [ish] drink at a local establishment for several of us).

Among the most exciting elements of the weekend was the presence of international haiku poets as both presenters and registrants. Jim Kacian, haikin extraordinaire, was here from the USA, accompanied by his wife, Maureen; and Beverley George, Cynthia Rowe and Vanessa Proctor (highly esteemed poets in their own right), among others, crossed the ditch from Australia. The leading lights of the NZ haiku community were out in force, and there was a good dash of people I didn't already know as well.

Quite apart from the impressive quality of the masterclasses, presentations and workshops, there was a real sense that we're all in this together. Whether you were a master of the Japanese forms, with screeds of publication credits or (like me) an interested dabbler, or somewhere in between, the mood was one of collaboration and sharing. In particular, Jim

suggested the somewhat radical notion that at such a Festival we should be sharing our work with each other – try that at a Writers and Readers Week!

We all discover quite quickly that “there’s no money in poetry”, the odd competition win or \$20 from *Landfall* notwithstanding, and haiku is a literary niche within a niche. Which makes it all the more remarkable that so many people are dedicated to improving their grasp of quite demanding forms. I learned a lot in a short time.

the Desert Road – snow in the shadows

Letter to the Editor

Reviews reviewed

In the May issue of *a fine line*, Vaughan Rapatahana reviews recent poetry collections by Rhian Gallagher and Airini Beauvais.

When I read a review, I want to know whether, in the reviewer’s considered and informed opinion, the poetry under review succeeds on its own terms. I want to know, objectively, what those terms are.

Rapatahana’s reviews tell me much about Rapatahana and very little about the work he is reviewing. What it tells me about Rapatahana is that he has an axe to grind. These collections appear to offend Rapatahana’s notions of how a New Zealand author ought to write. And how ought we to write? Rapatahana wants poetry that “makes-you-want-to-grab-it-and-smear-it-on-your-face”. He wants us to “stoke the full frontal furnace”, open our “fingernail screeching vents” and curse more. He dislikes “arbitrarily prescribed matters of metre and line-length and stanza and the rigid word arrangement on the page”, although I think we are allowed to “delve into the inverse passive subject-object co-ordinate”.

He then goes on to dismiss the poets under review for failing Rapatahana’s own arbitrarily prescribed tests.

Most disturbingly, Rapatahana dismisses Beauvais and Gallagher because they fail (in his view) to meet his requirement that a New Zealand writer must make reference to the “alternative cultures” the “multicultural ambience” and “ethnic divergence” of New Zealand. Surely Beauvais and Gallagher are writing from points somewhere on the wide platform of this much-lauded diversity. Aren’t we all? Yet Rapatahana reserves the right to narrow the platform. For example, “anglophilic” references are not seen by Rapatahana as contributing to our country’s ethnic diversity.

Rapatahana is entitled to his personal opinions, but they do not belong in these poetry reviews. He has failed the poets under review, and he has failed us as readers. A more appropriate forum for Rapatahana’s views would be an essay/manifesto for *a fine line*. I look forward to reading it.

Sue Wootton (Dunedin)

About our Contributors

Liz Breslin is currently on leave from life in New Zealand and checking out the poem potential in the UK.

Kirsten Cliff and her husband happily call Hobbiton (Matamata) home, where the hills are alive with haiku. She blogs at : <http://kirstencliffwrites.blogspot.com/>

Heidi North-Bailey is an Auckland writer and freelance editor. In 2007 she won the Irish Féile Filíochta International Poetry Competition. She is currently working on finishing her first poetry collection.

Greg O’Connell is a poet, performer, editor and producer. When not on tour performing, or at home writing, he can be found presenting action rhymes, songs, books and poems to bewildered preschoolers at Grey District Library.

Joanna Preston is an Australian-born Christchurch writer and teacher, whose first poetry collection, *The Summer King*, won both the inaugural Kathleen Grattan Award and the Mary Gilmore Prize.

Patricia Prime is a co-editor of *Kokako*, whose primary interest is in Japanese short form poetry.

Vaughan Rapatahana is a poet, educationalist, and language activist who lives in Hong Kong but considers the small town of Te Araroa near the East Cape of Te Ika a Maui to be his home.

“Depending on who you read, Sylvia Plath was variously perfectly normal, oppressed, manic, depressive, manic-depressive, schizophrenic, a borderline personality, a psychopath, a sociopath, a nymphomaniac, addicted to sleeping tablets, the victim of an Electra complex, a masochist, and very definitely a misogynist. Or was that a feminist?”

John Brownlow, *The Guardian*, 22 August 2003

(from: *Quote Poet Unquote*, ed. Dennis O’Driscoll. Copper Canyon Press, Washington, 2008)

A Warm Welcome To ...

Aidan Westrupp Christchurch
Arthur Amon Auckland
Benita Kape Gisborne
Beverley Teague Auckland
David Griffin Invercargill
Deborah Jones Auckland
Gillian Roach Auckland
Glenn Hancock Papamoa
Jane Simpson Christchurch
Jennifer Fraser Hamilton
Laura C Davis Australia
Melanie Wittwer Auckland
Nick Kyrke-Smith Wellington
Paula Moore USA
Rhonda Baker Waihi
Ruth Corrin Kapiti
Savita Vegil Auckland
Stephanie Musson Christchurch
Sue Courtney Auckland

Congratulations

John Adams has won the 2012 NZSA Jessie Mackay Award for Best First Book of Poetry for his collection, *Briefcase* (reviewed later in this issue).

One of **Ernie Berry**'s haiku was chosen as runner-up in the 5th Annual Hexapod Haiku Challenge (North Carolina State University Insect Museum).

Charles Hadfield has three poems in the current issue of *Takahe* (no 75). Other members with work in this issue are: **Jenny Clay**, **Kirsten Cliff**, **Eric Dodson**, **Janet Newman**, **Jeremy Roberts** and **Kerrin P. Sharpe**.

Greg O'Connell has received a Creative Communities Scheme grant to produce an anthology of the 45 winning poems in the Waitaki District Schools' Steampunk Poetry Competition 2012. Entitled *Steam Rising*, the anthology is due for release later this year.

Tim Upperton has won first prize in the Caselberg Trust International Poetry Competition with his poem, 'All The Things I Never Knew'. His winning poem was published in the May 2012 issue of *Landfall*. Tim's success follows his win of the Bronwyn Tate Memorial Poetry Competition in 2011, and his inclusion in *Best of the Best New Zealand Poems* (VUP, 2011).

Mary Cresswell had a poem Highly Commended in the Caselberg.

"The systematic interrogation of the unconscious, which is part of the serious practice of poetry, is the worst form of self-help you could possibly devise. There is a reason why poets enjoy the highest statistical incidence of mental illness among all the professions ... Then again I think maybe 5 percent of folk who write poetry really want to write poetry; the other 95 [percent] are quite safe, and just want to be a poet."

Don Paterson, T.S.Eliot Lecture, October 2004

(O'Driscoll, *ibid.*)

2012 Annual General Meeting

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The NZPS AGM will be held in Wellington on Monday 16 July (see below). All current committee members are required to resign at the end of their term, so nominations are now being accepted. All nominations need to be made immediately, and may be sent by post or email. They need to be made and seconded by financial members of the NZPS. Post to: The National Coordinator, NZPS, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145, or email to: 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 16 July 2011, upstairs at the Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington.

Agenda:

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2011 AGM
- 3) Matters arising from the 2011 AGM Minutes
- 4) President's Report
- 5) Financial Report
- 6) Proposed Budget for 2012-2013
- 7) Election of Officers – President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Members
- 8) Election of Auditor
- 9) General Business

The AGM will be followed by a reading by Dunedin poet Jenny Powell. There will be no open mic and no entry fee, though donations will still be gratefully accepted.

MINUTES OF THE NZPS AGM, HELD 18 JULY 2011

Present: Laurice Gilbert (President), Dame Fiona Kidman (Patron), Steve Veail (finances), Helen Rickerby, Margaret Vos, Carmen Downes, Mary McCallum, Susan Howard, Louise Marquet, Nick Kyrke-Smith, Robin Fry, Nola Borrell, Roland Vogt, Gill Ward, Alan Wells, Kerry Popplewell, Janis Freegard (minutes).

- 1) Apologies: Tim Jones, Karen Butterworth
- 2) Minutes of 2010 AGM

Laurice Gilbert moved that the minutes be accepted as a record of the 2010 AGM. Carried.

- 3) Matters Arising from the minutes

Alan Wells asked what the consequences were of having the positions of Secretary and Treasurer vacant. Laurice Gilbert replied that the society was required to hold elections. In the absence of an elected Treasurer, Stephen Veail is filling the role.

Dame Fiona Kidman asked whether applications had been sent to Creative New Zealand and Laurice Gilbert replied that they had and that the matter would be covered in the President's report.

- 4) President's Report

The report was read to the meeting.

Dame Fiona Kidman thanked Laurice Gilbert for all her hard work during the year and moved that the report be accepted. Seconded, Margaret Vos. Carried.

Gill Ward thanked Laurice Gilbert for her untiring work on the society's magazine, *a fine line*.

- 5) Financial Report

Steve Veail presented the financial report. Funds are slightly reduced from last year, due to a reduction in both grants and subscriptions. However, the budget is looking healthy going forward and the Creative New Zealand grant has been very helpful. Additional funds raised for the Lauris Edmond Award will be used as the basis for a seeding fund.

A question was raised about unspent tagged grants and Steve explained that this related to the outstanding Creative New Zealand grant, which applies for the calendar year (January - December 2011), not our financial year.

Laurice Gilbert was asked whether PayPal is now set up and she confirmed that it is, for competitions, anthology purchases and membership. Some money has been left in the PayPal account to pay magazine contributors outside New Zealand.

Laurice moved that the accounts be accepted. Carried.

6) Proposed Budget for 2012-2013

It was noted that Laurice has changed the anthology from a loss maker to an income earner. Assets are projected to be \$10,000 at year end. Steve confirmed that assets will drop by \$2,000 to \$3,000 over the year.

Laurice Gilbert moved that the operating budget be accepted. Carried

7) Elections

No nominations were received prior to the meeting and there were no nominations from the floor.

Laurice Gilbert was re-elected as President (to applause) and Tim Jones was re-elected as Vice-President. The positions of Secretary and Treasurer remain vacant. Anne Faulkner, Janis Freegard, Linzy Forbes and Gillian Cameron will remain as committee members. Further members can be co-opted during the year, if need be.

8) Appointment of Auditor

Laurice Gilbert apologised for not arranging an audit this year and moved that we retain Princely Muttiah as our auditor. Seconded Dame Fiona Kidman. Carried.

9) General Business

Kerry Popplewell raised the issue of whether we need to review the Constitution, given the disparity between the current written constitution and what is now practice. Alan Wells asked what was required by law and Dame Fiona Kidman replied that the Charities Commission requires an AGM. The committee will investigate further during the year.

The meeting closed at 8:05pm.

Competitions and Submissions

Update on '100 years from Gallipoli Poetry Project'

From Graeme Lindsay:

"I have got a couple of submissions from New Zealand poets for the 'Behind every war there are good women' Exhibition ...

"The current 'Language of War' Exhibition starts its run next month. In November, it will be in Deloraine when the Tasmanian Craft Fair is on. As part of this I am organising a poetry reading on Remembrance Day at the Empire Hotel – open mike with 'Remembrance' as the theme. As part of this, I plan to get a couple of local women to read a selection of New Zealand poems from the above exhibition – a glass half full attitude that I will have more than enough poems for a New Zealand selection.

"I have also got a guest blog on the ABC Open website. It is called 'A Particular Geography: 100 Years from Gallipoli'. This allows people to make comments, pose questions, etc. Some of your members may like to comment instead of providing a poem. The link is: <http://open.abc.net.au/openregions/tas-northern-82BO2Uo/posts/100-years-from-gallipoli-65th2kp>"

Sliver of Stone Magazine - Call for Submissions (USA)

Reading period ends 15 July Bi-annual, online literary magazine dedicated to the publication of work from both emerging and established poets, writers, and visual artists from all parts of the globe. www.sliverofstonemagazine.com

The New Guard: Knightville Poetry Contest (USA)

Closes: 18 July Entry fee: \$15. Prize: \$1,000 for an exceptional work of narrative and/or experimental poetry. Three poems per entry. Up to 300 lines per poem. Judged by National Poetry Series winner Jeanne Marie Beaumont: <http://www.jeanneMarieBeaumont.com/> You can submit online via the submissions manager or by postal mail with a check for the entry fee. Contest winners and all finalists get two free copies of *TNG*, and each submission will be carefully considered for publication. Final judging is done blind. We accept .doc or similar files - no PDFs, please. We do pay strict attention to word and line count. We are not presently accepting submissions aside from our contests. *TNG* accepts previously unpublished work only. Website: <http://newguardreview.com/> There is also a fiction contest, same deadline, same entry fee. See website.

Wasafiri New Writing Prize (UK)

Closing Date: 27 July For submissions of up to 5 poems. Prize is £300 plus publication in Wasafiri. See website for full details: <http://www.wasafiri.org/wasafiri-new-writing-prize.asp> Entry Fee: £6

Wasafiri, The Open University in London.

The Typewriter, Volume IV - Call for submissions

Deadline: 31 July <http://thetypewriter.wordpress.com/> The editors of *The Typewriter* are pleased to announce the call for submissions for a new issue. We will be reading poetry submissions in July, so dust off your pencils and send in that poem lurking in your desk drawer! There are a couple of changes to *The Typewriter* webzine, so listen closely. *The Typewriter* has previously dedicated its pages to emerging New Zealand poets; however, we would love to extend the criteria to encompass early-mid career Australasian and Asia-Pacific poets, as well as our Kiwi writers. We are open to all genres and forms of poetry, as long as they are well crafted and representative of your best work. We would encourage submitters to read the previous volumes of *The Typewriter* before sending in their work, to establish which of their poems suit the webzine. Submissions are now officially open. Send, send, send us your best work! All poets will be contacted at the beginning of August as to the success of their submission. Send all poems in a single attachment to: typewriter.editor@gmail.com

Rattle #38 - Call for Submissions (USA)

Reading Period ends: 1 August While we always accept and publish submissions of poetry in any style, on any subject, from anyone, each issue does feature a themed section. Theme for this issue: Speculative (Science Fiction) Poetry. <http://www.rattle.com/callsforsubs.htm>

NZPS publication a fine line - call for submissions

Deadline: 7 August The editor welcomes your contribution. We currently pay a small fee for Feature Articles and reviews. See publication guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines>

Memoir (and) Prizes for Prose or Poetry (USA)

Deadline: 16 August (Online submissions must arrive by noon, PST on the deadline date.) Magazine of personal essays offers good-sized prizes and publication for “traditional and experimental prose, poetry, graphic memoir, narrative photography, lies, and more.” Longer works welcome. Enter online (strongly preferred) or by mail. No entry fee. Prizes: \$500, \$250, \$100; there is also a \$100 prize for graphic memoirs. All winners receive 3 copies of the winning issue and publication in print and online. Guidelines URL: <http://memoirjournal.squarespace.com/contest-details/>

Aesthetica Creative Writing Competition (UK)

Deadline: 31 August The *Aesthetica* Creative Writing Competition is now open for entries. The competition celebrates and champions creative writing, nurturing talent and bringing work to international attention. *Aesthetica* is inviting all writers and poets to submit to the *Aesthetica* Creative Writing Competition 2012. There are two categories for entry, Poetry and Short Fiction, and a selection of fantastic prizes including:

- * £500 prize money - Poetry winner
- * £500 prize money - Short Fiction winner
- * Publication in the *Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual*
- * Complimentary copy of the *Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual*
- * A selection of books from our competition partners

For more information and to enter please visit: http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/submission_guide.htm Submissions previously published elsewhere are accepted. Entry is £10 and allows for the entry of two works into any one category.

The Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Prize for the Translation of Russian Poetry into English (UK)

Closing Date: 31 August This new prize celebrates the long friendship between Joseph Brodsky and Stephen Spender, as well as the rich tradition of Russian poetry. The prizes are: £1,500 (first), £1,000 (second) and £500 (third). The competition is open to entrants worldwide. Enter online or download an entry form at www.stephen-spender.org

Shenandoah - Call for Submissions (USA)

Deadline: 31 August Currently seeking submissions for a February 2013 feature on poetry from Aotearoa New Zealand. Please send up to five poems in a Word document to editors Lesley Wheeler and Drew Martin at shenandoahnz@wlu.edu

using the word "submission" in the subject line. Include a brief biographical note explaining your relationship to the land/country. Work previously published in any venue, including magazines not distributed in the United States, is not eligible. We will consider poetry simultaneously submitted to another journal, but please contact us immediately should the work be accepted elsewhere. We would be happy to receive photographs and other visual materials as complements to literary submissions. We will respond to all submissions by mid-October. Prior to publication, we will require a final electronic copy of the work, a high resolution photograph of the author, and biographical information. Additionally, we may ask for audio recordings of some work and will provide instructions for creating these files through Audacity. In lieu of payment, online publication will include links to authors' personal home pages and publishers' sites. All published work will be archived online. Website: <http://www.wlu.edu/x31904.xml>

Note: This is a selection of the opportunities currently posted on our website, taking you through to the next issue of the magazine. However, between now and then more will be added, so it's worth checking the Members' Pages for updates when you're looking for destinations.

Regional Report

WINDRIFT HAIKU GROUP, APRIL

Nola Borrell

Penny Pruden, our host, set the agenda for the April meeting: Free choice, home (-making, keeping, reaching, dreaming) and flair (talent, confusion with flare, fair, fare). Yes, scope!

Free choice. Anything can happen: From ice-blocks and banshees to fingertips and syndromes.

on her forearm
swelling and glowing -
mosquito

Karen P Butterworth

The following haiku evoked laughter - even before the reader had finished.

strong wind
the auction poster going
going gone

Ernest J Berry

The second category, 'home', embraced boat people and lake bach, cave and deceased estate, hermit crab and godwits.

below us
treacherous rocks, the churning sea:
leaving home

Kerry Popplewell

bach by the lake
bright orange bench
perfect

Jenny Pyatt

Despite devising the topic, for the third category Penny wrote:

a flair for haiku?
to be fair the flare
of inspiration fizzles

Neil Whitehead was on the way to 'out-Bevaning Bevan' (Bevan Greenslade, our previous punster).

opponent defaults
so she wins tennis tourney
it's not flair

Punku we cried!

haikai café

- Your bite-sized serving of haiku, senryū and tanka

Kirsten Cliff

strawberry guavas
by the garden wall
a small hand reaches over

~ *haiku by Maryrose Doull*

counting the minutes...
husband & wife
leave hand in hand

~ *senryū by Anne Curran*

honeydew
one walker stops
to quote Coleridge

~ *haiku by Nola Borrell*

Submissions: Please send your best three unpublished haiku/senryū/tanka for consideration to kirsten.cliff@gmail.com with 'HAIKAI CAFE' in the subject line.

Straight From the Haijin's Mouth

I asked haiku journal editors, Margaret Beverland (*Kokako*) and Dick Whyte (*Haiku News*), "What role does non-haiku poetry play in your life?"

Margaret Beverland's answer: I fear that if an earthquake hits my home I shall be found beneath the pile of books stacked on my bedside table. Many of these are poetry books, and not just haiku. Most I have read or are in the process of reading. There is a volume of Longfellow that I have skimmed, stopping to read only the short poems. Why labour over nineteen pages of 'The Courtship of Miles Standish' in tiny print, when I have a volume of Janet Frame, or Charles Simic, at my fingertips?

I took to reading poetry after Kim Hill had interviewed Carol Ann Duffy on the publication of *The World's Wife*. When I heard these poems performed, that was the beginning of my exploration of the world of verse.

Poems make me laugh, they make me sad, and sometimes I cry. I revel when they touch something deep inside. Some I do not understand, and yet I will read them again and again as the language touches on the divine, so comprehension matters not.

I never travel without a poetry book, even if it is just into town. In a traffic delay, a poem is a stress-free way to idle away the time.

Dick Whyte's answer: There is a certain violence contained in a phrase like 'non-haiku poetry'. This violence is not intentional, it is woven into the structure of language itself: here or there, man or woman, haiku or not. The production of

categories is always a violent affair, cleaving this from that with relative abandon. It is one thing to consider the function of tanka, or the sonnet, or beat poetry, in isolation. However, it is another thing entirely to contemplate the function of 'non-haiku poetry' as a category, which can only play one role: to perform the limits of haiku poetry without stopping. To constitute what haiku is not and, therefore, what haiku is.

The central question here concerns the function of poetry itself – only after this is established can we discuss different kinds of poems. Of course, I am not talking about poetry, as such. What interests me is the 'poetic' as a process, and this process is not unique to poetry. Julia Kristeva, for instance, defines the poetic as a "radical signifying practice" with two key functions: 1) "it brings to the fore the processes by which it constructs its own meanings", and 2) it places "subjectivity in process, making the moment of reading one in which meanings are set in play, rather than consolidated or fixed."*

contemplating poetry
late into the night
hazy moon

*Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures* (Routledge, 1982) p12-13.

#

The 2012 NZPS International Poetry Competition (Haiku Section) judge is Barbara Strang, and I'm pleased to be able to share with you a bit about her haiku journey, which she wrote late last year especially for a *fine line* readers. My apologies to Barbara for not publishing this earlier.

From Barbara Strang: Over twenty years ago I first tried to write haiku while taking part in a poetry workshop. We were taught they were short poems about Nature, in the form of 5/7/5 syllables. Within that constraint I tried to jam as much description of Nature as I could. But fortunately the first New Zealand Haiku Anthology, edited by the late great Cyril Childs, came out in 1993, providing modern examples by New Zealanders. I slowly realised the spirit of haiku counted, not rules. A helpful concept was the Japanese 'wabi sabi', something like a noble poverty of subject and means. I was a slow learner, but with a little help I created some that were actually publishable, for instance in Cyril's second anthology (1997), and also made many new haiku friends. I love the form's playfulness and surprise. Above all its minimalism appeals – you can suggest the whole world in a few well chosen words, like a Japanese landscape. Lately I have been using calculated understatement in my longer poetry, so that each little line has an intellectual, emotional and spiritual charge.

The Haiku Help-Desk

Special guest edited by Owen Bullock

Editing Haiku

In editing haiku, it's important to look at the ordering of words, as well as word choice. The following haiku was originally:

meditation –
the dent
in the monk's head

I submitted this version to several magazines, without success. Then, one day, I was thinking about the way the information unfolds in the poem and edited it to:

meditation –
the dent in the monk's
head

The detail that the dent is in the monk's head, and not in some inanimate object, is now delivered later, in the way a comic actor might work. When I submitted this version, not only was it accepted by *The Heron's Nest* (March, 2011), but the editor I was assigned to told me that all four editors had voted for it when consulted. Additionally, it was included in the latest Red Moon Anthology, *Carving the Darkness*. So, sometimes, a little adjustment goes a long way.

Here is the progress of another haiku of mine:

New Year's Day –

two swings

at the trouser leg

two swings

at the trouser leg –

New Year's Day

two attempts

at the trouser leg

New Year's Day

By leaving the setting till last, the action that prompted me to write is now what the reader encounters first. The choice of “attempts” over “swing” is a kind of stylisation. The word ‘swings’ was literal, but ‘attempts’ brings more humour and engagement with the human predicament (which is a surprisingly common one). The em-dash proved unnecessary. This haiku had also been submitted many times before, but in this form was finally published by *The Heron's Nest* (March 2012).

The following haiku was included in *Kokako 2*:

below the cliff

carrying voices

fishing boat

When considering work for my first haiku collection *wild camomile*, I asked the late Cyril Childs to read the manuscript and give me his opinion. He made suggestions which led to several improvements, including a change of line order for this one:

below the cliff

a fishing boat

carrying voices

The haiku now has a freer rhythm, and the ‘reveal’ comes later: what the boat seems to be carrying is delivered more subtly. After appearing in my collection, this version was selected for the Red Moon Anthology *Evolution* (2010). My suggestion to fellow poets is to seek the apposite word and the best order for words and lines.

Reviews

***Trace Fossils* Mary Cresswell (Steele Roberts, 2011) rrp \$19.99 ISBN 9-781877-577321**

Joanna Preston

Trace Fossils is American-born poet Mary Cresswell's second collection, following on from her 2009 book of parody and satirical poems, *Nearest and Dearest* (Steele Roberts). The manuscript of *Trace Fossils* was one of three runners-up in the inaugural Kathleen Grattan Award in 2008.

The poems overall are concerned with the contrast between beautiful and/or tranquil surfaces and the unease or chaos or even brutality that lies beneath them. This is most apparent in the second section, ‘Changing sea levels’, and most overtly of all in ‘Paradise, the package’, with its ‘7 O’Clock News / Silent Night’-esque juxtaposition of lyrical descriptions of a holiday with invented newspaper reports of social and environmental damage. The most effective was ‘Navigation without stars’ – a prose poem that simply describes a tropical scene, and loads the spaces between the words with a building menace.

She has serious fun with word slippage – someone “nailed his collars to the mast” (‘Dropping anchor’), someone else “pushed my luck / down the dark alley” (‘Blackwater’), and another poem asks “What do you do if you kith before they say you kin?” (‘Echo Rock in winter’). Verbs, in particular, end up in unaccustomed roles. Words “lavish my thighs”, there are “withering shadows”, a violin is “smarmed with mildew”, and mice “disenarbour themselves”. A variation of this strategy is in ‘Ode’, where some gentle punning on Keats’ ‘Ode to Autumn’ runs head-on into the line, “Unless of course this is not

the case". It's a nifty bit of destabilisation.

Cresswell is a formalist, and some of the fun of reading the collection is playing Spot the Form as you go. But they don't always work. Some of her syllabic poems sacrifice grace to syllable count – in 'Meniscus', for example:

That's all you need to
justify a bent
twig in the shallows

ending the line on "to" feels like a stutter. It doesn't add anything, other than making you check the syllable count. In some other syllabic poems she's been willing to let extra syllables creep in or out of odd lines without any ill effect ('Tsunami', for example). Why not here? Equally, some of her ghazals are a bit strained, with the level of variation of the repeated phrase being fairly erratic, poem to poem. Her abecedarians are also not compelling – once you work out the form behind 'Lovesong of the knockout mutant', the poem doesn't really have anything other than wackiness to keep your attention.

Overall this is a pretty good collection, without having stand-out moments. The final poem, 'Track to Angel Falls' speaks for the book as a whole – it's a lovely bit of evocation, an embodiment of miscommunication and that almost-comfortable frustration that we forget we live with. But it's also overloaded with puns and wordplay – try saying the phrase "winding winds whine". A piece of post-modern destabilisation? A way of adding a 'don't take it so seriously!' gloss to it all? If so, what a pity! Because the overarching sense of unease is what lifts this poem, as well as this collection, from 'fun but a bit indulgent', to 'quietly intelligent'.

***The movie may be slightly different* Vincent O'Sullivan (VUP, 2011) ISBN 9780864736437 RRP \$30**

Heidi North-Bailey

I was equally daunted and excited at the thought of reviewing Vincent O'Sullivan's latest collection. Trying to put the thought that he is one of NZ's leading writers out of my mind, I failed.

It's obvious simply from opening the book that he is an accomplished poet. No one else could get away with publishing 136 poems in a single collection. They are in three sections, the division of which I was unsure about, as they didn't seem grouped in any obviously thematic way that I could discern.

However, I did find I enjoyed the third section more than the previous two. It was in the third section that I felt that O'Sullivan's wry, unsentimental beauty really shone through. I enjoyed the shifting narrative voices in this section along with the play and grace. I also found it more hopeful.

I'm not going to technically comment on or unpick O' Sullivan's poetry. We all know it is always of a rigorous high quality. Instead, I wanted to share my personal opinion of this collection. I usually find his work in turn stunning, the way he works quietly at the seemingly mundane, peeling back layers, until you find yourself touched by something quite profound. Or, sometimes I find the poems leave me going 'Ok, I can see that technically you're great, and I get it, and there are a great deal of intellectual references that I feel I should understand (but usually don't), but it just doesn't speak to me.'

But when the poems do speak to me, they're powerful. Both 'Driving into the day' and 'Out on the coast' are two such poems. They strike me as sort of unlikely love songs to NZ: the people and the place.

Driving into the day

I don't know how we're supposed to speak of it,
the morning sky, the enormity of light
the enduring fact of what you look at first –
the totara stand between you and the corrugated
sheds, the long heel of the road the tanker
will pelt by on, the black, stationary beast
bits of night carved out, left standing.

And in 'Out on the coast', he captures the wild, violent beauty of some of New Zealand's west (I assume) coast. With lines like:

You have to work hard on this patch of country.
'Pretty's' not going to do it.

and

The burnt mountain and the stretch of coast,
the chunk of sea

or

'This is how you have to take us,'
naked, a touch repellent. You'd better be ready.

'Domestic' is another favourite of mine from this collection. I enjoy the way he mixes up the mundane and the divine (which is which, really?) as the narrator of the poem is making love to his lover while she quietly peels an onion, not bothering to stop.

Yes, O'Sullivan deserves his reputation, and this collection does nothing to disprove that. Overall, his tightly packed verse, ease at slipping between styles and his play of language is a delight. Did I quite understand the title? No, but I found it arresting in itself. Was this his best collection? I'm not sure. But there are plenty of poems here that leave me feeling I'm in the hands of a master. *The movie may be slightly different* is certainly worth a read. It's a collection I feel will continue to reveal layers to me on each re-reading.

Briefcase John Adams (AUP, 2011) RRP\$24.99 ISBN978-1-86940-491-8

Laurice Gilbert

Lots of poetry books pass through my hands. This one got stuck there. From the splendidly legal cover design by award-winning designer Spencer Levine, to the p. 73 (of 104) 'Index', this collection promises (and delivers) innovation and satisfaction.

I wasn't previously familiar with Adams' work, although he submitted (and I published) two poems for *a fine line* shortly after the review copy of the book arrived. There are some poems online that are well worth finding, and one from *Briefcase* appeared in *Best NZ Poems 2011*. A graduate of the University of Auckland's Masters in Creative Writing programme (2010), Adams is better known as a District and Family Court Judge. In *Briefcase*, he subversively merges his creativity with his day job.

Based on a case brought about by a (possibly accidental) domestic dispute, the book is a loosely structured collection of poems, legal documents – affidavits, police reports, wills, a victim impact statement, etc. – and such miscellaneous additions as partially-completed Sudoku (using the letters from "poetry" and "law"), draft notes for a speech to the Law Society Annual Dinner, a menu and instructions for erecting a tent. There's lots of wordplay and a healthy sprinkling of concrete poems. The top left hand corner of each right page is marked 'Staple', reflecting both the legal context and the fact that the domestic dispute began with a thrown stapler.

It's all great sport, or a dismal reminder of how mundane court work can be, depending on your point of view. Probably both, actually.

Many of the poems would stand perfectly happily alone, while clearly supporting the leitmotif. 'Dealing with fog', for example, immediately precedes the first of the legal documents:

It has much to do with focus,
Socrates would have us question
the fog until its particulate
nature is objectively revealed,
...

'Mist off Bermuda', an almost ghazal-like portrayal of the Bermuda Triangle, invokes the familiar concept of 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', finishing with,

On a spring day, what a sight,
but in the mist of cross-examination

buoyant boats can founder.

Others, like a letter to the Plaintiff from her GP, add to our general view of the protagonists and their lives without being overtly poetic.

Nevertheless, every page rewards close reading, even the clearly legalese ones, as the case builds and develops. Did he, or didn't he, mean harm? In the publicity blurb Adams wrote, "I have tried to downplay narrative", and to a degree he has been successful, but the collection holds together as a sequence which carries its own narrative. While a commentary poem like 'A short traverse about the panopticon' might well have been placed elsewhere than where it is (after a couple of pages of cross-examination), it serves a useful purpose as a thoughtful pause in the proceedings (pun intended), with its, "my legal scholar has/ an appetite to cobble sense from unseen/ webs..."

There is much to love in this book, not least the unique format of the collection as fly-on-the-wall exposure to the judicial industry. I recommend it as I would a crime novel (my other favourite literary genre), and hope there will be more where that came from.

And the tent instructions? It uses staples for anchoring the guy ropes, and has a killer final line.

Post Script: Briefcase won the 2012 NZSA Jessie Mackay Award for Best First Book of Poetry.

***Tongues of Ash* Keith Westwater (Interactive Press, 2011) RRP \$14 ISBN 9781921869266**

Liz Breslin

I do like a map. Helps you work out, literally, figuratively, where you are, where you're going, where you've been. So it was neat to see a Map of places in the poems at the start of Keith Westwater's collection.

The map is New Zealand, with a mini-insert of Wellington. Poetic geography in action, perhaps? The poems are referenced in a key. This gives us another way of diving into the collection than via the contents page, where the poems are divided into five sections – A basket of apple trees, The moon is lashed by trees, Tongues of ash, Today's hui of gulls and Tourists on safari for nirvana. Each of these sections is further subtitled, the first being Memories of place.

Places we visit here with Keith are Canterbury, the West Coast, Trieste Street and Hawkes Bay. There's some lovely imagery, from the "skirt of fog" worn by Canterbury, to the Waiho "as it bench-presses mountains of snow". 'Town statue talk' imagines and images a meeting between Robbie Burns, Richard Seddon and the Unknown Digger.

At first they talk about
the eighteen-sixties
when the town had
one hundred and two hotels
ten thousand souls
and nuggets in the creek.
They next discuss
the West Coast rugby team's
last match.
Aye, the best laid schemes...
moans Robbie.
What we need
thumps King Dick
is more resources
and a distribution plan.

But the Digger
just takes a swig
looks to the hills and says
There's gold inside `em –
we just need
to work it out.

The second section brings together weather, seasons, water, light, rocks, planets, stars. The natural world, it must be said, is gloriously highlighted on the front cover. It's an image taken from a work called 'Dawn Poem for Taranaki', by Turi Park. Mountains are overlaid with an orangey-translucent leaf. The effect is striking, but subtle. You want to go back for more. Like the poems.

As well as natural images, there are many musical notes in this section, particularly in 'Variations on an early turning'. Thus,

the last apple's heart
pecking a cadenza for rain's bolero.

and

playing arpeggios of hope
in a heart's winter garden

The love of rocks and water is a stand-out in this section. It has a dreamy quality and the sestina form does not overtake the words – no mean feat. The use of weight/wait is clever, too.

'Song of the Climate Canaries' brings some balancing cynicism:

melted permafrost, drunken trees
reports of iceberg fleets at sea
birds with GPS astray
is there time? can you see?

The third section addresses 'Army days in Waiouru, Wellington and its weather'. It contains also the poem from which the collection gets its title – 'Navigation point on the Desert Road':

The cutting's orange side
speaks millennia in tongues of ash.
Past it a mountain stream

corrodes the road each rain.
First, a short dipping straight
with sentries of black beech.

This poem is dedicated to Greg Hill; presumably the Greg of the same poem. We learn.

During Vietnam, Uncle Sam
licked Greg with orange rain.
Later, his life was cut in two.

This is just one of Westwater's poems where the no-nonsense language and strong metaphors belie the emotions below.

The 'Wellington Southerly' sonnet and the 'Bucket Man' poems in this section show also a song sense of people and place.

Found poems, among other things, can be found in the sweeping scope of the fourth section – musings on landscape, ecology, colonisation, identity and place. Not enough room here to quote from them but they are definitely journeys worth taking. As are those in the last section – Places overseas – experienced and imagined – and thoughts of home.

Throughout the collection, many of the poems are annotated. It is interesting as to what is explained and what is left to our readerly nose. You know who Tane Mahuta is? Does your Aussie cousin? Because surely our understanding depends on our own language and geography? For example, in the last poem, 'National Anthem', we are told what a waiata is (in footnote no. 26), but kereru, kowhai and kotare go unexplained. Nonetheless, 'National Anthem' is a lovely poem, evoking

a paddock with a sentry cabbage tree
the noise a kereru makes flying
tree fern unfurling and unfurled

A rousing, questioning cry to end the collection. A collection that is solidly conscious of home, and away, and represents these through some fine poems. Readers who want more can also look at www.keithwestwater.com for more information and Tuesday poems. Nice.

***Men Briefly Explained* Tim Jones (Interactive Press, 2011) RRP \$14 ISBN 9781921869327**

Vaughan Rapatahana

Guess what!

I don't have much to gripe about regarding Tim Jones' fine poetry (with pockets of prose) collection *Men Briefly Explained*, other than my usual spiel about a distinct lack of any reference to alterity qua otherness in his overall weltanschauung. Ain't no Maori boys in this book and sure as hell ain't no Maori words either! Other cultural entities are in someone else's book, eh.

But this is a fairly minor quibble. Let the boy alone, for here he digs some damned good things into the poetic coalfront of Aotearoa.

~ He is not pretentious. No special effect incorporation of arcane academically-sourced names and terms, or, if there is – a wry tongue in cheek incorporation of said, such as in 'The Wrong Horse' with its clever citings of Barthes, Saussure and my own favourite, Baudrillard. Even his notes are unadorned by pose. In many ways he is an agent of deflation, he deconstructs rather than ratifies University babbles.

~ He is a funny poet. There are some especially comical situations delineated and some wry, self-deprecating humour throughout. He combines fantasy with funny as in: grouping Bill Manhire, Chris Orsman, Nigel Brown and Alfred, Lord Tennyson together in their mighty Antarctic expedition: 'the first "Artists in Antarctica" programme' in fact! I had always thought that Robert Frost had gone with them, but I guess I was wrong, eh. Similarly his poems centering Cliff Curtis, The (Australian) Outsider and the James Gang are especially morassic – a cinematic merging of the marginalized and the mainstream.

~ He can write some damned fine lines too. There's a crop of splendid images throughout. Witness these bright baubles:

In a pre-dawn counterfeit of morning
Night ate the afterbirth of day
The music sees the hero first
She lets it out in flechettes of resentment

Good stuff, eh. And there is an economy of expression throughout also.

~ He is refreshingly fresh thematically. Although the content somewhat belies the title – for not all of the poems approach any explication as to what a man – especially a man in Aotearoa in 2011 – is like, there is enough activity here to redraw the macho and accent the 'sensitive' and non-sporting elements of the male gender:

This is what it means to be a man: not
the All Blacks, not power tools,
not fighting foreign wars,

but the ability to name
all the members and ex-members
of obscure seventies bands.

And similar pieces splintered throughout this slim volume, including the prose passage entitled 'As you know, Bob' and the eponymous title poem – both of which are further suffused with Jones' droll humour. 'Years with a Husband' reflects a woman's slant on her husband and is a more measured, serious testament: there is rare metal in the poet's mine here.

~ Holistically – after what I have noted above – Jones' poems 'work'. There is a cogent balance between themes, style and craft, and mood. They might not be especially 'New Zealand poems' but they are very well-written and thought-out and – generally speaking, for not everything fires in this collection – their success lies in the artist's ability not to take himself, his gender, his academic peers and his life per se too onerously. This is not to minimize the man's messages or quiet reflections – such as in his past grasps of growing up at the beginning of the cycle and his final considerations on the

asperities of ageing at the end – but to confirm that we have here a gifted and accessible and interesting poet. And a poet he is: not a showman, not a word-splatterer who just wants to ‘impress’ or ‘exhort’.

All of which is oh so very well shown in by far the best poem in the book, where ‘best’ is tantamount to clever, funny, fantastical, historical, skilful and also making you think, eh. ‘Baxter-Curnow Band Live At Hyde Park 1969’ is too long to quote in full, but here is a sample. Tim Jones’ own words and frolic in this whimsy surely beat my prattle about him!

...

It surely wasn’t easy,
playing behind those two:

Curnow always demanding, Baxter
perfecting the prophet’s penetrating stare.

Four sides, nine tracks,
no singles and no flash photography.

Over-long, we’d call it nowadays, overblown –
cowbell and mellotron, zither, Hammond organ,

Marshall stacks and London Philharmonic;
odd metres, broken rhythms, two voices

straining for harmony, their differences
as much musical as personal ...

Within six months it would all be over,
Allen going solo, Jim

in a different hemisphere ...

More than a distant memory reified: this is a vivid remake of relevance today – for everyone with a memory in this land. Kia ora Tim Jones.

***Bright the Harvest Moon: Haiku & Renga Imitations* John O’Connor (Christchurch Poets Group, 2011) RRP: NZ\$20. ISBN: 978-0-9582191-6-7**

Patricia Prime

A consistent innovator, John O’Connor has been a leader in contemporary New Zealand haiku for several decades. His new collection, *Bright the Harvest Moon*, focuses attention on his unusual blend of typography, font styles and symbols.

The haiku are inspired by traditional influences – haiku written by the Japanese masters – Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki, and others. Noted for its tenderness and its irony, O’Connor’s work has revolutionized form in New Zealand haiku by taking words from various sources to create haiku to which he has applied his imagination to create new structures that support ambiguity, juxtaposition and humour, as we see in these three examples from *After* Basho:

Though singing till nightfall –
thinking the skylark
hasn’t sung at all.

In fine rain –
straw coats & willows
toward the river.

ANCIENT POND –

a frog *breaks*
the meniscus!

Rapturous, yet paradoxically precise and incisive, O'Connor's haiku are both theatrical and performative. The haiku display his exhilarating sense of language, as well as his predilection for the comic play of typography and font which is sometimes at odds with the seriousness of the haiku. There's a dynamic play between coherence and incoherence at the heart of this collection. We're soothed into a welcoming comfort through his grammatically normative phrases – and their meaning. While the originals of his haiku may be familiar to many readers, each of his poems is original. As he says in his Note: "... I have ignored the disjunctive linkage of renga & at times the prescriptions & proscriptions of haiku."

In *After* Buson,

Rising mist.

A thousand steps e c h o
the market sounds.

*A new leaf turns back
the light.*

The long roadside grasses –
a grave-post among them.

The haiku retain all the flash and dazzle of the ephemeral, all the play with which readers of his haiku will be familiar. And it is out of that flickering indeterminacy that O'Connor constructs the humour that drives his poetry. His work gives an aestheticized, meditative turn to daily detail that reflects his knowledge of the Japanese masters and his familiarity with the art of haiku.

O'Connor makes haiku that inevitably feel stylish, timeless, and marked by a precise lyrical grace. His love, respect and knowledge of the Japanese masters influences his own work. Always challenging convention and form, this collection of haiku is inspired by, or is his "imitations" of haiku written by Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki, and others, as we see in the following four haiku:

From *After* Issa:

Thinking of home –
of rhodos
coming out.

Beneath the blossoms
there are no strangers.

Walking to Shinano –
higher & higher
the rice planters' song.

From *After* Shiki:

How low the graves
under the grass
of late summer.

After rain –
late sun *touching*
the cicada.

Market Square –
a well
a cloud
a ring-tailed skunk.

His is a highly speculative poetic intelligence, both philosophically elegant and lyrically charged. Meditative and mysterious, his haiku track the subtle moments of consciousness against the background of nature and human nature, as we see in the following four haiku:

From *After the Followers of Basho*:

So carefully
placing snow on this tray –
“autumn flowers”.

(*After Kikaku*)

From *After Other Haiku Masters*:

Delaying my journey
yet again
for spring.

(*After Ryota*)

The collection uses typeface, typography and symbols as a point of departure to alter our traditional ideas of haiku. Employing fragmentation and ellipsis, allusion and occasional symbols as a springboard that takes us back to the original haiku, but also emphasizes the public nature of personal experience; this is a collection to delight every reader of haiku.

First published on Graham Nunn's website Another Lost Shark, 18/1/12. <http://anotherlostshark.com/> Used with permission.

***leaving my arms free to fly around you* Nicola Easthope (Steele Roberts, 2011) ISBN 9781877577574**

Vaughan Rapatahana

I seem to have recently reviewed a steady babble of poetry books written by women poets who have either been born overseas and then travelled ultimately to Aotearoa to reside, or – conversely – who were born in Aotearoa but then went on an extended O.E. before balik*. And here is yet another!

For Nicola Easthope meets the above criteria too. She cannot claim Aotearoa as her tūrangawaewae by birth – she’s tauwiwi with an Orkney Island, Celtic and Sassenach heritage, who has settled on the Kapiti Coast, after ‘growing up’ in Wellington.

But the good – no, let me be rapturously honest here and state the great – news is that Nicola has avoided the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University, opting instead for the Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia Community Polytechnic.

Easthope does not get into bed with irony for irony’s sake, which is another way of saying she’s not pretentious and playing poetic party tricks, eh. No ‘academic’ references, allusions and name-droppings of personages and events. There are no Notes at the back either, for Chrissakes! Wow. I’m smiling as I write this. Nor is she – gleefully I prate this too – an Anglophilic poet, despite her heritages.

For as Witi Ihimaera once stated as regards postcolonial & postmodern positionings, given here with regard to Māori writers: “I take the essentialist position only with respect to maintaining a sense of Māori identity... Of course, my work

goes to and fro across that essentialist boundary”. I here also postulate that there is also another separate big room in the Aotearoa mansion of poetry – for Pākehā New Zealand poets with a crucial personal identity, a heart, a conscience, a sense of humour, a sense of being a multifaceted and multicultural Kiwi tied tightly to their country by more than economic exigency, and not always gazing longingly towards Dover. The room is still severely under-populated, but Easthope certainly has a foot in the door. There’s an authentic cosmopolitanism at large here suffusing through her verse as best displayed in the titular poem.

So, significantly, Nicola makes a fine effort to settle into the stew that is society in Aotearoa, and, furthermore, to incorporate ngā kupu Māori kei konei. Ka nui te pai tēnei hoki.** Never (generally) gratuitous either in doing so and palpably a tribute to her “phenomenal tutor” Renēe, at Whitireia.

I would like now to purvey some specific examples of Easthope’s craft, notably her vivacity of imagery, for she can avowedly write well across a glissade of specific themes to do with exile and return, relationships and men, ‘teaching’ English, and the pains and gains of pregnancy and birth. She is a poet good ‘n’ proper, yunno.

“His face was an element left on overnight”

(in a poem that is a set of rhyming metaphors entitled ‘The Spanish vagrant’, whilst another excellent poem, ‘Watching you sleep’, is one extended metaphor.)

“Rubbed eyes are kina
prickling with sleep”

“The sky is a thin blue boy
hurrying south
home from school

a black day in his satchel”

And perhaps the apex of her craft, embodying what I am prattling on about in this brief review as regards a multi-focal vista being not only thematically but also formulaically set in place for our comfortable engagement – is the excellent ‘Lesson plan: wide reading’ which has a Pākehā writing as Tūwhare and not the other way around for once, eh. I would love to type it all out here, but there’s no more space. Suffice to say Nicola writes her best verse as grounded here – home in Aotearoa.

Kia ora mo tau ruri Nicola. He timata pai na he tākapu mohio!

[Thanks for your pithy poems Nicola. A fine start by an intelligent gannet!]

* balik – Tagalog and Bahasa Melayu for return/come back

** ...ngā kupu Māori kei konei. Ka nui te pai tēnei hoki. – ...Māori words here. This is also excellent.

American Life in Poetry: Column 370

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAURÉATE

Here’s a fine poem about family love and care by Janet Eigner, who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. You can feel that blessing touch the crown of your head, can’t you?

Isaac’s Blessing

When Isaac, a small, freckled boy
approaching seven, visits us for Family Camp,
playing pirate with his rubber sword,

sometimes he slumps in grief,
trudging along, his sacrifice and small violin
in hand, his palm over his chest,

saying, Mother is here
in my heart. Before he leaves for home,
we ask if he'd like a Jewish blessing.

Our grandson's handsome face ignites;
he chirps a rousing, yes, for a long life.
We unfold the prayer shawl,

its Hebrew letters silvering the spring light,
hold the white tallis above his head,
recite the blessing in its ancient language

and then the English, adding, for a long life.
Isaac complains, the tallis didn't
touch his head, so he didn't feel the blessing.

We lower its silken ceiling
to graze his dark hair,
repeat the prayer.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2009 by Janet Eigner, whose most recent book of poetry is *What Lasts is the Breath*, Black Swan Editions, 2012. Reprinted from *Cornstalk Mother*, Pudding House Publications, 2009, by permission of Janet Eigner and the publisher. Introduction copyright © 2012 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Members' Poems

Love Buttons

Sam Hunt had control of the rainbows.

for a while

I had control of your light show:

pressing the buttons gently, to watch the colours

run.

it was a lucky accident -

because

we were verbally discordant.

& God forbid,

if I said the wrong thing.

all hell would break loose, as you began to shriek your head off.

then it would be wrong button, after wrong button
as the dark, molten blanket came down

& hot, psychic hail
piled up inside my ringing ears.

I'd stand there – a mixture of embarrassment & shock

while trying to understand -
putting up with the din of all dins
in all of the Shaky Isles.

for love.
plain, simple love
& for what you later told me
was ordinary sex.

Jeremy Roberts

Pending a Requiem

Watching you die is not an easy thing
You have been doing it for seven years
With no acceptance of death's bitter sting.

Ego, I think, demands one final fling:
Or else you're bound to earth by futile fears.
Watching you die won't be an easy thing.

Though you've ceased asking what next year will bring
Your dumb self-pity cancels all my tears,
Denies my own acceptance of death's sting.

As you stretch silence, watch me dance and sing
To jog momentum, get you switching gears.
Watching you die is not an easy thing

Why will you not let go? Why do you cling?
There is no Hell, I tell you; Heaven nears.
Calmly accept the justice of death's sting.

You can't hold on. Listen. The church bells ring,
And ring for you, I swear. Expect no cheers
For doing what must be done. Aye, there's the sting
That makes this wait for death no easy thing.

Jenny Argante

good poem is

a good poem

is a Frisbee,

h

g

i

skirring h

before

s l u e

i

n

g

askew,

rippling

as it skims

unwitting stratum,

succinct,

weaving clever

toponymy:

before you

snatch it,

caroming,

waaaaay-up

one-handed,

eyes agape

at its flight.

Vaughan Rapatahana