

# a fine line

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Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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**DEADLINE FOR  
SEPTEMBER ISSUE:**

**1 SEPTEMBER**

## *Mad Poets, Mild Poets, Wild Poets*

### **A History of the Rotorua Mad Poets Society**

*Jackie Evans*

On May 15th 1994, a group of poets met for the first time at Monkey Jo's Bar in Amohau Street, Rotorua. Initially they were strangers, but not for long.

Frank May, a member of the Rotorua Writers Group, had placed an ad in the *Rotorua Daily Post*. It went something like this: "Calling all poets. If you have an interest in reading, writing, or listening to poetry, join us at Monkey Jo's Bar on Monday May 15th, at 6pm."

Cynics said at the time that a town such as Rotorua, lacking a university, would never sustain a weekly poetry group, since it 'lacked culture'. However, in the words of the late John Bayley, former President of the Mad Poets Society, "the shroud-wavers were proved wrong".

Now, almost 20 years and nine published collections of verse later, Mad Poets are still meeting on a weekly basis, and recently celebrated their 914th meeting. Foundation members on May 15th 1994 included Frank May, John Bayley, Diane Broadworth, Phillip Ball, Maureen Doherty, Dorothy Wison, Lia van Lent, June Willis, Alan Papprell, and Dave O'Connor.

On June 9th, 1994, the following article appeared in the *Rotorua Daily Post*:

Calling all Live Poets: closet poets of all ages have been crawling out of the woodwork to share their masterpieces with fellow artists. Since the Mad Poets Society was established about a month ago by Mr Frank May – a member of the Rotorua Writers' Group – it has attracted over 30 people, and continues to grow every week. Mrs Maureen Doherty, who helped Mr May get the meetings underway, says it is an informal get-together, with the emphasis on having fun.

"The Mad Poets Society is a warm and friendly group, with everyone being warmly applauded when they perform their poems. There's no criticism, and no judgmental attitudes – for example, nobody thinks you have to be intellectual. Many people put pen to paper, including men. It's just a great night of laughter and fun. Although there is a theme every second week, any kind of poetry is encouraged, from political satire to humorous rhymes – absolutely anything, as long as it's not filth. There's always a smorgasbord of work," Mrs Doherty says. "The Society is considering holding a live poetry competition, and perhaps publishing a booklet at a later date."

In September 1994, Mad Poets changed its venue to the Pig and Whistle Pub in Tutanekai Street, where they celebrated their 215th meeting with a party. *The Weekender* reported Frank May as saying: "There will be limericks and poems about life and living and something for a laugh. Renowned poet Sam Hunt has been invited and everyone will have the opportunity to recite their own work".

In 1995, *Steamy Lakeland Verse*, the first collection of poems published

by the Society, was launched with funding assistance from the Rotorua Community Arts Council. Maureen Doherty claimed first prize in the Rotorua Community Arts Council/Daily Post (1996) Poetry competition, with her poem 'Upper Whirinaki River'.

*All Steamed Up*, the Society's second collection of verse, was published in 1996. In his introduction President John Bayley said: "This is the second anthology of poems by some of Rotorua's poets, members of the Rotorua Mad Poets Society. We have been careful to place no rules upon the form or content of the poetry. We celebrate and regard every contribution as original and valid for both the individual and the group."

## ONWARD AND UPWARD

Meetings continued to flourish, and in 1996 the first of many poetry competitions to encourage young Rotorua poets was organised by the Society, in conjunction with the *Rotorua Review*. From 176 entries, John Paul College student Stephanie Northey was placed first, winning \$100, with her poem, 'Nana's Stroke'.

With a new venue, the Good Sports Hotel, Mad Poets continued to flourish. Under Maureen Doherty's leadership, poets were encouraged to recite in schools, rest homes, and for community groups. The *Rotorua Daily Post* (August 1996) stated: "The Mad Poets Society held its 100th meeting on Monday and members John Bayley and Jackie Evans visited Glen Brae Rest Home on Wednesday afternoon, entertaining the residents with their favourite lines of verse."

I recall John Bayley asking if any resident would like to recite a poem. A frail elderly man, who had appeared to be dozing, suddenly came to life, and recited 'The Daffodils' by William Wordsworth in a loud voice – word perfect – to enthusiastic applause!

A card of appreciation from Room B1 at Rotorua Primary School read: "Thank you to Gwen [White], Jim [McGregor], Barbara [Kissock], Durelle [Dean], and Kay [McGregor] for sharing your poems." The card included a number of the children's original poems.

For this community outreach, Mad Poets was awarded Runner Up in the Community Arts and Culture category of the Trust Power Spirit of Rotorua awards.

The Society's third collection of verse, *Letting Off Steam*, was published in 1998. Secretary Durelle Dean stated, "This is a versatile and enjoyable book of verse, very readable, and appealing to a wide group of people." Maureen Doherty added, "We believe it is a professional contribution to the Arts in Rotorua. The book will be distributed locally, but is expected to be sent to libraries throughout the country."

In September 1998, Mad Poets celebrated their 200th night of live poetry. Apart from Christmas and New Year breaks, the group had not missed a single Monday night since May 15th, 1994. Maureen Doherty said, "Hundreds of poems have been penned by members during our 200

nights. Hundreds more favourite poems penned by the great bards of literature have also been read by members."

At this 200th meeting, members brought an object, or dressed up to depict a character from their poem. A live rooster, brought by Maureen, sat quietly on her shoulder all evening. Her poem was 'The Battery Hens'.

In the *Rotorua Daily Post* (15/9/98), Maureen reported: "We are a vibrant, friendly group, and welcome new members. It's wonderful to see new members improve in confidence, from those first barely audible readings, with shaking paper, to a confident live poet."

A poetry competition in 1999 for intermediate school children, as part of the Youth Celebration Festival, drew a magnificent crop of entries. A prime organiser of the event, Peter Ball, said in the *Rotorua Review* that the quality of entries had been quite staggering. A special presentation was held in the Rotorua Public Library, with a large attendance of young people, parents and members of the public.

*Mad Poets, Mild Poets, Wild Poets*, the fourth anthology of verse collected by the Society, was published in October 1999. Peter Bald described it: "This book is considered our best to date, in terms of both presentation and content." In the preface, Maureen Doherty wrote: "The poetry reflects a wide range of abilities, from the beginner poet, tentatively penning those first lines to the more polished, previously published poet."

On March 12th 2000, Maureen Doherty died. Founding member and loved President of the Mad Poets Society, she had suffered from a serious heart condition for some time. *Look Twice For Me*, a biography of Maureen Doherty by Jackie Evans (2009) describes the life and work of Maureen Doherty, acclaimed poet and writer, teacher, and conservationist, and a kind and caring friend to many. A fact which Maureen rarely mentioned was that many of her poems had been published overseas, including England, Canada, Israel and the USA.

Since Maureen's death the Maureen Doherty Intermediate School Poetry Competition, organised in conjunction with the *Rotorua Review*, has been run biennially. As a consequence many young Rotorua poets have been encouraged to put pen to paper, and in 2001 Mad Poets published its first collection of verse by young Rotorua poets, entitled *Bubbling Up – Voices of Young Rotorua Poets*.

Valerie Dyson, president of Mad Poets from 2000-2001, wrote in the preface: "It is heartening to see so many young people expressing themselves in poetry. Looking at the selection in this book, I would say poetry is alive and well and living in Rotorua."

## PERSONAL SUCCESSES

Individual members now began publishing their own work. One of the first to do so was Gwen White, whose book *Have You Considered?* was published in 1999. In the *Rotorua Daily Post* (2/2/98), Gwen described her book as,

“A light-hearted look at human stories about everyday life.” In 2000, Esme Kissock published *Two Lands, One Heart*, a year after winning the Florence Keene Memorial Poetry competition with her poem ‘Outside Paradise’, which attracted national interest.

In *Mrs McBeaton’s Economical Haggis Attack*, a collection of New Zealand humorous verse edited by Jackie Evans, 15 Mad Poets had their work published. Mad Poet, Terry Sleator (‘The Bushman’), published *Voices from the Bush*. Terry travelled New Zealand reciting his work in schools, delighting school children with his extensive knowledge of native bush and its flora and fauna.

Other members’ books include: *Mad Dogs and English When* by Martin Coles (1998), *Free Spirits* by the late Alyn Thompson, *Writings and Poetry of Mihipaea Kake Tait* by the late Pae Tait (2000), and *Poems From the Heart* by Roy Tucker (2005), who plans to have it translated into te reo Maori.

Mad Poets’ seventh anthology of verse, *Celebration* (2007), honours the memories of the six Mad Poets who have died within the Society’s existence: Maureen Doherty, Esme Kissock, Coby van Leeuwen, Lia van Lent, Pae Tait and Robert Rika.

In 2010 Wellington Mad Poet **Judith Clearwater** published *The Shed*, comprising a collection of her poems and short stories. Judith described her delight in becoming an out-of-town Mad Poet, emailing her poems to the secretary, who would read them at weekly meetings. Judith, who made publishing her living prior to retirement, not only published Mad Poets’ fifth anthology of verse, *A Decade of Poetic Madness* (2004), but also *Mrs McBeaton’s Economical Haggis Attack*.

For the first time, a CD of poets reading their own work was produced, with the generosity of Paul Hickey, of MORE FM, who gave up two evenings of his time to record the CD. In the foreword, the secretary noted: “Readers may wonder why a short story (‘The Flying Pig’, by Eddie Taylor) is included in an anthology of poetry. Our answer is that many of us are proud to be ‘a little mad’.”

Renowned Rotorua historian, the late Don Stafford, suggested that Mad Poets might compile a collection of poems with a Rotorua theme. The result was *Te Reo Pohewa – The Spirit of Rotorua in Verse*. This anthology was published in 2011 and includes an entire chapter of verse by Rotorua young poets. It is dedicated to Don Stafford, a man who bridged both Maori and European worlds and was regarded as Rotorua’s official historian and pakeha kaumatua.

*The Road to Tikapa*, the collected poems of the late Eru Potaka-Dewes, was published in 2012. It is the Society’s ninth publication (edited by Jackie Evans). Eru was a Mad Poet for the last five years of his life. Priest, activist, teacher, actor and poet, his poetry presents a kaleidoscope of political verse, Maori tikanga, theology, and poems addressing challenges in our society.

In 2013 Jackie Evans published *Tilting At Windmills*

– *Sixty Poems on the Lighter Side*. Illustrations and cartoons for this book are by Mad Poet and artist, Diane Broadworth.

Collected poems of the late John Bayley, president and a respected member of the society for many years, are to be published by the Mad Poets Society, and Russell Tibby plans to publish his collected poems in the near future.

On May 15th 2014, Mad Poets celebrated their 20th birthday. Presidents over the years include Alan Kissock, the late Maureen Doherty and John Bayley, Valerie Dyson, Jenny Carrol, Valerie Creamer, Colleen Dorrian, Lorraine Brooks and, currently, Pamela Brooks,

I joined six months after the group was formed, in 1994, since when Mad Poets has become my second family. Our youngest current member, Jayden Bradley-Waaka, is 10 years old while the oldest, Roy Tucker, is 98!

In the words of Maureen Doherty, “The limits of my poetry are the limits of my mind.”

*Do you belong to a poetry group with a long (or short) and interesting history? We’d love to hear about it. Send stories to: editor@poetrysociety.org.nz*



## From the Editor

The Editor who originally introduced this section to the magazine (if my memory serves me correctly) was Lynn Davidson. She would write erudite notes on what she’d been reading, what poets like Robert Haas had been up to, and which well-known poets she had the good fortune to spend time with. My only claim to name-dropping is that I knew Lynn before she was famous, when we were both pregnant at the same time, she with Tamara and I with Sylvia. (For the record, last time we spoke, Tamara had completed her environmental studies and Sylvia was graduating from Toi Whakaari, New Zealand Drama School, as a Costumier.)

I am not as conscientious or widely-read as Lynn, and am more likely to be found curled up with a thriller or police procedural. Much as I love poetry, this job has taken a toll on my reading enjoyment. One of the things I am looking forward to when my Presidency and general responsibility for the NZPS comes to an end is a return to reading poetry for its own sake, and not because I feel I ought to. That’s not to say I don’t enjoy the publications that cross my desk – I do – but there is a certain amount of (self-imposed) pressure to at least skim through as many of them as I can.

So I am currently reading a series by Ben Aaronovitch about a specialist police unit set up to deal with supernatural events in the London Met. area. I’ve ended up reading them out of order, but am enjoying them no less for all that. When I head overseas in July I’ll be taking my husband’s spare Kindle, loaded with whatever I can find to download for free. Hopefully, that will include some poetry, but I’m not promising anything.



# From the New President

Lonnard Dean Watkins

Looking through the list of distinguished poets to have held the post of President of the New Zealand Poetry Society, it is a great honour to have been elected to this position. A member since 2008, I have served as Vice-President for the last year assisting Laurice Gilbert with duties and responsibilities of the Society, particularly with maintaining our online presence through Facebook, Twitter and our website.

My earliest exposure to poetry came through the works of Shakespeare, although I only began writing poetry seriously when I was introduced to the haiku masters Basho and Buson. Since then I have continued to write and experiment with many poetry forms and styles. My haiku have appeared in journals, including *Heron's Nest* and *Acorn*, and my poetry has been published in numerous international journals and anthologies. In 2010 I became involved in Spoken Word and helped launch Poetry in Motion, a spoken word group in Wellington; in 2012 I was a finalist in the New Zealand Poetry Slam Championships.

The internet has quickly become a popular medium for publishing poetry. My background as a software developer and IT consultant was influential in my participation with online poetry. I am the webmaster for the online publisher Muse-Pie Press, based in New Jersey, USA, and maintain Muse-Pie Press' three online journals, *The Fib Review*, *Shot Glass Journal* and *Bent Ear Review* of which I am also the Editor.

Art is another subject of interest. A graduate from The Learning Connexion Creative Arts programme, I enjoy many facets of art, particularly Zen-inspired ink paintings. Combining my passion for art and poetry, I am currently working on a limited edition series of handmade, hand-written, chapbooks containing my haiku, short poetry and ink paintings. My intention is to use this background in art to help improve our internet presence.

From Basho to Baxter, Shelley to Sam Hunt, Shakespearean Sonnets to Spoken Word – I have a passion for all things poetry. I aim to bring this passion to the position of President of the New Zealand Poetry Society and work with the committee to continue the outstanding work performed by outgoing President Laurice Gilbert.



## About our Contributors

**Gillian Cameron** writes creative non-fiction and has had work published in *JAAM*. She was a founding trustee of the Randell Cottage Writers Trust and has had a long association with the New Zealand Poetry Society.

**Kirsten Cliff** is a free-range writer and book trader, with a love of all things haiku. She blogs at <http://kirstencliffwrites.blogspot.co.nz> and you can read her free chapbook here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/206750514/thinking-of-you>

**Mary Cresswell** is a Kapiti poet whose work appears in a variety of print and online journals.

**Jackie Evans** is a long-standing member of the Rotorua Mad Poets Society, contributing her skills to the group as poet, editor and historian.

**Emma Neale** has had five novels and four collections of poetry published. She lives in Dunedin with four males, three of whom are human

**Keith Nunes** lives in rural Bay of Plenty with a retinue of crackpots. His obtuse and melodramatic poems have been published in *Landfall*, *Poetry NZ*, *Takahe*, *Trout*, *a fine line* and *Snorkel* among others and his book reviews appear widely in *Oropi*. His chapbook *Crashing the Calliope* is on the streets. He's a former newspaper sub-editor but has been granted divine forgiveness.

**John O'Connor** is a Christchurch poet and editor, and judged the haiku section of the NZPS 2014 International Poetry Competition.



## A Warm Welcome to...

**Cecelia Fitzgerald** Christchurch

**Emanuel Garcia** Lower Hutt

**Glenn Durham** Auckland

**Harumi Minagawa** Auckland

**Helen Fletcher** Wellington

**Jacey McGrath** Porirua

**Joanne Kingston** USA

**Joy Mason** Papamoa

**Mike Tolhurst** Auckland

**Simon Hanson** Australia

**Sue Byford** Paraparaumu

**Sue Heggie** Auckland

**Tess Ashton** Auckland



## Congratulations

**Valeria Barouch's** haiku was a Prizewinner in the 15th HIA Haiku Contest: [http://www.haiku-hia.com/nyusen\\_en.html](http://www.haiku-hia.com/nyusen_en.html) **Elaine Riddell** received an Honourable Mention in the same contest.

**Emma Neale** was one of three short-listed poets in the inaugural Sarah Broome Poetry Prize, along with CK Stead and Kirsty Whalen. Head Judge Sam Hunt announced CK Stead as the winner, at the Auckland Writers Festival on Sunday 18 May.

The Poems in the Waiting Room (NZ) 2014 Competition was won by Belinda Diepenheim. **Cherry Hill** came Second, and Third prize was won by Charmian Koed.

**Carolyn McCurdie** won the Otago University Bookshop prize for Best Unplaced Dunedin poem.

**Vaughan Rapatahana** and **Anne Hollier Ruddy** have poems in *Shot Glass Journal* #13.

**Laurice Gilbert**, **Kristina Jensen** and **Valentina Teclici** have had poems accepted for the 2014 anthology of Voices Israel.

*Have you had publishing or competition success? Remember to let me know so we can make a big deal of it. Why should it be only the famous poets who get all the attention? Email details of your success to editor@poetrysociety.org.nz*



## Noticeboard

### THANKS

A big shout-out to those of you who support our Affiliation Programmes. Thanks to you, a random \$10-20 appears in our bank account every month, and it all helps. We currently have three programmes on offer.

#### Organic Boxes:

Everyone loves good food and feeling good about the food they are eating. Organic Boxes delivers fresh certified organic fruit and vegetables direct from the grower to your home each week. It's fresh, tasty, nutritious and good for the environment too. Organic Boxes delivers anywhere in the North Island (except for RD addresses).

Order at: <http://organicboxes.co.nz/> Use the Code NZPS2013 in the Voucher Code box, and not only do you get a really good selection of organic foods, but you help us in the process. It's win-win! Sign up now, and start enjoying the same yummy produce I eat.

#### Fishpond:

We are affiliated with Fishpond so that every time you enter their online store **via our website** and then make a purchase, we get a tiny wee cut of what you spend. You can enter Fishpond through our affiliation portal by clicking on any of the titles on our Bookshelf or Reviewed Books pages. You don't have to buy the book you click on – any purchase counts once you're there.

#### Online surveys:

Help the New Zealand Poetry Society raise money by doing the occasional survey by email. Every time you complete a survey we'll get paid for it. Click to sign

up at: <http://www.buzzthepeople.co.nz/helpfundraise.aspx?s=303A8CBB>

This fundraising programme is run through a website called BuzzthePeople, and they've been raising funds for New Zealand charities, schools and individuals since 2005. When you do the surveys you'll also have the chance to win prizes with monthly giveaways and the occasional big prize (cars, laptops, iPhones, iPads and windfalls of \$10,000 cash).

Buzz runs surveys for all sorts of organisations, ranging from Government departments to ad agencies and media companies. You can unsubscribe at any time you like and they never use our member details for any promotional offers.

## LOCUMS (LOCA?) WANTED

As I believe I have mentioned a few times, I am going to be overseas for two months from 14th July, and someone needs to do a couple of the things I won't be doing during that period. The emails will need checking for time-linked action and the membership database needs keeping up to date. You don't need to be in Wellington to do these things – you just need access to a computer. Once I have a few more helpers lined up I'll coordinate them all so everyone knows what everyone else is doing. It'll be like clockwork! Please contact me at [info@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:info@poetrysociety.org.nz) before 8th July, to give me time to set everyone up.

## SERVICES OFFERED BY THE NZPS

If you're a relatively recent member, you might not be aware of some of the services we offer other than the bimonthly magazine and the annual competition and associated anthology.

**Rent-a-Poet:** We list for free all members who are available for readings, workshops, visits to schools, or other public appearances: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/rentapoet>

We offer a **Poetry Advisory Service** for a professional critique of a sample of your work by a published poet: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutpoetryadvisoryservice> NZPS members pay a reduced rate for this service.

We offer advice on **Getting Published**, along with a list of publishers in New Zealand. A significantly more extensive resource is available in the members' section of the website: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutpoetrypublication>

We give you **advice on scams** – poetry competitions and publishing ventures – with information on what to look for and what to avoid: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutpoetryscams>

We feature a **Links page** to other resources and literary sites of interest to poets: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/resourcelinks>



# President's Report 2013-2014

Presented at the AGM on 16th June, 2014

Laurice Gilbert

I begin, as usual, by thanking all those who make the work of the New Zealand Poetry Society possible. We remain grateful to our Patrons, Dame Fiona Kidman and Vincent O'Sullivan for their ongoing support. Heap big thanks is due our Committee members Lonnard Watkins, who is also Vice-President, Carmen Downes, Sandi Sartorelli and Jack Wood, along with cheque signatory Gillian Cameron, who resigned in November. Sadly, for a variety of reasons, Carmen, Sandi and Jack all resigned by February, leaving me and Lonnard in charge. I'm grateful to Lonnard for hanging in there, and believe we have subsequently managed reasonably well and certainly co-operatively.

The web development company Signify continues to host our website for free, for which we are most grateful, and the Thistle Inn remains a comfortable and welcoming host venue for our monthly meetings. I thank manager Richard Walsh for his support.

At the end of the 2014 financial year we had 241 members, a reduction of 22 since March 2013. Wellington remains the biggest membership area, with Auckland and the Far North catching up fast, followed by the Canterbury region, still much depleted post-earthquake. Overseas membership was stable at around 16, about half of whom are long-term members, and half of those, ex-pats.

Contributors to a *fine line* continue to send in interesting and lively work, and the feedback from readers is generous and satisfying. This is such a successful aspect of our activities that I suspect some readers think it's all we do. It's certainly a useful showcase for New Zealand poets and poetry, thus amply fulfilling the aims of the Society.

The competition once more made a small but helpful profit, and I'm ever grateful to the Jeanette Stace Poetry Trust for continuing to offer supplementary prizes in the haiku sections.

Our 2013 anthology editor, Owen Bullock, once more did an excellent job of the annual publication, *Given an ordinary stone* (named for Carolyn McCurdie's winning poem in the Open Section). It didn't sell out this year, but made a small profit anyway, and we still have some for sale. They continue to make lovely gifts, even when displaced by later issues.

The website is slowly transforming and is far more visually pleasing, without compromising the quality of our posted information. Our social media presence has made the most progress over the year, with Lonnard taking over our Facebook and Twitter posts, to a highly positive reception. Sandra Simpson continues to make the haiku pages the go-to destination for the international haiku community.

We were able to run another writing workshop this year, with Australian poet and teacher Anne Carson at the helm. She ran the delightfully titled 'Spunky Funky Love' workshop and we all had a great time writing in this vein.

The financial situation finally improved, as you will see from the financial report [presented later], largely because I ceased to be paid as National Coordinator after November 2013. Apart from that small detail, nothing much really changed in my daily life, and I continued to run things pretty much as before.

This being the second year of the cycle, the Lauris Edmond Award was presented in March. For the first time we were included in The New Zealand Festival Writers Week, thanks to Programme Director Kathryn Carmody. The Award went to Michael Harlow at a reading that included two past awardees, and it was, as always, a privilege to present the certificate and cheque to a deserving poet not necessarily known well by the public, but certainly highly valued in poetry circles.

## Conclusion

The Society runs successfully as long as there is someone to carry out the day-to-day work. That work is well-supported and appreciated by the members, and I'm truly grateful for all the positive feedback I've received in that role over the last seven and a half years.

This is my last report as your President. It's been a happy and rewarding time and I feel honoured to have followed in some mighty big footsteps – Lauris Edmond, Denis Glover, Alistair Campbell, Harry Ricketts, and lots of other amazing poets. It's been my pleasure to serve and though I am standing down from that elevated position, I'll continue to edit the magazine and run the competition, at least for the foreseeable future.

Thank you all for your confidence in me since 2006. May the NZPS long continue to support New Zealand poets and poetry.



## Talk Poem

'Bartleby at the Wall', Jack Gilbert (*Collected Poems*, Random House, 2012)

Emma Neale

Alexandra-based poet Michael Harlow's serious, steely enthusiasm for the work of Jack Gilbert (1925-2012) first made me seek out Gilbert's *Collected Poems*. An American writer who became reclusive after his first collection was published in 1962 and nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Gilbert continued to write, deliberately removed from the American literary scene, while living in Europe and Japan. In his posthumous collection there are dozens of lyrics that manage to combine both verbal restraint and an unsettling plangency. One that particularly struck me was 'Bartleby at the Wall', partly because its visual attenuation differs markedly from the rest of his work. (Copyright law means

I'm unable to reproduce more than one line of the poem here. I hope this 'Talk Poem' creates an itch of curiosity that takes readers hurtling off to libraries and bookstores ...)

The Bartleby of the title is at once a verbal hologram of the author, and a figure from fiction – the title character from Herman Melville's 1853 short story, 'Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street'. The speaker of the poem, in one reading, tries desperately, doggedly to understand Bartleby; from another angle, Bartleby's dilemma is his own.

Gilbert's poem works hauntingly without any knowledge of the Melville; and yet one of the reasons I've fallen for it is that ferreting out the story – which is taught widely in the US, but not here – sharpened my appreciation of Gilbert's pared back, deliberating, stop-start, dysphoric bluntness.

Melville's story is about a legal scribe – a copyist – whose work means making handwritten duplicate and triplicate documents required by the legal process in nineteenth-century America. Melville's story seems often comic, quirky – lightly satirical – with some great idiosyncratic characters who have names like Turkey, Ginger Nut and Mr. Nippers. The combination of comedy and misery in Melville's fiction is extraordinary to a modern sensibility.

The view from Bartleby's window is of a black, shaded wall, ten feet away. Bartleby, at first a prodigious worker, soon answers every request, apart from copying, with what Melville calls a "mildly cadaverous" [... ] "I would prefer not to." Bartleby stares and stares at the wall outside his window; soon he even gives up copying, increasingly mired in melancholia. The story ends with his death from self-inflicted starvation in prison – (right, not much comedy left by then) – and the narrator retells a small piece of information he finds out about Bartleby's life prior to his work as a scrivener. Bartleby once worked for the Dead Letter Office in Washington, but then lost his job through a change in administration. (A DLO, part of the American postal service, deals with undeliverable mail, auctioning off valuables and destroying the letters.) The narrator reflects that the work itself might have led to an exacerbation of Bartleby's "pallid hopelessness".

The story can variously be taken as a commentary on the debilitations of repetitive, soulless office work; on chronic procrastination; on depression; maybe even on what we now call building sickness; on the sacrifice of the individual by faceless institutions; on the demise of someone seized by *le réveil mortel*; it could be a deeply sardonic study of a severe case of writer's block.

All of these meanings seem now to me to flicker under the skin of Gilbert's poem; yet the poem has further, glimmering ambiguities despite the fact that it's about 0.09% of the length of Melville's story.

Gilbert achieves the poetic equivalent of a musical triad: typographic, aural and semantic effects are all pressed into a bittersweet chord of psychological compression. The main sonic effect is a recurrent

assonance and consonance; and there are tiny detonations of high culture references in the midst of the demotic: "umber" and "Poussin" give an initial visual and semantic shiver that cause an overall alteration in tone, like dark drops of ink pipetted into clear water. The thin, rope-like appearance on the page, the terse, truncated lines that are nevertheless direct, declarative; these suggest a certain transparency. Yet any illusion of simplicity oscillates in the final five lines, where the mind has to skip back up and down to try to seize the sense.

The poem is about the difficulty of getting to the essence of the thing; the experience; the difficulty in both apprehending and articulating the authentic; of transcending the merely prosaic. Is 'everything' in affection, or is it in the skip between wildness and affection? And what is that skip? Is it *élan*, the leap of connection and desire? Or is it a gap, a judder, a transmission break? Does affection lead to sorrow? Does sorrow only grow out of connection, love? Are wildness, freedom, independence, singleton status, the things that meant happiness, in retrospect? There is a mordant pun here – when the speaker says he is already past – both unable to comprehend, and also, feeling the effects of time lost; brooding on mortality.

The whole poem jolts at this point with the possibility that the full thrust is about contemplating suicide. A man, staring and staring at a rope. What else could it be about? I'm drawn up with a shock here on my re-reading after months away from the work, shock at the fact that I'd completely forgotten that possibility in my memory of the poem. What I'd retained wasn't the pull of *thanatos*, but the slimness on the page, and slippery, elusive final five lines; the lovely sliding around of meaning. As we jink back and forth over the sense in these lines, we re-enact the internal thought-loops of Bartleby, and the poet. The sense of loss strengthens its undertow. And yet, and yet. The poem ends not with the word sorrow, but with that skip between wildness and affection. The ambiguity, and the verbal energy of that skip – joyous leap, or omission? – that is what draws me back again and again. And it seems to me that despite the fact that I'd suppressed the possibility that the skip might darkly ape a death throe dance, the very ambiguity here offers space for psychological regeneration.



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### *Quotation of the Month*

Writing is a lonely job. Even if a writer socializes regularly, when he gets down to the real business of his life, it is he and his typewriter or word processor. No one else is or can be involved in the matter.

*Isaac Asimov*

## Featured Poet: John O'Connor

### The Mark

- after Eugenio Florit -

you'll see that I lived  
from the mark on my forehead

the mark of a restlessness  
that I now hold within -

keeper of my own sorrows!  
a white face from now

minus its passion / its dreams.  
when I die there'll be only

the silence of paper flowers  
& a young olive branch.

•

O / to sleep without restlessness  
& the soul open to gentleness

my hands crossed before me  
& the songs of love far away.

now / the sweet taste of the sea  
running high.

### The Ship

- after Gunter Grass -

I'll build a ship  
if the seagull demands it.

I'll be happy as it's launched  
in a silk shirt

maybe I'll weep champagne  
or sweat sweet soap

both being necessary.  
who will speak at the launching?

who can read without going blind?  
the PM? the cleaner?

& what name will I give it?  
maybe I'll name it after

myself / or someone else

### Evening

- after Georg Heym -

there's no end to this evening  
but the low hills on the horizon  
will soon stop glowing /  
but glowing they still are

*like a dream country  
enriched by the sun.*

it's where the cornfields toss back broken  
daylight to the infinite evening. high up  
tiny swallows are circling. their flight  
lends glitter to every meadow /  
to the stands of rushes where tall masts  
gather in shining bays

*in the gullies between hills  
the darkness gathers*

### Ten Cent Piece

- after Bulat Okudzhava -

it happens frequently  
on the footpath  
shining like a tiny sun  
yet easy to miss -

a ten cent piece

someone's coming  
*walking swiftly*  
who stops suddenly /

he goes down  
bending at the knees /  
like a giant examining  
a bird's nest!

### Affection

- after Arthur Rimbaud -

evenings. blue. those of summer  
along paths by the spikes of virgin corn  
yes / I'll walk on the new grass  
& my feet will be chill as I dream  
& the wind will clothe my bare head.

*I'll not speak. I'll not think.*

only love - endless - will walk with me.  
I'll travel a very long way /  
a tramp / yes / as happy as in  
a woman's arms.

## Sky

- after Paul Verlaine -

above the roof / 'of course'  
the sky so tender / blue.  
a tree sways in the wind  
& a bell just within hearing  
like the bird on the tree  
making its dutiful song.  
such a simple life! & sweet  
& the companionable sounds  
of the streets. why do you  
weep? why have you  
put aside your youth?

## Autumn Day

- after Rainer Maria Rilke -

it's time. recall the great summer Lord  
consult the sun dials  
& loose the winds on open meadows

make the last fruit ripe. a couple more  
southerlies! take  
them closer to perfection / mix

the final sugar into the red wine. the  
homeless remain  
homeless. the lonely remain alone &  
will write long letters after they wake  
& read / will  
restlessly walk the tree-lined streets

when the wind picks up the golden leaves

## The Violins

- after Paul Verlaine -

autumn. daylight. I hear the violins  
sobbing in my heart

that is the melody I carry without  
words it is the gift

of time / its funeral over the long  
grass that we listen to

like tears at the end of a hot day  
tossed by the wind

all ways / by the violent wind

like an autumn leaf

## Moonlight

- after Paul Verlaine -

your soul a particular scene  
with masks & dancing  
& music of flutes  
virtually sad under  
its quaint disguises

all in a minor key  
the victory of love &  
brimming life they  
cannot / it seems /  
credit their good luck

yet their song & moonlight  
mingle / its calm & ineffable  
beauty that makes  
the birds dream & the  
water sob in the fountains  
among the tall marble statues



## American Life in Poetry: 355

By Ted Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006

Here's an experience that I'd guess most of the men who read this column have had, getting into a rental tuxedo. Bill Trowbridge, a poet from Missouri, does a fine job of picturing that particular initiation rite.

### Rental Tux

It chafed like some new skin we'd grown,  
or feathers, the cummerbund and starched collar  
pinching us to show how real this transformation  
into princes was, how powerful we'd grown  
by getting drivers' licenses, how tall and total  
our new perspective, above that rusty keyhole  
parents squinted through. We'd found the key:  
that nothing really counts except a romance  
bright as Technicolor, wide as Cinerama,  
and this could be the night. No lie.

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. Poem copyright ©2006 by William Trowbridge, from his most recent book of poems, *Ship of Fool*, Red Hen Press, 2011. 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.

# haikai café

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

edited by Kirsten Cliff

In carefree song a child  
outskips my failing gait  
I want to cry  
for my past my future  
her future?

~ Tanka by Lynn Frances

pinus draped in grapevine –  
. . . was I too much?

~ Haiku by Norah Johnson

my dreams  
fading into the distance  
I yearn  
for a blank page  
and a pen that prints in bold

~ Tanka by Anne Curran

Submissions: Please send your best three unpublished haiku, senryū, tanka and/or short haibun for consideration to [kirsten.cliff@gmail.com](mailto:kirsten.cliff@gmail.com) with 'HAIKAI CAFE' in the subject line.



## Regional Report

### WINDRIFT, WELLINGTON - APRIL

Bevan Greenslade

Contributions on the three themes of Free, 'Dis-/Connections', and 'Face' from five attending and seven corresponding members, were discussed. These included:

#### 1. Free:

raking this year's leaves  
last year's pile  
two hedgehogs koru'd

John Ross

hypnotizing me  
three rain-soaked sparrows  
more bread on the shopping list

Penny Pruden

salvo  
under the drunk soldier's head  
she slips a war cry

Ernie Berry

finally the grape harvest  
my veins appear again  
after the bike accident

Harumi Hasegawa

#### 2. 'Dis-/Connections':

no words needed:  
the dog's eyes connect with mine –  
walk time!

Kerry Popplewell

making amends  
bracing oneself  
no reception

Jenny Pyatt

#### 3. 'Face':

generation gap  
we rap on  
about hip joints

Ernie Berry

after the photographer  
says smile she pauses  
to adjust her settings -  
in the photo  
a row of fallen smiles

Karen Butterworth

beauty parlour  
muted voices  
my eyes grow bigger

Jenny Pyatt

I strode this  
you strode that  
we pause, turning, together

Bevan Greenslade

#### Apology and Correction:

Lastly, the report in the May 2014 issue of *a fine line* attributed the following haiku wrongly to Karen Butterworth:

Somme cemetery  
lichens fight for living room

In fact, this contribution to the February 14 Windrift workshop/meeting was from Neil Whitehead.



## Reviews

***Bird Murder*** Stefanie Lash (Makaro Press, 2014). Pb, 65pp. RRP\$25. ISBN: 9780473276492

Keith Nunes

This book is a wondrous read! A type of novella in verse – a threaded storyline that involves gothic murder and heroic birds written in five stanzas of three lines to each page. It has a plot that involves an investigation and a climactic end. But where some long poems written as stories lose their impact with variable and sometimes inadequate poetry, *Bird Murder* holds to a quality line throughout. It's charming and lyrical and even educational and profound.

The book's language is entertaining and rich and hints at dark undertones and sinister plots – there's much going on under the surface. Although it is made up of poems in the same strict form there's plenty of variety with line lengths changing and short stabs replaced by longer running lines. The tone of the poems varies, with playfulness and intrigue rubbing shoulders. A unique collection, *Bird Murder* is nourishing and rewarding.

One of the poems, 'Bird Room', sets the scene:

After the money, in their house of wonderful  
coloured stones

Mr and Mrs Cockatrice sit in the front room; the bird  
room

Their house is called The Good Ship

The heart of the room: two huia in a bell jar

Cockatrice has so many; has them all, all bought and  
sold

With money they used to be

Brown-eyed, honeyeater, Mrs Cockatrice

Looks at the journals all day

She hums to herself but won't be told she does it

Mr C is in disgrace from the bank

He clasps his hands on his stomach and picks the lint

Off his grey tweed and sighs and clasps his hands

The gas bill, the gas bill

He mutters this and sundries. Out the window

A stone angel points straight at the red sea, which  
boils

In 'Tableau mourant', Lash tells of what's going on just below the surface:

A still bird is so grotesque.

Pegged at the apex of a breath, forever.

Cockatrice looks like a leering dentist.

The clock's pendulum reflected  
in hundreds of glass-droplet eyes  
that he dusts himself.

He tells them all his troubles.

Arsenic crystallising under plumage.

Scores of lives, perching and on the wing.

He coos and preens at them.

They hate him.

A creak of a wire skeleton,

they use their last smear of residual energy  
to shrink from his revolving feathers.

Stretching and suspiring, an empty ticking.

Stefanie Lash completed her MA at the IIML, where she put together a collection of poems called *President Brie*. Her poetry has previously appeared in *Takahe*, *Turbine*, *Sport* and *Poetry NZ*. She's an archivist who lives in Wellington.

*Bird Murder*, along with *Heart Absolutely I Can* by Michael Harlow, and *Cinema* by Helen Rickerby, have been launched as the Hoopla series by Wellington's Makaro Press, celebrating its first year in the publishing business.

***The white clock: Poems*** Owen Marshall (University of Otago Press, 2014) ISBN 978-1-877578-63-2, NZ\$25.

Mary Cresswell

There is a giant clock white against the rocks  
above the town. A feature of this place, as  
others might be known for golden beach, art  
deco theatre, or sculpture no longer scorned.

... In summer the face shimmers like  
the multi-limbed Leonardo man.

... Time writ this large  
is discomfoting.

(‘The white clock’)

The book begins with these words and has a cover that reproduces Grahame Sydney's painting, 'Ida Valley Moon' – I don't think I've ever seen a cover and a poem that went so well together. There's not much moon in the succeeding pages, but there is a lot of time writ large.

Many of the poems are autobiographical in form, trying off loose ends of memory – as though the poet were

wandering through the house idly plunking away on an old guitar he just found in one of the closets. “So this is my life, here, now, with worn sneakers/ and a southerly over the hill. ... A deal of it lies/ behind me; some of it – who knows.” (“This is my life”) And in another poem, “This too will pass, the Persians/ said. Everything so fleeting that it dips/ and pales almost in the momentary flare/ of its creation.” (‘Freeze frame’)

Perhaps this is a main chord:  
Rain clouds scudding over sombre bush  
Anomaly glimpsed in a stranger’s face  
The poignant return to the familiar place  
Your eyebrow lifted, no need for speech.  
(‘Particulars’)

The poems vary from free verse to lazy quatrains, almost ballads; some rhyme and some have interesting internal rhyme. They are comfortable and wise.

Marshall is clever at showing the instant that changes everything. Take this magpie:

Wool gathering in the park  
then startled by whip crack  
above and a strike on my cap.  
On its second dive I see the  
bold piebald slash...  
(‘Birdstrike’)

One of the (rare) positives of age is the awareness of the critical instant, whether it comes from an existential banana peel that’s been waiting forever or from a hard-earned moment of truth. Marshall has an admirable way of presenting this awareness (often through images of birds). “An instant in full flight, then to strike and/ fall into nothingness. Not a bad way to go.” (‘Death of a finch’)

And at the end of the day we have the gentle, careless guitar again as

Al Fresco the poet sits thinking of  
Bishop Berkeley, that’s if he was  
ever really there.

**Us, then** Vincent O’Sullivan (VUP 2013) ISBN 9780864738929; RRP \$28

*Gillian Cameron*

There is much to like about Vincent O’Sullivan’s collection *Us, then*. Let me count the ways.

i

Firstly, Vincent’s faithfulness to the material of poetry: words and the patterns of words. In his hands, the ‘matter’ of our everyday conversations, the expressions our parents and grandparents used, are made anew. Even the titles – ‘When, exactly?’ or ‘Come again?’ – made me feel I’d been

dropped into some conversation which then turns out to be completely different from what I expected.

ii

Secondly, Vincent’s engagement in culture. Much have I googled in his realms of gold. Take, for example, the poem ‘Words to attend’. Googling “Studs Terkel” and “Take it easy, but take it” (from the poem), I found Terkel was an American radio show host whose regular sign off was, “Take it easy, but take it”, which in turn is a line from a 1941 Almanac Singers song – ‘Talking Union Blues’ – about workers’ rights (Woodie Guthrie/Pete Seeger/Lee Hays/Millard Lampdell). The poet wants “to sign off on,/ whatever inscriptions are called” with this catchy line. Yes, it pays to attend – at t’end.

iii

Certainly, Vincent’s concerns of those of a certain age (or, as the French so kindly put it, an ‘uncertain’ age) resonated with me (also of an uncertain age). In ‘As one does, alas, cobber’ the casual, down to earth language of old mates is a fitting container for contemplating one’s mortality:

It may just about be time to hand over.  
It may pretty much be time to think clover  
...  
We sit without saying much, glad the river  
Holds its calm, the long afternoon not over,

A friend of mine recently shared how he felt ‘complete’ when he held his only grandchild for the first time. I sensed the same sort of completeness in ‘Screensaver’:

I am holding a year-old child  
As you’d expect at my age,  
he is made of gold  
...  
an aging man, a child who  
may never know him

Nothing to regret, neither weather  
nor place, neither time nor distance.

iv

Fourthly, Vincent’s sheer erudition. In ‘And’ a man and woman stand beside an “ordinary river”. Seemingly, this is Plato’s ideal form of a river, “even though you had never seen it” which (since it is not a real river but an ideal river) “works on the lowest level, if no where else”. In their minds, the man and the woman, separately, link the river to a past memory, a revelatory moment of insight. This appears to mirror “the epiphanic tradition” ... “of Woolf” appearing later in the poem. By such cleverness the man and the woman “distract their minds/ from the fact their bodies glanced”. So now I’m wondering whether they’re so distanced from real, messy life (the legacy of Plato’s forms and Western rationality?), they cannot even account for.

Indeed they “surprise each other/surprise themselves” with their “naïve response” to the (messy) poignancy of Chekov. Is the “lowest” level the conceptual/abstract, while the highest is the individual thing that really exists? Or am I reading too much into this? I don’t know, but it’s been fun playing around with it.

v

Fifthly, Vincent’s love of the mundane. I so get the mother and daughter conversation in ‘En famille’:

Each said it never occurred as they  
shopped whether umbrellas were *functional* –  
who’d be so dull!

Of course an umbrella has to be “gorgeous”. My all time favourite had a wooden handle in the shape of a duck painted blue. Walking along Lambton Quay I felt like Mary Poppins!

vi

Dare I say it in this period of postmodernism and post-universals, Vincent’s poems touch the human condition, particularly its propensity for violence towards humans and other animals. In ‘Saba’s goat’ – a response to Italian poet’s Umberto Saba’s ‘La Capra/The Goat’ – the inversion of the usual subject-verb-object induces a feeling of choked discomfort:

every envy, every suffering  
the slow crackling munch  
took in, thorn by thorn

I recommend you click on <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/sep/13/new-monkey-species-congo-lesula> for an unforgettable picture of the lesula, the co-subject of the titular poem ‘Us, then’. As Vincent observes:

He could be an Amish.

His whiskers frame a man. His human nostrils  
decidedly close to home, so similar as we are.

His eyes remind me of my father. His intelligence  
that comes from being shot at, and eaten.

There are fewer lesula left than people who read  
Swift.

...

There are paintings too in Venice with monkeys  
in their corners, Last Suppers with their cousins  
watching the betrayal minutes before it comes,  
the bread about to break into another story.

A monkey observing a man makes its hirsute point.

He knows I am raising the gun, I who have never

held one. I know, quite rightly, he expects the worst.

vii

Finally, the way Vincent puts you through your paces. Just when you think, oh yes this is it, you find the pieces don’t quite fit together. The cryptic stories Jesus told apparently had a similar affect on his audience. In trying to puzzle out what they might mean, his hearers, without thinking, were made to reveal their innermost thoughts. Now that’s power!

Thanks a bunch, Vincent ☺ I’m looking forward to your next collection, due out soon.



## Competitions & Submissions

### Ledbury Poetry Festival Poetry Competition (UK)

**Closing Date: 10 July** Entry Fee: £5 for first poem, £3 for each subsequent poem. Children and Young People enter their first poem free. 1st: £1000 and a residential writing course at Ty Newydd. 2nd: £500. 3rd: £250. See website for details of Young People and Children’s competition section. Winners have the opportunity to read their poems at the 2015 Ledbury Poetry Festival. Go to: <http://poetry-festival.co.uk/ledbury-poetry-competition/> for further details and to download an entry form.

### Fakenham Poetry Circle Open Competition (UK)

**Closing Date: 12 July** Entry Fee: £2 per poem or £5 for three. 1st prize: £140, 2nd: £90, 3rd: £50. Maximum of 40 lines per poem. Poems should be submitted on a separate A4 sheet that does not identify the author. Two copies of each poem required. Please make cheques payable to Fakenham Poetry Circle. Add £4 to receive a winners/commended anthology. Send entries to: The Competition Secretary, 31 Hayes Lane, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 9EP, UK. Or email: [fakenhampetrycircle@ymail.com](mailto:fakenhampetrycircle@ymail.com)

### Knightville Poetry Contest (USA) Deadline: 14 July.

Entry fee: \$15. Three poems per entry. Up to 150 lines per poem. Prize: \$1,000 for an exceptional poem in any form. Judged by National Book Award Finalist and author of “Fast Animal” Tim Seibles: [http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2012\\_p\\_seibles.html#UvLYHPldWSo](http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2012_p_seibles.html#UvLYHPldWSo) Submit online via submissions manager. at: <http://www.newguardreview.com/>

We accept .doc or similar files - no PDFs, please. We do pay strict attention to word and line count. We accept previously unpublished work only. Any size print run or online publication (including blogs and/or social networking) disqualifies an entry. Simultaneous submissions are accepted, provided we’re notified upon publication elsewhere. If we accept your poem for publication, we trust you will remove that poem from all other contests upon our acceptance of your work. Contest winners and all finalists get one free copy of *The New Guard*, and each submission will be carefully considered for publication. Final judging is blind.

**The Elmet Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 25 July**  
Entry Fee: £5. First prize - an Arvon course at Lumb Bank. 2nd - a week's writing retreat at Ted's House, Mytholmroyd. Runners up - £50. The prizes will be awarded by judge Lucy Burnett on Saturday 25 October at the The Ted Hughes Festival 2014 in Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire. Contact: Conor O'Loughlin - conor.oloughlin@hotmail.co.uk Anna Turner - annabama@hotmail.co.uk Kathleen McGrath - kathleenmcgrath@hotmail.com TET email - theelmettrust@outlook.com Event website: <http://www.theelmettrust.org/competitions>

**Poetrywivenhoe Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 25 July** Entry Fee: £3 per poem. For original poems in English of no more than 50 lines. Prizes: 1st Prize £200, 2nd: £100, 3rd: £50. Entries should be sent to: poetrywivenhoe Poetry Competition, 96 Ernest Road, Wivenhoe, Colchester, Essex CO7 9LJ, UK. More information, full terms and conditions and entry forms: [http://poetrywivenhoe.org/?page\\_id=29](http://poetrywivenhoe.org/?page_id=29)

**Wasafiri New Writing Prize (UK) Closing Date: 25 July** Entry Fee: £6 if entering one category, £10 for two and £15 for three categories. Open to anyone worldwide who has not published a complete book. Submissions invited in one of three categories: Poetry, Fiction and Life Writing. A maximum of 5 poems can be entered and the word limit for Fiction and Life Writing is 3000. Other terms and conditions apply. £300 will be awarded to the winner in each category and their work will be published in *Wasafiri*. Send entries to: Wasafiri New Writing Prize, The Open University in London, 1-11 Hawley Crescent, London, NW1 8NP, UK. For entry forms and full terms and conditions: [www.wasafiri.org/wasafiri-new-writing-prize.asp](http://www.wasafiri.org/wasafiri-new-writing-prize.asp)

**The Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest (USA) Closes: 31 July (postmarked)** Write a poem or short story for a chance to win cash prizes totaling \$1275. Guidelines: Write a poem, thirty lines or fewer on any subject, style, or form, typed or neatly hand printed. And/or write a short story, five pages maximum length, on any subject or theme, fiction or non-fiction (including essay compositions, diary, journal entries and screenwriting). All works must be original, and all entries must be typed or legibly hand printed. Multiple and simultaneous poetry and short story entries are accepted. All winners will be announced on 20 September. Prizes: Poetry 1st Prize is \$250; 2nd: \$125; 3rd: \$50. Prose Prizes are \$500, \$250, \$100. Entry fees: \$5 per poem; \$10 per story. To send entries: include title(s) with your story(ies) or poem(s), along with your name, address, phone#, email, brief biographical info. on the coversheet. Add a self-addressed stamped envelope for entry confirmation. Fees payable to: "DREAMQUESTONE.COM" Mail to: Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest, P.O. Box 3141, Chicago, IL 60654, USA. Visit <http://www.dreamquestone.com> for full details on how to enter.

**Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award (UK) Closing Date: 31 July** Free entry competition open to 11-17 year-olds from all over the world writing in English, with whatever level of experience. The top 15 winning poets will have their poems published in an anthology in March 2015, which will be sent out to more than 22,000 people worldwide, making it one of the largest circulated poetry anthologies in the world. The top 15 poets will attend a week-long residential creative writing course at the prestigious Hurst Arvon centre in Shropshire, where they will be tutored by this year's judges, or receive a visit to their school from a professional poet, followed by one to one and distance mentoring (age dependent). The 85 Commended Winners will receive book prizes and a year's Youth Membership of the Poetry Society. Full details about entry can be found online: [www.foyleyoungpoets.org](http://www.foyleyoungpoets.org)

**The John Betjeman Poetry Competition for Young People (UK) Closing Date: 31 July** Free entry. The theme is 'a sense of place' and aims to encourage children aged 10 to 13 years to look at their surroundings more keenly as well as to be inspired by reading and writing poetry. 1st prize is £1000 (£500 to the winner and £500 to the English department of their school) as well as four Eurostar tickets. £50 book tokens are awarded to commended entrants. Junior/ primary schools entering a whole class will receive a copy of *The Puffin Book of Modern Children's Verse* on receipt of entries and secondary/senior schools, *The Rattle Bag*. The judges are National Poet of Wales, Gillian Clarke, and founder of Gifford Circus, Nell Gifford. Online entry form can be found at: [www.betjemanpoetrycompetition.com](http://www.betjemanpoetrycompetition.com)

**Ethnographic Poetry Award (USA) Deadline: 1 August** Top prize of \$100 for poems that use alternative literary genres to explore anthropological concerns. These concerns may be any of those associated with the fields of anthropology: Archaeological, Biological, Linguistic, Sociocultural, and Applied Anthropology. Send cover letter and 1-3 poems, maximum 10 pages total, by email. Website: <http://www.aaanet.org/sections/sha/2014/01/2014-sha-poetry-competition/>

**The Referendum Rant Poetry Competition (UK) Closing date: 15 August (subject to change)** All details are presented as a pdf at: [http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/files/Referendum Rant competition.pdf](http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/files/Referendum_Rant_competition.pdf)

**Buzzwords Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 17 August** Entry Fee: £4; £10/3 (postal entries); £4.35; £8.70/2; £11/3 (PayPal). Poems up to length of 70 lines. Prizes: £600, £300, £50 x 5 commended. Online entry at <http://tinyurl.com/buzzwords-competition>

**SaveAs Writers' International Writing Competition – Reflections on the Great War (UK) Closing Date: 23 August** Entry Fee: £2 per poem. This year marks the centenary of the outset of the Great War and entries are invited of short works of poetry or prose written in response to any work of art associated with World War One. 'Work of

art' in this context can be a painting, a song, a poem, even a film or a soundtrack to a film. The interpretation of the term is entirely up to the entrant. 1st Prize £50, 2nd £30, 3rd £20. Poems: maximum length 50 lines. Your name must not appear on your hard copies but please include a covering letter with your name, contact details, and titles of the entries. Electronic entries to be sent to: [saveas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:saveas@hotmail.co.uk) and headed 'poetry' or 'prose.' Electronic payments to be made via PayPal and to incur 50p administration charge. For more details visit: [www.saveaswriters.co.uk](http://www.saveaswriters.co.uk)

**The Manchester Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 29 August** Entry Fee: £17.50. First Prize: £10,000 'It's a delight to give money to poets!' National Poet for Wales Gillian Clarke, Judge 2008. 'Asking for a batch of poems rather than a single entry allows judges to look beyond competency and control in writing and to reward other virtues, such as risk-taking, inventiveness and sustained achievement.' Simon Armitage, Chair of Judges 2010. Under the direction of Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, the Manchester Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University runs the annual Manchester Poetry Prize - a major international literary competition, celebrating excellence in creative writing. The 2014 Manchester Poetry Prize will award a cash prize of £10,000 to the writer of the poems submitted. All entrants are asked to submit a portfolio of three to five poems (total maximum line length: 120). The poems can be on any subject, and in any style, but must be new work, not previously published or currently under consideration elsewhere. If you have any queries, or would like to be sent a printed entry pack for postal submission, send a SSAE to: NZPS, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145. Website: [writingschool@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:writingschool@mmu.ac.uk)

**The Aesthetica Creative Writing Award (UK) Deadline: 31 August** An opportunity for established and emerging writers to showcase their poetry and short fiction to new, international audiences. Prizes include publication in the *Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual*, a compelling anthology of new writing; £500 for the Poetry winner; £500 for the Fiction winner; a selection of inspirational books from Bloodaxe Books and Vintage. Entry is £10 and permits the submission of two works into one category. Fiction entries should be no more than 2,000 words each and poetry entries should be no more than 40 lines each. Both short fiction and poetry entries should be written in English. Submissions previously published elsewhere are accepted. For more information and to submit visit: [www.aestheticamagazine.com/creativewriting](http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/creativewriting)

**The Portico Brotherton Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 31 August** Entry Fee: £5 for the first poem, £2.50 per extra poem; FREE for YOUNG category. Prizes offered in two categories for a poem on 'Conflict and Community'. Entries may want to focus on particular conflicts and their effect on a community or write from the perspective of an individual experiencing conflict. OPEN CATEGORY (Over 16s). Prizes: 1st: £250, 2nd: £150, 3rd: £100. Poems,

up to 40 lines, in English. YOUNG CATEGORY (Under 18s). Prizes: 1st: book tokens, 2nd: book tokens, 3rd: book tokens. Poems, up to 40 lines, in English. For full entry rules and conditions see: <http://www.theportico.org.uk/prizes/poetry-prize>

**Thynks 2014 Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 August** Entry Fee: £3 per poem. Poems up to 40 lines. To be judged by members of the Thynks Publications team. 1st prize £100 plus publication, runners up – possible publication. Further details on the website: <http://www.thynkspublications.co.uk/competitions>

**NZPS publication a fine line - call for submissions; Deadline: 1 September.** The editor welcomes your contribution. We currently pay a small fee for Feature Articles. See publication guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines>

**The Templar Quarterly Pamphlet Award (UK) Closing Date: 8 September** Entry Fee: £10 for postal entries / £11 for online entries. For portfolios of between 10 and 12 pages of poetry. Prize: One submission will be published as a short Templar Pamphlet with a launch event where the winning poet will be accompanied by another Templar poet and guests. Entries will be read by Alex McMillan along with other readers commissioned at the discretion of Templar Poetry. For further information and guidelines see website: [www.templarpoetry.com](http://www.templarpoetry.com)

**The Poems Please Me Prize (UK) Closing Date: 14 September** Entry Fee: £5 for first poem, two poems £9, three poems £12. Prizes: 1st £600, 2nd £300, 3rd £150, Highly Commended £30 each. Subject: open. Length: 12-40 lines. Judge: Anthony Watts. Artists worldwide will illustrate the winning and commended poems (with mounted illustrations of their choice for the top three poets) with publication by Poems Please Me, by The Artists' Quarter (TAQ) and in a new eBook (see *Movement* with 2013 prizewinners: <http://www.poemsplease.me/movement/>) Please see Poems Please Me website for full details: [www.poemsplease.me/](http://www.poemsplease.me/)

## Questions

"Can anyone explain Poetry to me? What do people see in it? How is it better to have a few lines of poetry, rather than a well written article/story/etc? Is there some way you are supposed to read it, to have it make sense? – seriously, I read a poem and it's just gibberish. What is the appeal for you? I ask this out of genuine curiosity because I know some of the fine people on here do write and even enjoy poetry. I have never been able to understand why. I have read a number of poems over the years in an attempt to understand the appeal and I fail each time."

**Some answers:** <https://kdp.amazon.com/community/thread.jspa?threadID=195055&tstart=0>



# Members' Poems

## Stepping Stones

Step into my world, my world of tunnel vision  
where only small steps exist.  
Often I take a step backwards, reassess situations,  
and sometimes I side-step around issues  
I am reluctant to face or deal with.

My view is focused on what the mind sees,  
analysing where life's fuzziness starts and ends.

I have been known to take a step up,  
extend myself, take responsibility,  
and a step forward, to be accountable,  
move on.

I have also stepped aside  
to avoid doggie doo on the footpath.

It's not so much the steps you take  
to overcome problems,  
but the pebbles you kick aside  
on your journey.

Pebbles hold you back,  
these are past mistakes,  
step over them, they are learning steps.

A step in the right direction  
to live a long and happy life  
is to take one step at a time.

What steps are you taking,  
and where is your tunnel going?

*Debbie Williams*

## Cerberus Announcing the New Millennium

It was his turn t' embark the steep gangplank.  
Obedient, he followed fa(r)ther down.  
Beyond the busy port, the red sun sank  
behind the wharf in shadows black and brown.  
  
He heard the cur now bark, though not for him.  
He heard the ding-dong of the bell. How strange.  
It is full fathom five; so sink or swim;  
New Zealand shifts, and suffers a sea-change.

*Eric Awl De Beus (Guest Poet)*

## At Ticketek

Behind the counter, flies on the wall  
share the immobility of the queue  
immersed in quiet inactivity.

A mother, thrift shop chic,  
breaks ranks to undo the silence.

"Come here".

Her four-year-old steps away and cowers,  
a conditioned reflex.

"Come here!" – louder –  
the two-year-old hunkers deep  
within the bunker of her stroller.

"Come. Here."

She hauls the boy nearer and swats them both  
– first him then her – loudly over their ears.

"Hey! Don't hit them!"

A middle-aged woman, designer label elegant;  
red-faced, shoulders tensed, palms pitted by painted  
nails.

Towards the back of the queue:  
an older man, tweed and gabardine, indignant.  
"She should hit their legs, never their ears."

Nothing visibly accounts for either attack site.

The querulous mother faces the counter  
straight-backed, red-eared;  
still no sign of service to distract the audience.  
The boy glowers in mistrust;  
the girl howls at the betrayal  
of one who professes to be her guardian.

The queue loses cohesion  
as the youngsters are dragged away.  
Flustered with the stroller, the mother  
has only her share of the anger  
to show for this family outing.

*By the age of four a professional's child  
will have had 50 million words addressed to it;  
a working-class child 30 million  
and a welfare child just 12 million...  
...the professional child at the age of three  
has a bigger vocabulary  
than the parent of a welfare child.*

*The Listener, September 17, 2005*

*Laurice Gilbert (Published by Muse-Pie Press, 2012)*