

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
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NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
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WELLINGTON MEETINGS
Poets' Corner, The Thistle Inn
3 Mulgrave St, Wellington Central
Starts at 7.30pm with open mic.

Casual workshop opportunity with an
experienced facilitator.

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT
ISSUE:**

30 SEPTEMBER

A message for Laurice Gilbert on her NZPS Lifetime Membership Award

Margaret Vos

I clearly remember the first time I heard Laurice read one of her poems. It was a typical cold, rainy night in Wellington at the regular meetings that used to be held at Turnbull Library. I was new to New Zealand and to the Poetry Society, but when I heard her read 'Child Protection' I knew I was in the right place with my kind of people. The kind of people who Laurice embodies: accepting, encouraging, promoting, and writing poetry.

Encouraging New Zealand poets and poetry has been the hallmark of her work for the NZPS, and perfectly reflects her warm and welcoming personality. I speak for the whole Society when I say her award is more than well-deserved.

Laurice expanded on her work for the NZPS Committee from the early 2000's and was elected president in 2007, a post she held until retiring in 2014. Astonishingly, during that time she took on four additional and critical roles: President, administrative Co-ordinator, Editor of a fine line, and Competition Secretary. She really was quite a one-person NZPS for a time. I know the Committee continued to heave collective sighs of relief when she carried on year after year – I certainly did!

It's true what she once said to me about the anthologies: if you want something done, give it to a busy person.

And busy she was. Not only was she carrying a huge load of work for NZPS, she had a family (featuring many non-human ones), demanding career choices, working holidays abroad, poetry workshops and general life maintenance. Not to mention somehow finding time to write her own poetry, judge competitions, build relationships with other societies and groups (including MENSA!!!), and receiving children back into the nest and pushing some out. Wally, you're a lucky man you were kept on!

On a very personal note – Laurice and a few NZPS Wellington members started a writing 'club' sometime in mid-2000s – well it started as a writing and critique group, but it ended up being a great deal social as well. You may have heard her speak of The Academy. That was where I got to experience her constructive criticism, which only reinforced my opinion that she was an ideal person to lead the NZPS. She always found something positive to say about our poems, and always contributed something constructive. Since those days, I think of Laurice every time I see a big-cat-patterned handbag ...

We have been so fortunate to have Laurice take the NZPS through very difficult financial times and the constant challenge of finding good volunteers. Her intrinsic importance to, and her love of, the NZPS became all the more apparent when she began to shed some of her many roles. NZPS has been incredibly

lucky to have her as long as we did. Her unquestionable dedication, long-service commitment, genuine interest in and support of New Zealand poetry, and finally, her unique attitude to life and writing will be always treasured by her friends and Society members alike.

So it is very apt that you are being awarded this Lifetime Membership, Laurice – you have achieved in about a decade what many people take a lifetime to do. It has truly been both an honour and a pleasure to work with you for the NZPS, and even better, to call you my friend. On behalf of the NZPS, I trust this Lifetime Membership will ensure you continue putting the try in poetry and your verse into the universe. I know you will be enormously successful in your next adventures in life and in poetry.



Laurice Gilbert being presented the Life Membership award by President Lonnard Dean Watkins.



From the Editor

Lonnard Dean Watkins

Welcome to 'a fine line', the magazine of the New Zealand Poetry Society. This is the first issue of which I am the editor. Laurice Gilbert, the editor since 2006, has developed this magazine into what it is today. I will strive to continue the quality of 'a fine line' that has been maintained by Laurice over these many years.

Over the next year, it is the intention to build from the great foundation laid by Laurice Gilbert. More content will be included in each issue with articles, reports and poetry from our members and associates.

In this issue, we publish the Presidents' Report presented at the recent Annual General Meeting, and provide an analysis of the recent member's survey. There is also a book reviews, meeting reports and a selection of members' poetry. I hope you enjoy the July 2015 issue of 'a fine line'.

'a fine line' Guidelines

'a fine line' magazine is not just of the New Zealand Poetry Society, it is the magazine of the members of the New Zealand Poetry Society. We welcome submissions from members for all things poetry.

All articles and poetry send in must be the original work of the submitter and you must be a financial member. We do accept articles and poetry that have already been published elsewhere as long as the publisher and publication are cited.

Material suitable for 'a fine line' includes:

- Poetry Book reviews (check our website for books)
- Articles about poetry
- Poetry event reviews (including local readings)
- Interviews of poets
- Poetry

When submitting, please include a brief bio of no more than 50 words.



President's Report 2014-2015

Presented at the AGM on 20 July 2015

Lonnard Dean Watkins

Twelve months ago I took on the role of President of the New Zealand Poetry Society. It has been a year of changes, while still being mindful of tradition and hard work of previous committees. I would like to thank Laurice Gilbert and Anna Hudson for their work on the committee over the past year. I would also like to thank our Patrons, Dame Fiona Kidman and Vincent O'Sullivan, for their continued support and involvement. And of course, my thanks go out to all members of the New Zealand Poetry Society.

During the year, the committee began putting together a strategy to improve our services to members and to New Zealand poetry as a whole. One service we implemented from the suggestion of a member was that we have a monthly Newsletter. Thanks to Anna Hudson for her work on compiling these newsletters. We expect that over the coming years these newsletters will continue to grow to keep our members informed of events, opportunities, and news from the New Zealand poetry scene.

Another change has been our monthly gathering at the Thistle Inn in Wellington. We felt that poets are being generally well catered for around the country with poetry readings and Open Mic's offered by local poetry groups. The role of the NZPS should be to encourage participation and help publicise these events. We still hold our monthly Poets' Corner at the Thistle Inn, but we now offer workshops and discussions on poetry. We plan to be able to offer these types of workshops and discussions outside of Wellington in the future.

To ensure our strategy aligns with the views of our members, past president Margaret Vos, proposed to

conduct a survey of our members. The findings of this survey will assist us in focusing on better serving New Zealand Poetry members. I would very much like to thank Margaret for not only the idea, but for her work in compiling the survey and analysing the results. I am pleased to be able to present these results at the 2015 AGM and to make available online for members who are not able to attend.

We have also increased our exposure in social media. While we understand that not all our members actively follow social media sites, we feel it is an important avenue to increase the awareness of the New Zealand Poetry Society. Over the last year we have increased our followers by over 50%. Organisations from within New Zealand and around the world have also showed interest in the NZPS. This international exposure will help us forge closer bonds across the oceans for the society and our members.

We are conscious that some may view the NZPS as a Wellington based poetry group that does not always appear to represent the wider New Zealand poetry community. This is something we have been actively working on and I am pleased to have received offers from outside of Wellington of others who would like to be involved at the executive level. We expect to continue to increase this involvement over the coming years.

I believe that with our sound membership and financial base, the incoming committee can further improve how the New Zealand Poetry Society delivers on our mission statement to advance education by promoting, developing and supporting poets and poetry in New Zealand.



Elected Officers for 2015-2016

The follows officers were elected on the NZPS executive:

President	Lonnard Dean Watkins
Vice-President	Laurice Gilbert
Secretary	Anna Hudson
Committee	Gus Sinonovic Susam Haniel



2015 Member Survey

Background

In 2014, the committee of the New Zealand Poetry Society was approached by past-president Margaret Vos to conduct a survey of our members. This was compiled and invitation to participate was issued in March 2015.

The Goals of the survey were

- Why do poets join NZPS
- What do poets see as benefits of being a member
- Does NZPS offer value for subscription fee
- Members understanding of NZPS structure

And more importantly

- How do members think we can do things better

Respondents

- Percentage that are current members - 96%
- People who write poetry regularly - 70%
- People who read poetry regularly - 80%
- People who regularly purchase poetry - 60%

Survey Results

Top benefits of membership

- Being a member of a community of poets - 80%
- 'a fine line' NZPS magazine - 40%
- News about the poetry community - 20%
- NZPS web site - 20%

Value of membership

- Value for subscription fee - 80%
- Membership fee about right - 90%

Comments and Suggestions

- Representation in other regions
- Poetry book discounts
- Discount to poetry competitions
- International associations
- Workshops
- Web site improvements
- Membership to academic institutions
- Become more inclusive

Are we listening?

No survey is relevant unless they are acted upon. Analysing the results gives the committee clear guidelines and goals to pursue.

Goals

- Active encourage regional representation
- Committee member outside of Wellington
- NZPS events in other locations
- Improve web site
- Discounts for members
 - Bookstores
 - Book services
 - Competitions
- Investigate improvements to 'a fine line'
- Pursue relations with academic institutions
 - Courses
 - Workshops
- Pursue international relationships

Conclusion

Firstly we would like to thank Margaret Vos from her work compiling and analysing the results.

The survey was valuable in understanding what our goals should be moving forward to ensure we improve our service to members of the New Zealand Poetry Society and the wider poetry community of New Zealand.

But the committee cannot achieve all this without the assistance from our members. If you can help in anyway, we welcome you to contact us.

email us on info@poetrysociety.org.nz

Finally, although the survey is completed, we are still keen to hear from our members with further suggestions and comments.



Reviews from the Poetry Society Bookshelf

waha/mouth – Hinemoana Baker (VUP, 2014)

Reviewed by Vaughan Rapatahana

Interesting. Wow. Oddball. Whanokē. Interesting.

These - and I guess many other words - best describe this new collection of poems, both lost and found, by an ever effervescent and wry Hinemoana Baker.

For it is word-play that inculcates the entire collection: words – *ngā kupu* – are bandied about, repeated spasmodically within and beyond any one piece, played on and played with, placed in new and unfamiliar poses in and throughout this elliptical array of verbal obscurities, images, lists, eulogies, epistles, koan. The poet is having fun and at the same time bending our eyes & ears into contorted response as we scramble to unravel her erstwhile verse rambles. Just like her *whānau* playing dandily in the adjective game. So we have all this lexical repetition, like:

A single word in capital letters sang itself in chocolate
[from candle. This, by the way, is a pretty-good, well-behaved poem.]

*Is it possible to perform this word? To own this word?
To kick this word once in the face and want to do it again?*

Oh yes, yes it is a veritable killer whale of a word
[from candle]

The word and over and over
[from eclipse (for Greg)]

The word is waha
[from road train]

We agree the word needs an x if only to say
[from part 1]

the land that vowels forgot
[title of a poem]

It vanished the day she said those words under her breath
[from malady]

what the whale said
[title of a poem]

Interesting. *Hārakiraki*. Postmodern. Dense. *Whēuaua*. Pretentious in places maybe. *All of this nonsense avoids the obvious* [from media training 1] – that the poet isn't interested in giving her readers an easy ride. You just gotta go along with her or jump out of the book and rest on the side of the road into the gap, eh: *your pathway has become a tunnel through these astonishing green ferns* [from media training (1)].

Pae kare, even some of the titles are a ruse: wellington is revealed to be a mishmash, a cornucopia, a nonsense-ville of a place, precisely because its idiosyncratic descriptors are so gobbledygook.

Waha is Māori not only for mouth, of course, but for voice. Baker's voice is divergent. You will not find a consistent collection of structured stanza, decipherable poetry, definitive 'meaning' here and the point is that you are not meant to, eh. Perhaps 50% of the collection requires several readings to even begin to comprehend what – if anything other than sensory revitalization – is on offer within any given poem, given that Baker does stress that a couple of the works are indeed 'found' poems and at least one other is prose – *media training 1*.

I'd like to think that opening this book to read is like standing at the mouth of a cave, or a river, or a grave, with a candle in your hand is her own back cover sentence: sometimes the flame flickers far more brightly than at other times. Sometimes it's all benighted.

The scenarios and locales too are divergent – Australian outback, American ambience, Aotearoa attitudes. Most particularly in the guts of the book, the 2 – 5 line hypnagogic landscapes book-ended by the druggy part 1 and part 2, whereby iteration is all 'about':

two white horses/My country is a mother moose/making joyful noises/woodworker/a monk strikes a piece of hollow bamboo with another piece of hollow bamboo/kidney/that place online where you can listen

Echo. Echo. Echo. Echo.

Now amongst this litany of lunacy, there are also some figurative gemstones: Hinemoana Baker can certainly write more – for want of a better *word* – 'conventionally' too (so that some poems are quite simply luscious and you want to frame them on your wall – such as *school & moving house & the mighty manifesto*). Take, for example the following delectable dribbles from the corner of these page lips:

A parliament of owls
[from school]

She rises like tealeaves from the keyboard
[from my twin sister]

The books are quiet babies resting in the dome of dark
[from woodsmoke]

The floating walkway sings two clear notes from its hinges
[from the abbreviations] - Think about the title here too!

The sun comes out like a fucking miracle
[from malady]

Be the parrot on your own shoulder
[from media training (2)]

Now, while I am at it, there's a few other vocal inflexions and verbal timbres I'd like to mention here too:

- You could sort of sing some of this collection, poetry slam some of them into the audience, as there's a sort of frenetic musicality here (Baker is, of course, an accomplished recording artist.)
- Māori are largely absent in terms of reo, *kōrero*, *mahi tuhi*, *wairua* Māori. We sort of float by on the margins of the book, granted that point the canoe and *kānga wai* swim into the current and that one poem is a motley of snippets from A Dictionary of the Māori Language, 1971. *Waitaha* has a brisk walk-on shimmy at one stage too.
- Dead and sick things intertwine themselves with funerals and operating tables and doctors here also: the collection is a nostrum of panegyrics and palliatives. So we have *haematology/cytosines/subscapularis/infraspinatus* among others.

So there/here you have it. waha/mouth/voice – a jolly jumble-sale of *sauruses/cetaceans/chillaxing/langpo* and *salvia*. Indeed:

My love, we are *awash*.
We've eaten *maps*
You are an *airbase*.
[from eclipse (for Greg)]

Exactly.

You know what? I'm going to leave the last **words** here to Joanna Preston, who is discussing another poem altogether (Jac Jenkin's fine *Uncoupling*, winner of the 2013 *Takahē* poetry competition), for her **words** sum up so well also the experimental, sentimental journey into Hinemoana Baker's own attributed openings and apertures of cave/river/grave:

Even now I can't tell you what it's about, except by quoting it back verbatim - to paraphrase Wallace Stevens, it 'resists the intelligence almost successfully'. But I could pull almost any line at random and offer it as an example of lovely workmanship. The way words and images return and modulate... Intoxicating sounds, and repeated phrases that shift their meaning as they flicker through the poem.

Interesting. Wow. Oddball. *Whanokē*. Interesting.

Ko mutu taku arotakenga.

Kia ora Hinemoana.

Kāore he kupu ināianei..



Close to the bone -Charlotte Trevella

(Steele Roberts, 2013), ISBN 978-1-927242-03-2,

RRP \$19.99

Reviewed by Mary Cresswell

Together, these poems read like a magic lantern show from hell – the images glow new and bright, but when you look closer they melt into decay and corruption:

... *The women with china tea cups beneath the chestnut tree. They are speaking in hushed voices of stethoscopes and snapdragons and grandchildren who think that death is a soft, furred animal with coiled claws, floating among stagnant shadows.*

[Dog eat dog]

Or else there is breaking and killing:

*The sky, it's an abattoir,
where cumulus cows
and cirrus sheep kneel down
and bare their throats.
The estuary's as bright
as plasma.
Stars divide the spoils.* [Motunau]

Behind it all there is a personal back story, addressed in two long prose poems (quite different from the slim and careful phrasing of the rest of the book). When the back story is stripped of its verbal dexterity and its wit, there is nothing left but the basics: no secrets, only a situation close to apocalyptic despair.

I can just see my family, curled up in our sleeping bags in an underground bunker, my mother boiling water for the two-minute noodles, my father reading aloud from TLS to keep up our morale. In fluorescent turquoise flashes, our skins would shimmer like the membranes of a mythical creature. We would see each other's bones.

[To be perfectly honest]

Any chance of escape is either impossible to find or so deeply coded as to allow only a response from the mind, not from the heart (the latter being too heavily damaged to speak for itself):

*There's a warship with machine guns splitting skulls and apples, atoms (before they make the barrel rotten), with his flashlight he is shouting,
... - - - . . . !
Which means: the stars are snipers
shooting [Writer's block]*

(... which also means STOP in Morse code) and, elsewhere,

I like this.

*It has a rhythm and
intuition
quite unsurpassed by
EK = ½ mv²* [Sgt Pepper's ECG]

(... which also means kinetic energy, as in stay alive, keep moving).

A few of the poems are very slightly lighter than the rest of the collection.

*I have dreamed of you before,
walking in the golden
glades of morning,
blade by blade
and bone by bone.* [Philippa]

*Dawn, and in this land of
milk and honey, she walks
among the olive groves.* [Unbearable lightness]

They don't hold out hope but do vaguely suggest that the rot and the collapse of everything into a Hieronymus Bosch world may somehow be superseded by a possibility of light – not here and not now, but perhaps in dream and memory. We can but keep moving. And in the meantime, we write poems:

*Is there such a thing as
an island without water?
As a lake without a
shore? Nibbling on our ankles,
tiny transparent fish are
brazenly ignoring the fact
that they don't exist.* [The empty archipelago]



Quotation of the Month

Poetry is what in a poem makes you laugh, cry, prickle, be silent, makes your toe nails twinkle, makes you want to do this or that or nothing, makes you know that you are alone in the unknown world, that your bliss and suffering is forever shared and forever all your own.

Dylan Thomas, 1914– 1953



Regional Reports

Windrift April 2015 Meeting

by Karen Peterson Butterworth

An animated gathering of seven met at Penny Pruden's Brooklyn home on April 16th to critique their own and corresponding members' poems. A taste of the poems and discussion follows. Some of those most liked were withheld from this report for future submission, and others for editing in the light of members' suggestions. Watch out for those in future journal issues and competitions.

Free choice

getting late . . .
the dog samples
each fresh blade of grass

Kerry Popplewell

Multiple associations were evoked, including the owner's frustration, and a gathering storm.

in my new garden
a blowsy red rose
tries to seduce me
into loving the house
I didn't want to buy

Lynn Frances

Sensuous imagery and delicate humour enjoyed. Discussion of whether tanka guidelines allow its expression in a continuous sentence inconclusive.

Resurrection:

grass cut short
today
a field of daisies

Penny Pruden

Someone suggested the last line be shortened to 'daisies'. Others thought the word 'field' was needed to invoke the scale of the scene.

winter morning
bright green grass
where they found him

Ernest Berry

Concise expression appreciated, with pathos and much room for imagination.

weeping through
humorous anecdotes
of the eulogy

Jenny Pyatt

This struck a common chord with audience. Suggestion made that last line better placed first and shortened to 'eulogy'.

Housework:

camp shelter
a pair of mallards clean
the floor

Nola Borrell

Conciseness and contrast between human and wildlife behaviour appreciated.

hasty housework
dust swept
under the carpet

Julie Burns

Hearers identified with scene. Echoes of legend in the wording suggested universality of human habits.

retirement home flyer
put the rubbish out

Bevan Greenslade

Conciseness and irony appreciated. Poet mused it was perhaps not subtle enough, since instantly understood. Audience disagreed, liking its clarity.

Windrift June 2015 Meeting

by Nola Borrell

Wintry weather for our June workshop was well-compensated by warm home, Kerry-muffins and Bevan-wit. And, of course, haiku - of all sorts. The best haiku, I thought, were in the open section. We were more challenged by Penny's topics of 'metamorphosis' and 'fuss'.

overcast sky
how red the pine leaves
underfoot

Kerry Popplewell

This haiku drew appreciative murmurs.

muddy estuary
a glowing kotuku
preens

Bevan Greenslade

A fine contrast between mud and kotuku, we immediately decided. The poet agreed to delete a few words, but claimed 'glowing'.

one batch made
of crabapple jelly
waxeyes flit

John Ross

No-one suggested amendments, but we were a little slow to appreciate the association of crabapples and waxeyes. Was the cook waxing jelly (as our mothers did) and wax linked with waxeye: Kerry's ingenious suggestion.

But! John (corresponding member) said later: "I'd hoped people would pick up the significance of 'one' - I could have made MORE than one batch - as there had been enough crabapples left on the tree - but not now - the waxeyes have scooped most of them - and they're welcome."

I found the following two haiku among the most interesting: more challenging, and not reliant on an immediate laugh.

graveyard
a windmill appears
through the mist

Jenny Pyatt

Highly suggestive but a little puzzling, said the Group. Political statement? Wind turbines? Toy windmills in a children's cemetery?

lone cross
above the snowline
circling crows

Ernest J Berry

We agreed: a striking image with its black and white - but NZ? Crows like tall trees for roosting, and migrate to warmer climes. We were confused by crows suggesting an unburied body; cross suggesting a buried (or no) body. Once we identified the author, we wondered if the location could be North Korea.

Penny led the way with a familiar example of 'metamorphosis'.

swan-plant
on the window-ledge -
no sign of movement
till opening the door today
a monarch flies straight out

Penny Pruden

We liked the fun ending. Penny says she's working on the grammar.

'Fuss' produced everyday examples.

never satisfied
my fussy cat -
in and out

Julie Adamson

Laughter and recognition greeted this moment. How about 'my cat - / in and out' we suggested.

willow-lined river
a water rat scuttles
through the wind

Nola Borrell

I designed this moment as a literary verse, while thinking that old Toad was the one who really made the fuss, not sensible Ratty. But that largely passed the Group by; they were unimpressed. I threatened them with publication. Without a turning-point, it's a short poem rather than a haiku - but was I going to point that out!



About Our Contributors

Vaughan Rapatahana is a long-term resident of Hong Kong with homes in Philippines and Aotearoa-New Zealand. He is widely published internationally across several genre, including fiction, language critique, poetry, philosophy and was a semi-finalist in the inaugural Proverse Prize for Literature and highly placed in the 2013 erbacce poetry prize.

Mary Cresswell came to New Zealand from Los Angeles in 1970. She began writing poetry while winding down a full-time career as a freelance technical editor. Mary is the co-author of *Millionaire's Shortbread* (2003) and the author of three poetry books, *Nearest & Dearest* (2009), *Trace Fossils* (2011) and recently *Fish Stories*.

Susan Haniel has written poetry for the past three years. She has had her poetry published in the fib review and a fine line. She has read her poetry in a regular spot on Hutt Radio in 2014.

Belinda Diepenheim lives in Ashhurst and has had her poetry published in Landfall, Poetry NZ, Snorkel, Interlitq, as well as other magazines and ezines. Her first book is soon to be published by Steele Roberts.

Cherry Hill is a retired teacher of Chinese and Japanese languages. She is a partner in a deer and sheep farm on the edge of Lake Ellesmere/ Te Waihora.

Mariela Durnhofer Rubolino arrived to New Zealand ten years ago and from the start loved the rhythmical pace, the green atmosphere and the familiar blue southern sky. She has a bachelor in Communication Sciences and works as an activities coordinator. She enjoys translating literature to English/Spanish and writing poetry.

Gail Ingram writes poetry and short stories, which have appeared in Takahe, Poetry New Zealand, Cordite and Flash Frontier among others. She has been placed in various competitions, including the 2013 Takahe Short Story and BNZ Literary Award Flash Fiction competitions. She is the immediate past president of the South Island Writers Association, and is currently doing her MCW at Massey University.

Sue Heggie was born in Dunedin, lived and taught in Christchurch for many years and now lives in Auckland. The drift North has come to a standstill. Sue decided last year to stop working and now blogs, knits and writes. Living on fresh air and sniffing oily rags is working out just fine. www.fluffygeorge.co.nz

Beverley Teague writes poetry in response to mood, muse and moment. She enjoys the challenge of different forms. Many years ago one of her daughters called her a poet at heart. Beverley would like to think that's true.

Anne Curran has been writing short verse forms for about four years now. She lives in Hamilton New Zealand, a pretty provincial town in the North Island. She reads and writes poetry as time and inspiration allows. She is inspired by people, memory, landscape, and language.

Judith Clearwater, author, editor, reporter and publisher, has written poetry for a number of years.



Members' Poems

Ah sweet mystery..

There's an ad
on TV
recently

background music
Somewhere
over the rainbow...

Always mean to check
what they're pushing
but I drift off...

Who composed it
who sang the damn thing
first

why is that
sentimental verse and tune
attached to my brain

with some undiscovered
cranial glue,
when I can't recall

the postman's name.

Cherry Hill

Primal Ode

The beginning of the written world

Dried rivers flow
the first poem of all,
upstream.

Literature and humanity's currents
converge, collide
into one who knows the deep.
Scribes reset
time and history
as the sumerian venture narrates
the beginning of the written world.

Twelve tablets that tell
about the oldest of tales,
the divine origin of man.

Clearly it states that the secret of life
is to control the heartbeat.
Amused is the wise by that one
who wants to conquer the unknown
when he can't even conquer sleep.

The origins of life and death
overflow the first poem of all, upstream.
An oral culture starts writing.
A new era. An old poem. And a secret.

The quietness between the beats
of the a heart,
of the world
and the underworld.

An epic evermore.

Mariela Durnhofer Rubolino

The Scent of Approaching Rain

Last month my old dog came inside,
dropped to the floor and died in my arms.
That night I slept, even though his body lay in the corridor,
white in the half light of a big moon.

Loss has become a sort of comfort,
the sharp twist of it makes my mouth water.
Here's the road side stall with the lemons
and rhubarb that we drove past on the way to Massey.
There's the river where we'd swim each Summer.

Tonight I felt an earthquake rock the bed where we slept
for seven years, back-to-back, the window open just enough
to bring in the scent of approaching rain.
The shaking ends in seconds, but I wait and wait
even though I know it's all over.
while we wait for the boatman to cross the lake.
Stillness takes time

Belinda Diepenheim

My List

Margarine and bathroom cleaner, tea and coffee,
fruit and bread.

It's a list of things I'll buy,
but it's not MY list.

Water plants, put out the rubbish, phone the dentist, wash
the floor.

It's a list of things I'll do,
but it's not MY list.

The wind is strong, the boat is heeling, water floods
the deck.

It's a list and I lean with it,
but it's not MY list.

The day that I was born, something wasn't right,
but no one noticed.

The day I started walking, something wasn't right,
but no one noticed.

The day I started school, something wasn't right.
The kids all noticed.

They liked to copy me, limping with a turned in knee.
I had a list.

Judith Clearwater

we walk
this early autumn morn
in silence
a climbing yellow rose
throws out a sunny hue

Anne Curran

Installation

What are you looking at? A mirror that holds itself midair. There are no attachments! How did it get here? I was walking; I stumbled across it. Come now. What do you see in it? The moody sky. You're alone on a hill in a paddock. Isn't it strange? Are you lonely? I'm not alone. I see you in the reflection. Go on. You're old. Old as the wizened-mouthed Greek who asks too many questions in the dusty market place. Old as my new bald son with his forever startled eyes. You fill the sky, the waving tussock, the neon flash of a beetle's wing. You give me what I need. Oh. And you are the star. Don't flatter yourself. The one that shoots between my eyes, between my legs, wedges in that frozen place between my ribs. Sometimes I hate you as if you were my mother. Okay. You're silent now? I'd tip my battered hat if I could. No need. As you can see, I'm moving on.

Gail Ingram

Knowing Myself

my
eye
remains
greyish-blue
unchanged since sixteen
when endless possibilities
had yet to find the limits of intrinsic constraints
and perceive myself, that the blue
was bound around by
a sliver
line of
dark
green

Susan Haniel
(first published in the fib review, Issue 21)

I Pocket Sir Edmund Hillary

when I ride my bike to work
I pocket Sir Edmund Hillary's face
on the front of my five dollar note
snug in my wallet, safe from the price of petrol
and I know he would approve
as I push my bike home
up the hill

Susan Haniel

Choices

I
am
only
a product
of my attire
my nakedness hidden behind
a company of clothing, tidy on my hangers

Susan Haniel
(first published in the fib review, Issue 20)



Map of France

*We are moving to France
For six months.*

I have highlighted the place
in orange on the map. Only
twenty houses, no patisseries,
no romantic tabac, no school at
4 rue de L'Ecole, just people
and we hope, children.

*We are moving to France
For six months.*

Past Perpignan, Quillan and Puivert,
Where there is a castle and a café,
open in the summer and some Australians.
There is a market for the locals and La Poste.
We are going in winter.

*We are moving to France
For six months.*

The photograph of our converted barn
off the net is grainy and black
and white, like an image from the last war.
I see thin men in striped pyjamas.

*We are moving to France
For six months.*

The walls are two feet thick,
Too thick for ears,
shuttered and grey-stoned.
Silence then inside except
for soft voices. A child and
a mother speaking in Anglais,
fluent and fearful.

We are driving into the map
in our Renault on the wrong side of the
world, getting smaller and smaller as we zero in on Campgast.
past Quillan, Puivert and the Australians.

Neither of us knows a soul or any French
beyond s'il vous plait and ca va monsieur,
our exchanges timid and polite.

*Nous allons demenager a France
Pendant six mois.*

We don't know any French.
our foreign tongues are tied.

*Sue Heggie
(blackmail press 21)*

The Pathologist's Report

"This is the body of a tall, fit, well-built young man."

Lying here on the slab, stitched from the navel to the chaps,
they've done your hair all wrong.

I'll pull it back down your forehead, cover the two deep gouges
parallel as tracks cutting into your gorgeous face.
Wouldn't want you to look uncool.
Your nose, I see is patched together with skin-coloured filler.
No in or out breath at all. Can't put that together.

O the pity of it.

Apart from the abrasions on your beautiful hands
and the wreckage of your face, you are dead perfect.
Not a broken bone apart from the one
around your neck, your twenty-first present,
I see it's split in two.

Your cock lolls to one side as I pull back the sheet to
check that it is really you, not some changeling they've swapped.
You are starting to smell of embalming fluid, drowned in it
so I'm still not sure. You were always so shower-fresh.

I'm stealing now from the dead, taking your wedding ring away,
freshly cut, to give to our son when his tiny hands turn
to man's hands. Right now they wave in the air, clutching at nothing.
This numb thing is not you surely?

Both of us are sucking our fists at night, it stops my screaming.

Don't fret, your son is sleeping, looked after by our friend
while I am down here in the morgue looking at you, for you.
You seemed to have slipped by me, whistled off to climb I suppose,
what do I tell him when he's old enough to understand?

You do know, he'll never be old enough. I'm going home now
betraying you by leaving. Now you know how it feels.
It's cold here and you won't speak to me.
I want to lay my hand on a warm cheek, lean over him
and check his faint breath for life and catch my breath with love
when his eyes open and he recognises me and smiles.

Lie there then, with your eyes shut against me.
Mine stare at the dark all night, dry and open,
Hearing you trip and fall, seeing you
silently, desperately grasping at crumbling rock after rock.
They all let you down.

I really am going now. You'll be sorry you
Let me go, you know. Alright then, one cool kiss and
I'll be off.

Sue Heggie

