



a fine line

March 2010

The Magazine of The New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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MARCH MEETING:

Monday 15 March, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Mary-Jane Grandinetti,

editor of *the fib review*: <http://www.musepiepress.com/fibreview/>

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

Meeting begins with an open mic

\$2 entry

APRIL MEETING

Monday 19 April, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Jennifer Compton

Writer in Residence, Massey University

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

Meeting begins with an open mic

\$5 entry (\$3 for members)

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities / Wellington City Council

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Feature Article

Is there any word for diamond, please? On the joys and difficulties of writing poetry in a Conlang
Valeria Barouch

Kristina Jensen's article guiding us through her 'Letter Land' has encouraged me to share with you my own adventures in – Elvish. I guess in the country that has become a synonym for Middle-Earth, the fact that some people attempt to write poetry with Tolkien's linguistic creations will not surprise anyone. The challenges involved are manifold.

The main problem is lack of vocabulary. A prominent wordlistⁱ has some 4,500 entries, including words struck out by Tolkien, prefixes, suffixes, words repeated with various inflections, and numerous proper names, etc. The actual number of terms useful for a Neo-Quenyaⁱⁱ text is therefore much more modest. Quantity is not the only problem; the nature of the vocabulary is also providing a number of pitfalls one should avoid. Many words are so specifically connected with Tolkien's mythos that their use in texts unrelated to it may be questionable.

What is the pleasure of writing with such an 'imperfect' tool, you may wonder. In a much cited letterⁱⁱⁱ Tolkien said: "...this process of invention was/is a private enterprise undertaken to give pleasure to myself by giving expression to my personal linguistic 'aesthetic' ". Thus Neo-Quenya writers may yearn for more vocabulary, but there is indeed no reason to complain about the shortcomings of a tool that was not designed for one's own use. The only thing one can do is to make a virtue of necessity. My writing with Quenya is motivated by the pleasure of experimenting with this highly poetic vocabulary and to turn the challenges into a creative experience. The length of this article does not allow examining the semantic and grammatical problems. What I would like to demonstrate is the next best reason after fun for adopting a fixed form for a poem. As strange as it may sound, the cause may be 'failure'.

I find it difficult to think in a vocabulary that cannot be used like a Real World language, i.e. in daily speech. I start therefore usually with a text in English as I need a canvas to paint on with Quenya. My example is based on a scene I witnessed on a mountain pasture one summer evening. My draft reads:

No one would know that it was there
were it not for some **ripples** in the **lea**
 and not a breeze the **blame to bear**.

Far from the **shelter** of shrub and tree,
waited on by mallow and meadowsweet,
 it feasted there like a **Roman** grandee.

The slender **muzzle** of the young **doe**
plucked choosily from the grassy mere,
oblivious of watchers close - friend or foe.

While the sun **trailed** off into the fragrant eve,
all at once the place was graced **with an air**
 of Arda^{iv} Unmarred - sweet, but, oh so brief.

About 20% (bold) of the text presented a problem. I toyed with a translation day after day. A specific meter combined with lack of vocabulary had put my brain in a sort of straitjacket. All the drafts sounded clumsy and the only reasonable solution seemed – abandon. I had just bought Stephen Fry's *The Ode Less Travelled* and so returned to reading instead of writing. The word "pastoral" in the description of the villanelle and Fry's mention that this form has been called by some "an acoustic chamber for words"

made me give it another try^v. This time, I tried to think in pictures rather than in words and to reduce them to simple statements. I wanted to use 'hraicénima' (scarcely visible) for its sound and this determined the first rhyme. The second one was imposed by 'tasse' (from a line my brain could not get rid of). Once I had searched the wordlist for suitable rhyming terms, the fixed form seemed suddenly to take the lead and pictures and words clicked together. The 5 stanzas reflect all I wanted them to say, so I left it at that. The literal translation shows that although form and vocabulary have changed, every idea from the draft is present.

Nu laire-vilya calima
né nurtaina ambo súmasse
emma Ardo vanwa ar írima.

Under a bright summer air
was hidden on the hill's bosom
the picture of a lost and desirable world.

Urulaste ar hraicénima -
ananta sinten - anes tasse
nu laire-vilya calima.

Difficult to hear and scarcely visible -
and yet I knew - it was there
under the bright summer air.

Lótelion liltie vórima
úfane hendunyanta i lisse
emmo Ardo vanwa ar írima.

Some flowers continual dancing
unveiled to my eyes the grace
of the picture of a lost and desirable world.

Sossenca imíca farme férima
ve arquen caine nessa arasse
nu laire-vilya calima.

Fearless amid edible plenitude
like a noble lay the young deer
under the bright summer air.

Raine ar vánie waltaner i síma
panyala oiave endanyasse
nu laire-vilya nísima
emma Ardo ilvanya ar írima.

Peace and beauty stirred the imagination
fixing everlastingly in my heart
under the fragranced summer air
the picture of a perfect and desirable world.

The fixed form, seeming demanding at first sight, turned out to be a blessing. It structured text and thoughts. I had cluttered up lines with details, trying to paraphrase the untranslatable, increasing only the muddle. The importance of sound and sensible refrains helped simplify and shape the text.

If you would like to judge for yourself whether this villanelle has something of an "acoustic chamber", you can listen to it here:^{vi} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV2HnEbcQJI> Wonder about the title of this paper? No word for diamond in Elvish, I am afraid. But the Ancient Greeks proved helpful, they called it 'Tears of Gods'. I compounded this into 'Ainunier' which inspired me to a poem

on 'Blood diamonds', but that is another story.

[Editor's note: this article arrived with footnotes integrally attached, and try as I might I can't figure out how to keep them at the end of the article. You will find them at the end of the magazine. Sorry.]

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

Well, the best-laid plans, and all that. My much-anticipated break in January was brought to an abrupt end by a mysterious viral illness that neither my GP nor the medical day ward at Wellington Hospital could diagnose. As a result I've had several weeks off life in general while I recovered and regained my energy. I can confidently say I'm much better now, and back at work, but everything I should have been doing in February is somewhat delayed, including getting this magazine to the printer and competition letters to schools.

Nevertheless, before I got sick I managed to complete three new poems (two of which have been submitted) and a whole page of my epic poem. Not as much as I had hoped, but it's something to show for the summer anyway. I hope those of you who write managed to get lots done during the relatively quiet part of the year we call the holidays.

As we come to the end of another financial year, I want to say a huge thank you to all our members for hanging in there. It's a cliché, I know, but without you all I'd have nothing to do and no-one to do it for. I really love this work.

Thank you to all the magazine contributors without whom I would have had to do **all** the work, but who did it so much better than I could've: Jenny Argante, Valeria Barouch, Lucas Bernhardt, Nola Borrell, Liz Breslin, Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle, Karen Peterson Butterworth, Gillian Cameron, Tony Chad, Jenny Clay, Majella Cullinane, Rangī Faith, Linzy Forbes, Bevan Greenslade, Jeffrey Harpeng, Anne Harré, Kristina Jensen, Harvey Molloy, John O'Connor, Joanna Preston, Patricia Prime, Peter Rawnsley, Ruby Roberts, Elizabeth Robertson, Barbara Strang, Mary Bell Thornton, Neil Whitehead and Helen Yong. That's a fantastic team I've got supporting my editorial efforts, and I feel very lucky.

I also want to thank all of you who have let me publish your poems on the Members' Poems page without payment, a situation that will improve as soon as I can get some funds: Rosetta Allen, Jenny Argante, Ruth Arnison, Fred Buijn, Caroline Glen, Linzy Forbes, Maranda Haynes, Ackroyd Jackson, Alexander Lomakin, Helen McKinlay, Robynanne Milford, Janet Newman, Keith Nunes, John O'Connor, Pita Patter, John C. Ross, Julie Ryan, Suzanne Vaassen and Clare Ward. I hope you all remember to add your *a fine line* poems to your publishing CV. And thank you for letting me slip in one of mine once a year.

And of course I couldn't function without the generous and thoughtful support of the NZPS Committee: Anne Faulkner, Gillian Cameron, Linzy Forbes, Tim Jones and Alan Wells. Thanks guys.

You'll find competition entry forms in this issue, as well as a membership renewal form. Our policy is to accept renewals until the end of May along with competition entries, to save you stamps and cheques. After that you're on your own, and why would you want to give up the pleasure of being part of a national poetry community?

Happy writing.

About our Contributors

Valeria Barouch : Swiss living in Geneva, Switzerland. Took up writing poetry in English to keep the potential of frustration low from toying around with limited Conlang vocabulary.

Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle is a 19 year old student at Auckland University. She was the featured poet for *Poetry NZ* #39.

Rangī Faith lives in North Canterbury. He is currently completing a new book of poetry.

Anne Harré is a Wellington writer and musician, with editing and publishing experience.

A Warm Welcome to:

Rona Abbott Nelson
Heather Bauchop & Richard Miller Dunedin
Sandra Fraser Auckland
Steven Green Auckland
Martyn Roberts Dunedin
Monique Watson Wellington
Karl Williams Tauranga

Congratulations

Phillip Donnell won The Nancy Jervis Prize (£150) in the Café Writers 2009 Poetry Competition with his poem 'Reconciliation'. Nearly 1600 poems were entered in total. Read Phillip's poem at:

http://cafewriters.awardspace.com/nancy_jervis_2009.htm

Ginny Sullivan won the Indigo Dreams Press (UK) poetry competition for the second year in a row, with 'Bringing the Bone Carving'. Read it at: <http://www.indigodreamsonline.com/#/poetry-comp/4536312528>

Haiku writers **Ernie Berry**, **Sandra Simpson**, and **André Surridge** all have poems in the latest edition of the annual Red Moon anthology, this year titled *where the wind turns*. The book, which claims to be a survey of the best English-language haiku of the past 12 months, contains 161 haiku, 12 examples of other forms, such as renku and haibun, and essays. It can be ordered from the Red Moon website:

<http://www.redmoonpress.com/>

Patricia Prime and **Sandra Simpson** received Honourable Mentions in the Manichi Daily News Contest (Japan), won by Scott Mason of the US. The winning poems can be read at:

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/features/haiku/etc/archive/contest2009.html>

Publications

New arrivals on the review shelf since the last issue:

Tigers at Awhitu Sarah Broom (AUP, 2010)

Ithaca Island Bay Leaves, a mythistorima Vana Manasiadis (Seraph Press, 2009)

Noticeboard

For a complete rundown of regional events, and to find the poetry meeting in your town, please go to our website:

www.poetrysociety.org.nz

HAIKU PATHWAY'S BIRTHDAY

Katikati's Haiku Pathway turns 10 this year and to mark the occasion there will be a bit of a bash on Sunday, June 6 (Queen's Birthday Weekend). Starting at 1pm in Katikati's Memorial Hall there will be a public event to dedicate 10 new boulders, announce the winners of this year's Katikati Haiku Contest and enjoy some Japanese-themed entertainment, including taiko drumming. Please consider this as a personal invitation. For more information email Sandra Simpson nzhaiku@gmail.com

POEMS IN THE WAITING ROOM

The Autumn edition of this great little brochure is out now with 10 poems and a haiku, featuring mostly NZ poets of all ages and styles, with some international selections as well. The brochures are distributed to medical waiting rooms and rest homes in Dunedin, North, Central and South Otago, Southland, as well as to Scott Base and Samoa. PiTWR is a Registered Charity and welcomes donations, which can be sent to: 19 Hunt St, Andersons Bay, Dunedin 9013. Find out more about this fantastic initiative by **Ruth Arnison** at <http://www.pitwrnz.blogspot.com/>

CHARITABLE E-ANTHOLOGY

The Book Of Hopes And Dreams is a poetry anthology featuring many award-winning and internationally respected writers, including Simon Armitage, Margaret Atwood, Carol Anne Duffy, Elaine Feinstein, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Michael Horovitz, Anne Stevenson and many others. Money raised from sales of this book go to Spirit Aid for their aid programme in Afghanistan.

The Book Of Hopes And Dreams is available for a minimum donation of \$2 (though larger donations are gratefully received) via PayPal to dee@thunderburst.co.uk followed by an email to that address to advise that you've paid. As soon as the funds are received you will be emailed your e-book. All funds raised (minus PayPal admin. charges) go direct to Spirit Aid.

Spirit Aid is a Scottish charity staffed entirely by volunteers who donate their time willingly because they wholeheartedly believe in the ethos of Spirit Aid, which is to give practical assistance to war or disaster torn regions of the world and to promote peace in a secular, non-religious way. Because it is staffed entirely by volunteers, 90% of all funds raised go direct to its projects.

<http://www.spiritaid.org.uk/>

Surfing the Web

<http://poetrytyneside.blogspot.com/> Poetry Tyneside is edited by Dave Alton (who will be visiting NZ later this year) and Keith Armstrong. They want to develop international postings and invite NZ poets to send a contribution or two occasionally. They tend to post two or three poems from a contributor at a time and the blog itself shows the sort of length they favour. If anyone wants to submit please email in a form that can be cut and pasted to: Freemanscore@aol.com Copyright remains with the author.

http://www.scientificblogging.com/chatter_box/where_science_meets_poetry Food for thought – where do you stand on the continuum of traditional – modern poetry? This guy likes rhythm and rhyme and dislikes prose poetry.

<http://dpstreet.blogspot.com/2010/02/street-poetry-february-20-2010.html> On the other hand, someone who loves poetry in all its manifestations.

<http://www.americanlifeinpoetry.org/current.html> A wonderful website by The Poetry Foundation, archiving American poems. You can sign up to have one sent to you every week, as I have.

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/02/portugals-new-bike-paths-are-filled-with-poetry-video.php> Wellington has its Writers' Walk, Lisboa (Portugal) has cycle tracks with poetry to read while riding.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/series/poetryworkshop> Want to have your work reviewed by a published poet? Every month, The *Guardian* Books poetry workshop is hosted by a different poet who sets an exercise, chooses the most interesting responses and offers an appraisal of them.

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutpoetryadvisoryservice> We have our own review pathway. For a fee (reduced for NZPS members) you can get focused and constructive feedback from an individual member of a panel of experienced and published NZ poets selected for their proven teaching skills. This is an opportunity to get professional and personal comment on your writing. You will receive a written critique, including a response to particular questions. We are lucky to have really good poets available, and they all do a fantastic job.

<http://www.poemofquotes.com/e-cards/> Send poetry e-cards to all your friends.

Competitions & Submissions

You can find many more opportunities in the members' section of our website: poetrysociety.org.nz/members

JAAM 28 call for submissions. Deadline: 31 March. Reminder (see January issue of *afl* for full details):

The 28th issue of *JAAM* will be the DanceDanceDance issue, edited by Clare Needham and Helen Rickerby. For publication in September 2010. Please send your work to: jaammagazine@yahoo.co.nz or: JAAM, PO Box 25239, Panama Street, Wellington 6146, NZ.

Contemporary Verse 2: 2-Day Contest (Canada) Registration and payment to be received by: 2 April

The 2-Day Contest challenges participants to come up with a winning poem in only 48 hours, using all ten words of CV2's choosing. Pay online using the PayPal link on the website. Please let them know if the name on your payment is different from the name on your registration. At 12:00 midnight (CST), on April 12, 2010 when Friday becomes Saturday, CV2's list of words will be emailed to registered participants. Participants then have 2 days (48 hours) to write their best poem. Each word must be used at least once in their final submitted poem. Submitted poems may not exceed 48 lines. Only one poem may be entered per participant. There is a \$12.00 registration fee (approx. NZ\$16.50) for the contest. Registration and an email address are required to play. Prizes: 1st: \$500.00 plus a one-year subscription and publication in CV2. 2nd: \$250.00 plus a one-year subscription and publication in CV2. 3rd: \$150.00 plus a one-year subscription and publication in CV2. Three honourable mentions will also be chosen, and will receive paid publication plus a one-year subscription to CV2. All entrants receive a copy of the issue of CV2 featuring the winners of the 2-Day Contest. Register at:

<http://www.contemporaryverse2.ca/index.php/contests/2-day-contest>

a fine line - call for submissions. Deadline: 7 April. The editor welcomes your contribution. We currently pay a small fee for Feature Articles. We also welcome submissions of members' poems, though there is currently no payment available for these. For that reason, we do not insist on First Publishing Rights. However, if you submit a previously published poem, please advise, so that correct attribution of the original publication details can be made. See publication guidelines at:

www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines

Katikati Haiku Contest 2010. In hand deadline: 16 April. An open theme haiku contest with proceeds going to the Haiku Pathway project. Thanks to Katikati Advertiser for sponsoring the bulk of the cash prizes - 18 & over: \$100 for first; \$50 for second and \$25 for third; 17 & under: \$50, \$25, \$15.

Rules: Poems should preferably be typewritten, otherwise clearly handwritten. Haiku should not have been previously published (including on the web or broadcast). Unlimited entries. Submit 2 copies of each haiku with 1 only including your name, address, phone number (no mobiles, please), e-mail address, and for the junior section only, your age. Putting several poems on an A4 sheet is fine. **Entry fee:** Within NZ: 18 & over, \$5 for 3 haiku or \$2 for 1 haiku. 17 & under, \$1 for up to 2 haiku. For overseas entrants: \$US5/3 haiku or \$US2/haiku.

Post to: Katikati Haiku Contest, PO Box 183, Katikati 3166, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. **Results** will be announced and prizes presented on Sunday, June 6. A judge's report will be sent by email, otherwise please include a stamped addressed envelope. Any entry not accompanied by the correct entry fee will be disqualified. Entrants send cash at their own risk. Inquiries to nzhaiku@gmail.com

Reviews

Broadsheet /1, new new zealand poetry ed Mark Pirie (The Night Press, Wgtn, May 2008) RRP \$10.00. ISSN 1178-7805 (Print) ISSN 1178-7813 (Online)

Rangi Faith

The first broadsheets I encountered were printed at Taylors Mistake in the 1970s. I still possess the copies and the poems are fresh after all these years. Some were in envelopes or pockets, and each poem seemed to be given more importance when it was unfolded. In Mark Pirie's *Broadsheet /1*, the impact is still the same. In one sense it is not a book. The concept of a collection of broadsheets and its soft cover means that it stands halfway between a hard cover book and single, crafted sheets. It stands on its own - a collection of excellent individual poems that could have had lives as broadsheets in their own right.

In the first poem Jeanne Bernhardt asks: "does air not tell you anything?" In 'Ode' Tony Beyer questions the wisdom of the city fathers of Auckland, saying: "in the days of the death of oil/ they build roads". In 'Mother Lode' he acknowledges the debt all poets have to their parents: "I have seldom

mentioned you/ in my poems/ because you are part of their making and should know”.

If poetry is ‘pure’ there is plenty of this in Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s ‘Intacta’:

And she was gracious
As a pearl on fingers of cool sound,
And like a tree she made a Christ of skies
When she stirred.

In ‘To My Muse’ he writes: “This is my last poem. It’s out there on the beach/ For eternity to come by/
And lift it out of reach.”

Meg Campbell’s ‘As Far As It Goes (2000)’ has that sense of a poem that will stand the test of time:

I see my sister as a young girl
she’s with me now. I have
all things to thank her for.
Let no-one speak ill of her.

Gemma Claire’s words are simple and shocking: “...where was the neighbourliness/ when Nia was strangled and tumble-dried?”

Evelyn Conlon’s works ‘Untitled’ and ‘For Yana’ (2001) are haunting and emotional tributes. Michael Duffet’s ‘Dark Matter’ is a breath of oxygen:

We have not seen nor felt nor touched you,
Mysterious pervasive matter
But we live our days in comfort
And our debt to you is utter.

Robin Fry’s imagery is sharp: “..that wild night/ when wind turned water/ into knives..” (‘Orange’).

Iraqi New Zealander Basim Furat presents a new view of his adopted city, Hiroshima, in two poems translated from Arabic. Michael O’Leary offers a sonnet to the late Victor O’Leary: “When it comes time to breathe your last breath/ Remember, you are the victor, not death, not death.” On the next page Victor replies “...only thus, briefly, we live.”

Imagery is a strength of Stephen Oliver’s ‘Marooned’ – “The...(dolerite columns)/ hang from the summit/ as baleen in the mouth of a whale”. His short ballad ‘Swagman’s Song’ about ‘Bob Orr’s glass door’ could become a Kiwi classic.

Mark Pirie and L.E.Scott complete a fine collection of poetry. There are only 14 poets and 25 poems. The total cost works out at 40 cents a poem and you get Contributors’ Notes, a good Preface and strong binding included as well. You need to reward good writing and this issue points forward to more of the same. Poetry is not a big seller, so these are small steps that add up to a quality production.

JAAM 27 ed. Ingrid Horrocks (JAAM Publishing Collective, 2009) Sub: \$24 for 3 issues

Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle

I began reading JAAM 27 while travelling across the Tasman Sea, which seemed appropriate as the theme of the issue was wandering. Ingrid Horrocks, the guest editor, asked for “work that features literal wanderers and travellers...[as well as] works that digress in creative ways from narrative, argument, or genre”. Horrocks received about 400 submissions, which is incredible and wonderful, and this issue features work by both emerging and experienced writers. For example, we have Pat White, who will be the 2010 resident writer at Wellington’s Randell Cottage, and Tina Makereti, who won the non-fiction category of the Manhire Prize for Creative Science writing last year.

When you wander you are leaving from, and arriving at, a certain place. The majority of the

work in this issue conveys a strong sense of place or setting. The poetry section takes us from Ohau Bay to Great Barrier Island, to memories of Giza, up 'North' and for 'A Walk in the Park'. Coastal environments are frequent backdrops. There is a distinct NZ flavour with many references to specific landmarks, flora and Maori place names: "Maui hooked the fish/ right at this point/ right here". ('The Sinews of Ohau Bay', Keith Westwater). On one hand this is good because it reflects NZ, but on the other hand it makes some of the poems feel too domestic and confined.

Many of the poems have excellent cadence and fluidity, using long lines and enjambment. The idea of flight weaves throughout this section. Two poems which stand out are Sue Fitchett's 'Wing walking', a tribute to aerial stuntwoman Jessie Woods, and Siobhan Harvey's 'Birds', which talks about leaving one's home country. Majella Cullinane's 'Exile' conveys similar sentiments to Harvey's, and is also a good read. I enjoyed Robert McLean's poems, especially 'Poem', emulating the talky style of Frank O' Hara – the poem being a homage to him.

The creative nonfiction section opens with Martin Edmond's interesting excerpt from 'The Thousand Ruby Galaxy', a piece to re-read and ponder. It is placed in the creative non-fiction area, but we travel to a planet with "two violet suns ... one is the sun of forgetfulness and the other the sun of memory". (Perhaps this magical place is metaphorical...) "Samsara has asked me here in order to remember the forgotten and also to forget the remembered. This is what is called love".

Helen Lehndorf skilfully wanders between the past and present in her piece about motherhood. Even her title employs a wandering quality – a sprawling 42 words – which made me smile. Memories, from childhood and adulthood, appear in both the creative non-fiction and fiction sections. For instance, Ian Richards recalls the safe and simple days of his childhood in 'Cycling for Safety: A Memoir'. In the fiction section, Kirsty Gunn, Kelly Joseph, Michele Powles and Susan Gendall also use memory to tell a story, creating absorbing narratives. Three of the stories use the motif of snow, which is interesting. Most of the stories have one narrator with a strong consistent tone and voice, although Tina Makereti's story alternates between different viewpoints with ease. Artistic images by Mike Ting are included in JAAM 27 as well – strange, unsettling, interesting – and I kept coming back to them and studying them, noticing tiny details which I hadn't previously. The image on the cover by Rachel Walker, 'Falling through time', is fantastic too, one of the best JAAM covers I've seen for a while.

The Trouble Lamp Richard Langston (Fitzbeck Publishing, 2009) ISBN 978-0-473-16196-1 RRP

Laurice Gilbert

I confess – I asked Richard for a signed copy of this book so I could review it myself and keep it; I am a shameless fan. He's published three previous collections at roughly 2-year intervals: *Boy, Henry, come see the blue* and *The Newspaper Poems*, and is one of Wellington's best-kept secrets. I learned of him through the Wellington Winter Readings of 2008 ('The White Album'), organised by HeadworX Publishers, Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop and Kwanzaa - the Afrikan Shop.

He's a journalist, not an academic poet, so there are no artful fireworks or mysteriously labyrinthine wordplay. In fact, his poems are often so spare as to be almost haiku-like, and the opening poems in the first section of this collection ('I' - that's a Roman numeral, not an ego) are frankly romantic and autobiographical:

Looking into the lens
falling again
toward each other.

Your hand threaded
into the fabric of me.

from: 'Photographs'

Langston sticks to what's important to him – 'write about what you know' – using deceptively

simple language that sizzles with the desired element of surprise that makes it poetry:

Sisters did not have smelly feet and pong out the gym.
They had girlfriends to lighten the eyes of brothers
heavy with homework.
Sisters were calm as mid-summer lakes,
mutinous as rough seas.

from: 'In the House of Sisters'

Langston tells little stories that move: "only now/ I understand// how a motorbike/ stopped her son's life" ('Mrs van Zandt') and amuse: "My stomach sloshed;/ I puked." ('First Test 1970', but it's not what you think). He simplifies details:

Some winged Athene on a racing cycle
glides to a halt at the traffic lights:
shades, helmet, hair tucked-in for speed.
Those limber athletic legs
ending in a professional click into the pedals.

from: 'Not Myth'

and handles the grand metaphor in a to-die-for manner: "This blue.// A thousand cubic metres/
dumped into Civic Square." ('Spring So Fast Returning')

The final poem of this section, the eponymous 'The Trouble Lamp', is a tribute to Langston Senior, exploring the differences between them without judging the father.

In Section II the mood shifts dramatically, to poems dealing with the anticipation and aftermath of his father's (and later a loved uncle's) death: "This January day winter news:/ our father's left lung clouding up.// Dire weather to come." ('Southerly') They are arranged chronologically, so that the reader is drawn through the last dark days and the immense sense of loss.

Lament

When time-worn beasts lie down in the dust,
When crops are left to stand in the field,
When a lone boat sets sail on endless seas,
When dark tides wash through the gathered,

Fathers die.

The penultimate poem, 'The Abandoned Hospital', is the one that grabbed my gut when I first heard Langston read in 2008: "It lacked people. / Its corridors were loveless./ The deathly quiet of once." I find that third line almost personal, and keep going back to it, poking myself in the eye to see if it still hurts.

There are themes running through Langston's poems: blue, the sea, lakes and boats, but they don't come across as overdone, just noticeable. If I have any criticism at all (maybe I have to try harder) it's that 'It Starts Here' could comfortably lose the last two lines, and the illustrations (by Emily Efford), while giving the poems lots of room to breathe, seem unsure whether to be abstract or not, which is distracting, but hardly Langford's responsibility.

Overall this is a collection I'm pleased to own, and many of the poems feel like old friends already.

Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.

Maya Angelou

KiwiHaiku

Please send your KiwiHaiku submissions to Patricia Prime at pprime@ihug.co.nz, or post to: 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610.

Friday night
packed like sardines
in the fish-and-chip shop
Joanna Preston

farewell ceremony
godwits, humans
observe each other
Barbara Strang

Tanka Reflections

- short songs of the human spirit -

Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka. Please send submissions to: pprime@ihug.co.nz, or post to: 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610

old hillside chapel
rats overhead
mice below
the windows speckled
with grains of pollen
Richard von Sturmer

gathering dust
his father's walking cane
today its my support
I hobble around like him
trying to fly on one wing
Catherine Mair

Mini Competition

As usual, you've astounded me with the diversity of work that the instructions inspired. The winning poem, by Stefan Starling, was not only what I asked for – a conversation (real or imagined) – but created a mental picture without recourse to excessive description, and the innovative presentation, added to the atmosphere it created. Very clever. (There is a small gap below, to enable the poem can be printed all together.)

Other entries needed severe editing, were too descriptive (not enough conversation) or unsuited to a family publication (you know who you are).

The prize for the next competition is a DVD: *Hunger for the Wild, Series 3* (with Steve Logan and Al Brown). Subject: food, a subject close to all our hearts. Deadline: 14 April.

T & P Meet J

- from Tom & Pete -

T: Gi'day mate.

Jeremy: O . . . *helllo*.

P: Well, well. & what school did *you* go to?

Criss-Kol'.

Eh?

Dussssn'mata.

D'ya fancy a vodka-'n'-lime?

NOW YA TALKIN'.

You'll find we have *lotts* in *com'n*.

Exactly what I was *thinkin'*.

Another'

id

go

down

fine.

O.

*

Hours later

arms-

round-

each-

other

T/P/J in the Avon

singin'

the

national

anthem

*

For T/P a night in the cells. For J "a stiff warning".

10 Minutes with Sue Wootton

Anne Harré

Sue Wootton is a Dunedin-based poet and short fiction writer whose work has been widely published in newspapers and journals. Her poetry collections are *Hourglass* (Steele Roberts, 2005) and *Magnetic South* (Steel Roberts, 2008). She was the 2008 Robert Burns fellow at the University of Otago, and will judge the Open Junior section of the 2010 NZPS International Poetry Competition.

Which writers inspire you, and why?

I enjoy many writers, and the more I read, the more writers I find to admire. However, writers who *inspire* me tend to come in two camps. First, I'm inspired by those who continue to write against seemingly impossible odds – poverty, or prejudice, or serious health problems, or political repression. Their courage, determination and self-belief inspire me to keep going any time I think it's too difficult. Phooey – my life is a breeze!

In the second category are poets whose work challenges me technically and/or intellectually. Writers in this category include many of the usual suspects: Wallace Stevens, Dickinson, Neruda, Lorca, Keats, Eliot, Bishop, Louise Gluck, David Constantine, Gjertrud Scnackenberg, Pinsky, Frost, Derek Mahon...any writer whose work promises to sate my thirst, but demands that I return again and again, each time for a longer, deeper drink at what turns out to be a bottomless well. No pressure!

How long have you been writing poetry, and what motivated you to start?

I was writing stories, doggerel and bad poetry by the time I was in my teens, but solely for myself. In my final year at Onslow College we had a poetry module, and I was transported to heaven. Denis Glover ("in country rumpled like an unmade bed") and Dylan Thomas ("time held me green and dying/ though I sang in its chains like the sea") – I *loved* this stuff. But there was a bleak counter-realisation: I seemed to be the only student in the class so moved. I was a *freak*.

I became a physiotherapist and for many years I lost the thread of my writing. I enjoyed my career, but I always felt that I was slightly miswired for it. I was drawn more and more to the idea of trying to write, but it was impossible while I also practiced as a physiotherapist. On maternity leave after the birth of my third child, I made the decision to study English at university level – and it was this immersion in the world of literature, mixing with others who also loved writing, which gave me the impetus to get going on my own work. At last!

Your poems seem very complete but as the writer are you (ultimately) satisfied with your finished work, or do you feel there is always more you could have said?

I work hard to 'finish' my poems, in the sense of trying to craft them to a point of 'undislodgablness'. That's my ideal. I don't always reach that point – but every poem provides a new opportunity to try and get it right.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Wine, coffee, book, paper, pencil, hammock, sunshine. In no particular order (though paper without pencil is a pain).

In 2003 you were awarded a NZ Society of Authors mentorship. Do you see the process of mentorship as important to your development as a writer, and (on the other side) is the idea of being a mentor something that appeals to you?

Simply being selected for the mentorship was a huge boost to my confidence. To think that my poems were being read and commented on by Elizabeth Smither – well, it made me focus, it raised me from doodling around with what came easily and challenged me to begin the serious, attentive reading and writing required of a Real Poet.

I do find myself drawn to mentoring others, particularly those, like myself, who are starting late,

or otherwise lack confidence. But it's not an easy role: a good mentor facilitates and guides but does not dominate. Done well it requires a commitment to close reading of the work, and is energy-intensive.

In 2008 you were awarded the Robert Burns Fellowship. How has that experience filtered into your writing?

Ah, this was special. I found I worked well in a designated office well away from the home environment, so much so that I've since rented a cheap garret room to replicate the sense that when I write I 'go to work'. For me the luxury of writing full-time was not so much in the number of words I can write in a day (I'm pretty slow in that regard), but in the amount of reading and reflecting I was able to do. I was able to nourish the muse... a practice I've tried to carry into my post-Fellowship life.

In your writing you cover most topics pretty succinctly. Is this a concerted effort on your part or do you simply cover what comes to mind?

Succinct! Thank you! Yes, it is a concerted effort on my part, a compression effect I've always thought important – I wrote this when I was about seventeen:

I admire the poet's line
Which can succinct the thought define.

I always wish that I could do it,
And end up thinking, Sue, you blew it.

So I'm happy to think I might have learned something since then.

Do you 'wait for the muse' or are you one of those disciplined writers who try to write something every day?

I've learned that 'the muse' is 'the life' – so I don't wait. Either I write, or I try and be very awake; either way I'm working.

What are you working on at present?

Last year I completed a third collection of poetry and a collection of short stories. I'm finishing final edits of these, and of a children's book which is due out soon. This year's devoted to: (a) paid work to cover the bills following a February trip to Nicaragua to read at the International Poetry Festival in Granada: www.festivalpoesianicaragua.com; (b) absorbing that experience and finding a way to write about it; (c) learning better Spanish in order to translate poems from Spanish-speaking poets into English.

Gingernuts or Krispie biscuits with the afternoon coffee?

Another espresso for me, thanks!

MEMBERS' POEMS

Telling Our Own Stories

I
Tell me, City of Action
Who owns a story?
By Lauris Edmond's injunction
I can't live here by Chance
I have to Verb and Vibe
Or else fail you
My migrating soul
Tumble dries in circles
On this wooden bridge
My brain washed clean
Of all desire to appropriate

Gasps: what if Shakespeare
Had been so constricted?

II

Beshrew my heart mapped
Vicariously on unseen steps
I rise and fall trapped
The wairua in your winds
Of four directions
Blow and enthrall all
Who come and are conquered
Tell me, City of Artful Winds
Whose stories?

III

Washed out of the hair
Gargled out with toothpaste
Scraped off the plate
Dumped in the bin
The question remains
Why *not* live here by chance?
Perchance to dream
The word freed
From thorny stubble flanking
The desert road

Sugu Pillay

I Am Not Alone

The chains on my ankles are rusty
They've been there so long

Across the forehead lines
stretch and tear

The limp is now obvious
the memory's just about gone
but the relish I feel for words
has not abated and I write
with glorious hands and
a smile so wide it can't be crossed

I will not fade but sizzle as
Images dart from me to the page
I'm so full of lustre the gazing lookers
can't see me anymore and
the word curls me up inside it

Keith Nunes

Today the sea is an angry child

a southerly wind
blows washing down the bank

I retrieve it, think of a tropical island
where the sunrise is pink flambé
& the ocean licks the sand

in the Pacific, Tuvaluan soil
is being swallowed by a thirsty sea

bones of the ancestors will dissolve
in salt, weary spirits lost in a storm
of flotillas. Perhaps wood
from a playhouse
will drift on the current
yesterday's tea, morsels for sea creatures
a car, home for a conger eel

elders will show children
a brown-edged picture
to prove it was there.

Shirley Deuchrass

Correction: in the January issue of a fine line the first word was inadvertently left off Jenny Argante's poem 'Grounded', which should have started: To measure the sun's height... The editor apologises for the omission and offered to reprint the whole poem. Jenny graciously declined.

Guest Poet

In The Days When We Are Dead

Listen! The end draws nearer,
Nearer the morning, or night,
And I see with a vision clearer
That the beginning was right!
These shall be words to remember
When all has been done and said,
And my fame is a dying ember
In the days when I am dead.

Listen! We wrote in sorrow,
And we wrote by candle light;
We took no heed of the morrow,
And I think that we were right,
(To-morrow, but not the day after,
And I think that we were right).

We wrote of a world that was human
And we wrote of blood that was red,

For a child, or a man, or a woman,
Remember when we are dead.

Listen! We wrote not for money,
And listen! We wrote not for fame,
We wrote for the milk and the honey
Of Kindness, and not for a name.

We paused not, nor faltered for any,
Though many fell back where we led;
We wrote of the few for the many,
Remember when we are dead.
We suffered as few men suffer,
Yet laughed as few men laugh;
We grin as the road grows rougher,
And a bitterer cup we quaff.

We lived for Right and for Laughter,
And we fought for a Nation ahead,
Remember it, friends, hereafter,
In the years when I am dead,
For to-morrow and not the day after,
For ourselves, and a Nation ahead.

Henry Lawson (Australia, 1867-1922)

MAY DEADLINE: 7th April

ⁱ Quettaparma Quenyallo compiled by Helge K. Fauskanger

ⁱⁱ Creations by Tolkien fans are called Neo-Quenya, Neo-Sindarin, etc.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien (297)

^{iv} Arda means the Earth, world

^v Fry's book is aptly subtitled 'Unlocking the poet within'!

^{vi} Recorded for the purpose of this article by Petri Tikka, Finland