



# a fine line

May 2008

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

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The New Zealand Poetry  
Society Inc.  
PO Box 5283  
Lambton Quay  
Wellington 6145

**Patrons**

Dame Fiona Kidman  
Vincent O'Sullivan

**National Coordinator &  
President**

Laurice Gilbert

**Contacts**

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

MAY MEETING

**Lindsay Rabbitt, Kapiti**  
**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 7.30pm**

The Greta Fernie Room, Leuven Belgian Beer Café, 135 Featherston St, Wgtn  
The meeting will begin with an open mic.

JUNE MEETING

**AGM**

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00pm**

Turnbull House, Bowen St, Wellington  
Followed by a reading at 8pm from:

**Chris Orsman**

There will be no open mic.

## ***Notice of Annual General Meeting***

The NZPS AGM will be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June, at Turnbull House. Our Guest Poet (after the meeting is over) will be Chris Orsman, whose new collection, *the lakes of mars*, is out in early May. It's been a while since Chris last read for us, and I urge local members to support this event. Refreshments will be supplied.

As usual, we are on the lookout for committee members, and as our Constitution requires that all members resign each year, the field is wide open. Committee members do not need to be resident in Wellington, as we meet by email, though you will obviously need to be on email.

Nominations for committee members are now being accepted. Nominations can be by post or email, and need to be made and seconded by financial members of the Society, so if you haven't renewed your membership yet, here's another opportunity to do so. (Reminder: the renewal form was in the March issue of *a fine line*).

In view of the increased national spread of members, I am planning to introduce electronic voting this year, so all nominations need to be received by the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, to allow time to organise the voting, and circulate voting forms for those of you who do not have electronic means to do so.

Please check with your nominee before offering their services.

## AGENDA

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Minutes of the 2007 AGM [These are available on the Members' Pages of our website, or by sending a SSAE to the National Coordinator.]
- 3) Matters Arising from the 2007 AGM minutes
- 4) President's Report
- 5) Financial Report
- 6) Proposed Budget for 2008-2009
- 7) Election of Officers –
  - President
  - Vice-President
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Committee members

### 8) Notices of Motion:

- that the membership subscription be raised to \$40, with a \$10 discount for email magazine subscriptions, and that membership outside New Zealand be by email subscription only.

Explanation: the current membership fee does not cover the cost of producing the magazine, let alone any of the other functions of the Society, and an email version was not in existence when the Society was first set up and correspondence consisted of a newsletter only. This motion proposes to improve cash flow to the Society, while rewarding those who subscribe by email, thereby reducing expenses.

- that Clause 14.1 of the Constitution be amended to read: A person shall become a member of the Society by paying a subscription, and may obtain a membership card by request. [Replacing: A person shall become a member of the Society by paying a subscription and receiving a membership card.]

Explanation: at present membership cards are required by the Constitution, and extra costs are incurred in both printing them and sending them out to every member. The amendment would make them optional, and therefore still available to those who want them.

- that Clause 14.2 of the Constitution be amended to read: A person shall cease to be a member when the subscription has not been renewed within two months of the expiry date. [Replacing: A person shall cease to be a member by resignation.]

Explanation: It is rare for a member to actively resign, and technically, we are obliged to keep people on the list until they do, which contradicts the 'membership by subscription' rule. In practice, members receive one issue of the magazine after the expiry date, to allow for renewal of membership while entering the annual competition. This motion, if passed, will allow for renewal up to a cut-off point at the end of May, coinciding with the closing date of the competition.

### 9) General Business

These motions have been moved by the President, and therefore do not require seconding. However they have been approved in principle by the committee.

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

*Laurice Gilbert*

Our new financial year has started, and expenses have had to be reduced, due to a drop in grant income. Payments to guest readers and magazine contributors have been cut, and my honorarium has been halved. After much soul-searching (and close examination of our family budget) I have decided to continue to provide much the same level of commitment as I have contributed to the Poetry Society for the last 18 months. This is not a claim to noble martyrdom, but a stubborn determination to meet the goal I set myself, which is finally beginning to become a reality – to update our Society to be a truly national

poetry organisation.

Prior to my appointment, the Society had grown from humble beginnings in 1973 as a small local group of Wellington poetry lovers, to a point where further growth was limited by its still being perceived as mainly for Wellingtonians. The addition of 80 new members from all around (and outside) the country is evidence (for me, anyway) that the work is paying off. I can't stop now, just because there's not enough money to pay the bills. It does mean, however, that I can't devote all my time and energy to Society work, as I have been doing, so as of now I'm "off the air" one day a week, in order to supplement my income elsewhere.

Sadly, I wasn't able to take advantage of Writers and Readers Week here in Wellington, though friends who did weren't as inspired as I'm sure the sponsors would have liked. The Auckland Readers & Writers Festival is coming up, and looks promising. I hope our Auckland members are more satisfied with the offerings.

My own poetry group is performing at the Ngaio Community Arts Festival at the beginning of May, under the by-line: "The Academy – Local Poets from the New Zealand Poetry Society". This is a great way to promote the Society, and we will be offering copies of NZPS anthologies for sale. Anyone who wishes to do likewise at local events is free to contact me for back copies of anthologies to sell on behalf of the Society. Fund-raising is much on my mind these days!

And on that note, many thanks to all those who've promptly renewed their membership. Thanks in advance, to all those who plan to include their renewal with their competition entries. For the remainder, this is the last issue of *a fine line* that you'll receive, until you get around to renewing your membership. You know you want to.

Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary.

Kahlil Gibran

### ***About our Contributors***

**Nola Borrell** is a Lower Hutt poet, co-editor of the "third NZ haiku anthology", *the taste of nashi*, and the 2008 judge of the NZPS international junior haiku competition.

**Laurice Gilbert** is a retired audiologist and current poet who prefers working for the NZPS for peanuts than for a District Health Board for pistachios.

**Keith Nunes** is a former journalist who quit in a fit of pique and decided to write poetry and fill shelves in a supermarket.

**Vivienne Plumb** is a Wellington poet transplanted to an Auckland residency.

**Joanna Preston** lives in Christchurch and recently edited the 2007 NZPS anthology, *the infinity we swim in*.

**Helen Rickerby** is one of the founders of *JAAM* magazine, and can often be found blogging about writing, reading and publishing at: [wingedink.blogspot.com](http://wingedink.blogspot.com).

**Sandra Simpson** lives in Tauranga, and is editor of the HaikuNewZ web pages. One of her haiku has been engraved on to a rock on the Katikati Haiku Pathway.

### ***Letters to the Editor***

*Open Letter About a Poet and his Grave*

To: Prime Minister - Helen Clark, Mayor of Wanganui - Michael Laws, leading expert on JKB - Paul Millar, The New Zealand Poetry Society - Laurice Gilbert.

On my third visit to New Zealand this summer my wife and me (sic) decided to travel down the exciting Whanganui river valley and to visit Jerusalem (Hiruharama), a fantastic and heartbreaking place in the area of old Maori settlements, a Catholic mission, a church and - which was my main reason for coming - the extraordinary spot James Keir Baxter had chosen for his "commune".

I still struggle with my feelings coming to Jerusalem. I was just shaken straight ahead! Nom de dieu! Why don't you look to this place and give it a humble and artistic appearance dignified of an extraordinary man and New Zealander? Or, one thing I tell you ... confiden[dtly], the hidden overgrown PATH (there is another "entrance" also we discovered later ) leading to the poet's grave and house and which the old Catholic sister almost whispering indicated to us and which passed her villa, alone made worthwhile the whole travel to NZ this year 2008! But then! Old car wrecks, a ramshackle house and yard, soon overgrown cemetery. Perhaps all of it private or maybe Maori communal land, I don't know, but couldn't something be done?

I've read a lot of poetry in four languages and I tried to study history - not the least New Zealand history - and realize now that I was lucky to meet Baxter's "oeuvre" at the time of my second nearly one year visit to NZ. The implication of that and the doors it opened to me for ... understanding of NZ country and people cannot be exaggerated because it soon included a lot of other reading. I'm thinking about J C Sturm and other poets and authors (Janet Frame!) from the last 60-70 years.

Pär Hörnström (Sweden) (abridged)

### ***Congratulations***

**David Beach** has won the 2008 Prize in Modern Letters, which is a \$65,000 cheque. The award was made at the tail end of the Writers and Readers Week programme. David's response has been well documented, but it's worth repeating: "That a book of poems can win a \$65,000 prize makes me feel as if I've stumbled into a parallel universe where poetry is considered important."

**Craig Ireson** (with the help of Kirsten Kelly) is the proud father of Miro Thomas Ireson. May he inspire many new works.

**Sandra Simpson** won the 4<sup>th</sup> Kokako International Haiku Competition 2007, judged by **Catherine Mair**.

### ***A Warm Welcome to:***

**Emily Adlam** Auckland  
**Sharon Alvey** Wanganui  
**Stephen Atkins** Hamilton  
**Madhuri Ball** Warkworth  
**Kirsten Cliff** Tauranga  
**Janis Freegard** Wellington  
**Kevin Goldstein-Jackson** Poole, Dorset, UK  
**Karamu High School** Hastings  
**Jenny Pyatt** Hastings  
**Vaughan Rapatahana** Hong Kong  
**Nadine Spalter** Auckland  
**Alexander Wedekind** Auckland  
**Briar Wood** London, UK  
**Karen Zelas** Christchurch

### ***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](http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz)

### **NZPS JOB VACANCY**

Our Treasurer has indicated her intention to resign in the next couple of months. Heather Harrop has been a trooper, and immensely supportive, and I am sorry to see her go. The position of Treasurer is paid by honorarium and supervised by the National Coordinator on behalf of the committee, as a result of the

fraud perpetrated on the Society some years ago. It requires a good understanding of book-keeping practice, and Heather is willing to fully train her replacement. If you, or anyone you know, would like to contribute to the smooth running of the Society in this way, please contact the National Coordinator for a job description, either by email or post. I really don't want to do this job as well.

#### BOOKS AVAILABLE

**John O'Connor** has generously donated back copies of some of his publications to initiate a 'Poetry by Post' scheme. Send a stamped (\$1.50) self-addressed envelope (paperback book size) to the NZPS Post Box, and in return you get a free poetry book. How easy is that! More details, including a list of the books available, at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutbooksbypost>

If you have any poetry books you are happy to give away, please feel free to send them to me to add to the list. (*National Coordinator*)

#### BOOKS WANTED

I would like to compile a full collection of the Poetry Society's publications for our archives. In particular I'm looking for:

*The Sunday Painter and other poems* 1988

*A Fall of Leaves* 1988

*Winter's Blossom* 1988

*Provisions* 1989

*NZ Haiku Anthology* 1993

*The Old Moon and so on* 1994

If anyone has a copy of any of these they are happy to let us have for a permanent collection, please let me know. (*National Coordinator*)

#### VALE BERNIE

On 20 February 2008 about thirty people gathered at Manukau Libraries Central Research Library to pay tribute to local poet, anthologist and editor, the late Bernard Gadd. Tributes were delivered by Bernie's son, David Gadd, and poets Marie Cameron, Riemke Ensing, Siobhan Harvey, Alistair Paterson, Alan Papprell, Anna Rugis and Michiel van Boeckhout, among others.

Bernie had a long association with the Manukau area. He taught at Pukekohe High School during the 1960s and at Hillary College, Otara, during the 1970s and 1980s, and is remembered as a dedicated and inspiring teacher. In retirement he wrote the history of Papatoetoe City.

Among his many other contributions to poetry in New Zealand, Bernie edited 'Manukau in Poetry' on the Manukau Libraries website ([www.manukau-libraries.govt.nz](http://www.manukau-libraries.govt.nz)). (*Bruce Ringer, Manager, Specialist Services, Manukau Libraries*)

You can read Bruce's obituary of Bernie at <http://www.manukau-libraries.govt.nz/whatwehave/poetry/obituary.htm>

#### WRITERS AT THE KARORI SANCTUARY

'The Arts on Sunday' (Radio New Zealand National) broadcast this programme on 23 March, featuring readings by poets **Dinah Hawken**, Hinemoana Baker, Jenny Bornholdt, Lynn Davidson, and **Keith Westwater**. The programme was recorded at the Sanctuary on Sunday 3 February and can be downloaded as a podcast from

[http://www.radionz.co.nz/audio/national/art/writers\\_at\\_the\\_karori\\_sanctuary](http://www.radionz.co.nz/audio/national/art/writers_at_the_karori_sanctuary) (*Keith Westwater*)

#### *Surfing the Web*

<http://www.bookhabit.com/> This is a book distribution forum, free to join, and with regular competitions that help books get noticed.

<https://www.goodbooksnz.co.nz/> Every time you buy a book via this site, all profits go to Oxfam. There is an eclectic section of poetry books, listed under "Fiction" – an interesting choice of category. Note that the site is not Foxfire-friendly, so you'll need Internet Explorer to read it easily.

<http://newzealandpoetryforum.yuku.com/> A new website encouraging NZ poetry lovers to share and enjoy each other's poetry and discussions about poetry.

## ***Publications***

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since the last issue:

*In Continents* (AUP) by Richard Reeve. The third collection from this Dunedin poet whose poem 'Alien' appeared in the NZPS anthology *The Ordinary Magic* in 1997.

*I Want More Sugar* (Steele Roberts) by James McNaughton. An eminently readable collection; many of these poems were written while McNaughton travelled around South Asia.

*the lakes of mars* (AUP) by Chris Orsman. The long-awaited third collection from this former President of the NZPS.

*Magnetic South* (Steele Roberts) by **Sue Wootton**. The second collection of this imaginative and exploratory Dunedin poet.

*The Polar Bear Ward* (Clerestory), edited by Tessa Duder and **James Norcliffe**. The seventh in the Re-Draft series of anthologies by the Christchurch **School for Young Writers**. More new work from among the best of the country's young writers.

*Takai* and *Penina he magafaoa* (Self-published with the assistance of CNZ) by Lee Aholima and Nogi Aholima. These two books present a Pacific voice in bilingual poetry – the poems written by Lee, a Niuean New Zealander, with translation assistance from his grandmother.

## ***Workshops & Residencies***

**CREW 253 – Poetry Workshop, IIML, Wellington**

**Applications close 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

Cost: \$682. Tutor: Chris Price

7 Jul – 17 Aug 2008, 1 Sep – 12 Oct 2008

This course involves the writing and study of poetry. Weekly workshops are held for the discussion of set readings and student work in progress. All undergraduate workshops are limited to 12 students. The quality of the writing sample which accompanies applications is critical in deciding admissions.

For more details and application form, go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/modernletters/creative-writing/courses/CREW-253.aspx> or contact IIML, Victoria University, P O Box 600, Wellington 6140

**2008 Iowa Summer Workshops, USA**

June 8 - July 25: a huge variety of one-day, weekend, and one-week workshops. All details at

<http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/iswfest/>

## ***Competitions & Submissions***

NB For those without on-line access, submission guidelines can be obtained by sending a SSAE to the National Coordinator, stating which competition or journal details are required.

**Deadline: 14 May: Bravado** – Call for Submissions. Bravado is inviting submissions of poetry for the July issue, which will also carry details and an entry form for the 5th Bravado International Poetry Competition, for which the 2008 judge this year is **Tim Upperton**. The poetry editor is **Bryan Walpert**. Go to [www.bravado.co.nz](http://www.bravado.co.nz) to submit up to 6 poems online, or send to Poetry Editor, Bravado, PO Box 13 533, Tauranga 3140. Please include a brief contributor's note, up to 50 words, when you submit.

**Closing Date: 19 May: Virginia Warbey Poetry Prize 2008 (UK)**. For poems of up to 40 lines. First prize £800. Entry Fee: £3 per poem and five poems for £12. Contact: CFW Poetry, PO Box 474, Eastleigh, SO50

0AN. Website: [www.poetrypf.co.uk](http://www.poetrypf.co.uk)

**Closing Date: 23 May:** *The Times* Stephen Spender Prize for Poetry in Translation (UK). Translate a poem from any language, classical or modern, into English. Three categories: Open, 18-and-under and 14-and-under. Entry Fee: £3 per entry in the Open category only. Contact: Stephen Spender Memorial Trust, 3 Old Wish Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 4JX

Website: [www.stephen-spender.org](http://www.stephen-spender.org) Email: [info@stephenspender.org](mailto:info@stephenspender.org)

**Closing Date: 31 May:** Biscuit Publishing International Poetry & Short Story Prizes (UK). For poems of up to 42 lines. First prize: £1000 or have your poetry/prose collection published and receive 75 books. Second prize: Writers' Retreat Holiday, third prize £200. Entry Fee: £9 for first three poems, additional poems £3 each. Contact: Biscuit Publishing Ltd, PO Box 123, Washington, Newcastle upon Tyne NE37 2YW, UK

Email: [info@biscuitpublishing.com](mailto:info@biscuitpublishing.com) Website: <http://www.biscuitpublishing.com/comp/competitions.htm>

**Closing date: 31 May:** *Calyx – a Journal of Art & Literature by Women* – 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Lois Cranston Memorial Poetry Prize (USA). Final judge: Ursula K. LeGuin. Publication plus \$300. Fee: \$15 per entry (3 poems, 6 pages total). Send to: CALYX, Lois Cranston Poetry Prize, PO Box B, Corvallis, OR 97339. Guidelines at: [www.calyxpress.org](http://www.calyxpress.org)

**Closing date 31 May:** Earlyworks Press Open Poetry Competition (UK). For poems of up to 40 lines. First prize £100. Entry Fee - £3 or up to 6 poems for £12. Details at website: [www.earlyworkspress.co.uk](http://www.earlyworkspress.co.uk)

**Closing Date: 31 May:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ted Walters International Short Story and Poetry Competition (UK). Poems of up to 40 lines; short stories up to 2000 words. £1 from each entry will be donated to the Macmillan Cancer Support. Entry Fee: £3 for the first entry, £2.50 subsequent entries. Contact: T. McBride, The University of Liverpool Creative Writing Society for Lifelong Learning, 50 Onslow Road, Kensington, Liverpool, Merseyside L6 3 B

**Postmark Deadline: 31 May:** War Poetry Contest (USA). 1-3 original, unpublished poems on the theme of war, up to 500 lines in total. Prizes total \$5,000, including a top prize of \$2,000. Submit online or by mail. Entry fee: \$15. Complete guidelines and past winners at:

[http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/war/wa\\_guidelines.php](http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/war/wa_guidelines.php)

**Closing Date: 2 June:** Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition (UK). Poems of up to 60 lines. First prize £5,000, Second Prize £1000, Third Prize £500, Runner-up Prizes x 2 £50. Entry Fee: £5 per poem. Contact: Glasgow Poetry Society CIC, First Floor, 17 Dryburgh Gardens, Glasgow, Scotland, G20 6BT, UK. Website: [www.vitalsynz.co.uk](http://www.vitalsynz.co.uk)

**Closing date: 5 June:** The Dawntreader Poetry Awards (UK). 1st Place £75, 2nd Place £50, 3rd Place £25 Entry Fee £3 per poem; £10 per 4 poems. Subject: Rustic, Spiritual, Environmental, Legend. Max length: 40 Lines. No name on poems but covering sheet with titles, name and address. For full details /email/overseas entries visit: [www.indigodreamspress.co.uk](http://www.indigodreamspress.co.uk)

**Closing date: 5 June:** Indigo Dreams Press Poetry Awards (UK). 1st Place £100, 2nd Place £75, 3rd Place £25. Entry Fee £3 per poem; £10 per 4 poems; £2.50 each additional. Max 40 lines single spaced poems. No name on poems but covering sheet with titles name and address. Full details/email/overseas entries visit [www.indigodreamspress.co.uk](http://www.indigodreamspress.co.uk)

**Closing date: 20 June:** Envoi Open Poetry Competition (UK). Single poem: £3 or 5 poems for £12. Poet's details on a separate sheet. See [www.envoipoetry.com](http://www.envoipoetry.com)

**Closing Date: 30 June:** Bridport Prize for Poetry & Short Stories (UK). Poems; 42 lines maximum. 1st = £5000, 2nd = £1000, 3rd = £500, 10 supplementary prizes of £50 each. Top 4 poems are submitted to the Forward Prize for best single poem. Short Stories; 5000 words maximum, 1st = £5000, 2nd = £1000, 3rd = £500, 10 supplementary prizes of £50 each. The winning stories and shortlist will be read by leading London literary agents with a view to representing writers. The top 13 stories (those eligible) are submitted to the National Short Story Prize, worth £15,000. The top 26 stories and poems will be published in the Bridport Prize 2008 anthology. For rules and to enter go to:

<http://www.bridportprize.org.uk/index.htm>

**Closing date: 30 June:** Cinnamon Press Awards: First Poetry Collection (UK). £100 & publication + runners up anthology. Submit 10 poems/to 40 lines. Fee £16 (inc. copy of winners' anthology). Entries with details: Meirion House, Glan yr afon, Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, LL41 3SU. See [www.cinnamonpress.com](http://www.cinnamonpress.com)

**Closing Date: Received by 30 June:** Manchester Cathedral 10<sup>th</sup> International & Interfaith Religious Poetry Competition (UK). 1st Prize £300; 2nd Prize £150; 3rd Prize £75. Entry fee: £3 for the first poem and £2 subsequent. Send entries to: 'The Religious Poetry Competition', The Cathedral, Manchester M3 1SX. The poems submitted should be 'broadly religious', and, like all good religious poetry, should appeal to those who would not necessarily describe themselves as such. 'Religious' thus includes poems that are Christian, as well as those from within other faith traditions. Those struggling to discover their own sense of the sacred are also invited to submit entries. For complete submission guidelines and entry form, please email the National Coordinator or send a SSAE PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145.

**Postmark Deadline: 30 June:** Margaret Reid Poetry Contest for Traditional Verse (USA). For poetry in traditional verse forms such as sonnets, published and unpublished. Fourteen prizes totaling \$5,250, including a top prize of \$2,000. Entry fee: \$6 for every 25 lines submitted, online or by mail. Early submission encouraged. See the complete guidelines and past winners: [http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/margaret/ma\\_guidelines.php](http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/margaret/ma_guidelines.php)

**Deadline 1 July:** Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Contest (USA). Categories: under-12, youth (13-18), and adult. Entry fee: \$15 for adults; under 18 free. Prizes to the top poet in each age group: Adults - \$1,000; Youth (13-18) - \$200; Under 12 - \$200. Honorable mentions are also awarded in each age group. Website: [http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/awards-&-contests/bmk-contest/bmk\\_2008\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/awards-&-contests/bmk-contest/bmk_2008_flyer.pdf)

**Entries must be received by 5pm, July 13:** Classics Poetry Competition. Prizes: Adults - 1st: \$300; 2nd: \$150; 3rd: \$50 Classics Vouchers; 13 - 16 Years - \$100 Storytime voucher each for poet and school; 9 - 12 Years - \$100 Storytime voucher each for poet and school; 5 - 8 Years - \$50 Storytime voucher each for poet and school. Send entries to: Northland Poetry Competition, The Northern Advocate, PO Box 210, Whangarei, or email: [editor@northernadvocate.co.nz](mailto:editor@northernadvocate.co.nz) (including name, address, phone number, category and title of poem). Rules: One poem per entrant; poems must be unpublished and original work, & not previously submitted to a competition. Poems can be written on any subject and in any style. The winner in each category will be named in The Northern Advocate on Saturday, July 28. Winners will also be notified by telephone, email or letter. Copyright remains with the author, although the Northern Advocate reserves the right to publish any submitted poem. Open to NZ residents only. Entry forms on website: <http://www.classics.net.nz/>

## **Regional Reports**

*Readers are invited to submit reports on local events as they occur. Please email to [editor@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@poetrysociety.org.nz) preferably as attached Word or rtf documents, or send hard copies to Po Box 5283, Wellington 6145.*

### **WINDRIFT, WELLINGTON, APRIL MEETING**

*Mainly Bevan Greenslade*

While Editors **Nola Borrell** and **Karen Butterworth** beavered away preparing the 2008 national haiku anthology, *the taste of nashi*, other members focused on the main reason for Windrift's existence: writing and studying haiku. Lawyer Bevan Greenslade kept things in order - to the extent of tabulating all the group's responses to individual haiku. Great for corresponding members. Here are some of the work-in-process haiku, with notes by Bevan.

**Kerry Popplewell** provided 2 haiku which impressed:

nowadays he hears  
cicadas all year round  
tinnitus

out early  
the slightest breeze  
an icepack on my cheek

Annette de Jonge gave us a pun, repetition and rhythm, and droll imagery, all in one waka:

see waves in the sea  
touching waves in the sky  
a bumpy ride

**Penny Pruden** varied tradition to 5-5-7, the imagery prevailing over strictures about metaphors:

cabbage-tree waving  
sharpens its shears  
on the stone of the blue sky

**Neil Whitehead** used travels in Japan and Australia to spring a surprise:

Japanese garden  
Sun, pool, carp  
Kangaroo hops by

And from **Ernie Berry**:

meditating  
on the lawn  
I need a shave

**Irene Ruth** (now in Napier) generated much discussion with:

mastering the mouse  
we both berserk  
computer madness

The group decided line 3 should read 'catastrophe'.

**Jenny Pyatt** expressed some gentle frustrations:

mouth watering  
ripe strawberries  
under netting

Bevan Greenslade remembered a recent holiday on Taranaki roads:

bad cholesterol  
hardening the arteries  
holiday tankers

Neil Whitehead, our Japanese 'diplomat', selected and sent two bone carvings to thank the Japanese calligraphers who generously provided beautiful kanji for *the taste of nashi* (Windrift, 2008). Contact: Nola Borrell. Ph: 586 7287. Email: [nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz)

## Reviews

*Dream Boat: Selected Poems* Tony Beyer (HeadworX 2007); 224 pp; rrp \$34.99 ISBN 978-0-473-12652-0  
Keith Nunes

Sixty this year, awash with published poems, Tony Beyer is another Kiwi who can say he's knocked the bastard off. Since his first published work *Jesus Hobo* in the 1970s, Beyer has been consistently truthful and staunch - he means what he says and says what he means.

*Dream Boat: Selected Poems* catalogues 30 years of his best work and puts into print his legacy as a very fine New Zealand poet. His work has been scattered across many anthologies and more than 10 collections of poetry - this new book brings it all together in one place so we as readers can see where he has been and where he has come to.

Beyer, who was born in Auckland but now lives in New Plymouth, also recently edited *Poetry Aotearoa* (Picaro Press, Sydney) which is a bi-annual selection of contemporary New Zealand poetry for Australian readers.

Almost bugged with the success and the power of *Jesus Hobo* Beyer has strived to outdo the standard bearer and *Dream Boat* shows he has grown in stature and maturity over the years. There are many highlights in the 200-plus pages of poems but those that stand out for me include 'Guru Songs' : "here by the muttering fire/where rain from windward/beads my coat"; the twist in the tale of the 'Dancing Bear'; 'Cornwallis'; and 'The Seventies': "sitting in the shade of a wide phoenix/palm in the asylum grounds".

'Roll of Honour' reads like a Beyer poem often does - to the point:

in the cold museum  
among the marble  
and the golden names  
I grip my fists  
with desperate  
grief for youth  
now most of mine  
has passed  
and my son is growing.

In 'White Games' he conjures wonderful New Zealand images and sounds: "the shadows of the oaks caressed the cricket pitch"; "a flatulence of bugles/coaxing five hundred/raw hymnal voices/into exaltation".

'Coming Home' moved me greatly with its admiring portrait of dad and then the crushing almost unbelievable bursting of the bubble as an irate mother berates the father for coming home drunk and late - "I suppose he had/never been that size before".

In 'Pacifcity' he steps out of himself for a moment and fires off a barrage of vivid images like some sort of machine gun splintering a wooden house: "blunt artillery of thunder among the hills"; "amazing ginger lioness eyes"; "pallor of revellers in pub coloured photographs"; "dancing garments on the dry line"; and finally in closing somewhat breathless - "foreplay of tides against my porous heart".

'Red Sofa' me sums up Beyer in that it expresses the nuances and the colour of life in the towns and cities of this country. He does it simply, without fanfare, and he does it with meaning and humour - "I once saw/all the sofas in Puhinui/change hands/in an afternoon"; then he slips into another dimension and in 'Murnau' casts a black vampire-like cloud over a moment between two people - "the shadow of his hand/slides like liquid from her lap/ and grips her heart".

'The Year 2000', 'Mending' and 'The Rescue' raise their hands as exceptional works, showing Beyer as a compassionate and caring man and a poet with well-honed skills. Perhaps one of the finest of his works is the relatively epic-sized 'El Mreir', which switches from Egypt and the Second World War to home and present day and paints a picture of a returned serviceman and his family coming to grips with what changed their lives forever - "Not enough has been said yet about that time".

*Dream Boat* is an outstanding collection of poetry and the publisher HeadworX was inspired to put together this book. It has opened my eyes to a career that deserves another mention.

**Open Book: Poetry & images**, Claire Beynon (Steele Roberts, 2007), 64pp, RRP \$49.99 ISBN 978-1-877448-15-7

Laurice Gilbert

I've been waiting to get over the excitement of viewing this book for the first time, so I could take a more measured approach to it. It didn't happen.

South African born, Dunedin artist and poet Claire works full-time as an exhibiting artist, and as a writer she's also had work published widely overseas. Her poem, 'Mystery Sonatas', won the 2002 NZPS International Poetry Competition, Open Section, and is included in this, her first collection.

The book starts as it means to go on: the cover illustration is one of Beynon's own (charcoal and pastel), and even the Contents page looks like a poem itself. This a highly visual book, in every imaginable way. Many of these abundantly sensory poems are accompanied by an (untitled) illustration. They are loosely arranged in alphabetical order, eg 'Getting to know you, Venice', for "V", 'RoXanne', for "X". The alphabet itself is illustrated in "light calligraphy" – photographs of the moon from different parts of the world, exposed and stretched to shape each letter.

As you might expect from a collection of poems ordered in this way, there are unusual juxtapositions, with connections sometimes appearing only after several readings. 'Sandwich Queen' (/Q/), for example, is an admiring portrait of an anonymous food worker, described by both her looks and her actions:

... Her hair is up  
twisted and twined, held hostage  
by six seven eight nine ten clips and slides  
and pins ...

...  
... Man she's skilled. She folds  
sandwiches into origami. Lettuce never strays ...

On the page opposite is a found poem, a thoughtful questioning of "Sam Bowser, cell biologist and veteran polar scientist", from a letter written to him:

Imagine the ripples through the science community  
when you say you've discovered the world's oldest  
one-celled creatures designing wallpaper for the heck of it  
in your petri dish in Albany, New York?

(Quandary)

Such poems – visually descriptive vs intellectually enquiring – might seem to be strange bedfellows, but their proximity allows echoes and interplay between ideas of determined proficiency of daily work, the imaginary life of single-celled creatures discovered by a scientist, and his equal devotion to the execution of his profession. On the page following 'Quandary' is an egg shape, illustration rather than poem (though it could be either), made up entirely of the interaction of the letters A, C, G and T, the bases that perform the essential duty (and daily work) of building DNA. Exciting stuff, and lots more where that came from.

Everyone who spends time in Antarctica (as Beynon did in 2005), seems to develop a fascination with the wind ("Antarctica & her rebel wind"), and Beynon's masterful use of metaphor (and washes, for the accompanying image) comes to the fore in 'Katabatikos':

. . . She hears him  
long before he comes  
without warning  
his hands trace her upper valleys  
her mountains and hanging glaciers  
travel her frozen  
coastline. . .

And yet she is equally at home with word play for its own sake:

### Something New

I have a newfound taste for lightness

albumen moon  
mood stone  
tone poem

I have a new lightness of taste

late wind  
white ground  
round sound

Many of the poems are shaped like their illustration (or vice versa):

Step  
out  
onto  
white

not  
as  
a  
body  
bearing  
any  
weight

. . .

(Thin Ice)

is accompanied by a drawing of an upright feather, while 'Getting to Know You, Venice' is shaped as an urn. While the effect of this might seem to be to distract the reader from the text, most of the poems easily stand alone and recurring themes hold the collection together: Antarctica, family, music, loss. Detail representative of the big picture is evident in 'Mopani Worms', a tribute to the poet's African childhood:

Smooth as glass and cold as yoghurt  
to the touch, they are dressed today in the colours  
of Grandmother's leftover knitting. Ribs and rows  
of orange, yellow, black and white

. . .

. . . I shift the grass and dust  
of Africa between my toes. The sweat  
on my lip is ripe mango.

There are a few poems that are less successful: 'Out for Dinner' describes one of those occasions when you really had to be there, and 'Close Call' doesn't achieve the emotional impact that the event imprinted on the poet's memory.

Overall, the book is intended to be an art object in the "tradition of the Artist's Book". My (admittedly limited) understanding of that "tradition" is that it's: 1) usually handmade, rather than printed, and 2) still in contention as to whether it's an art rather than a craft. It's a minor point, as *Open Book* is neither an illustrated poetry collection nor a set of illustrations accompanied by poems. Rather, it's synergistic, with poems as art, art as text, and the final effect being a rich sensory experience of a life well-observed. If by some miracle you haven't yet spent your Christmas money, this would do very nicely.

**Tributary** Rae Varcoe (VUP, Wellington, October 2007), 80 pp, rrp \$25. ISBN 9780 86473 6545

Joanna Preston

Good poetry is fluid – moving, infinitely flexible, capable of solidity, or softness, or both. Endlessly extensible. Seamless, as a river is seamless, but still registering the rocks and ripples, changes of tempo and texture. Musical, because water is inherently musical. As poetry should be. As this book most definitely is.

Unsurprisingly, many of the fluids here are of the body – blood, amniotic fluid, tears, milk, sweat. Also waterfalls, ice bergs, and vapour trails; water in all three states. And a strong rhythmic intelligence running through all of it.

The book is in three sections, each begun by a different *Inscription* poem. The first section deals with things past – childhood, memory, family. Section 2 is the poet's present, and collects the more overtly medical poems, including a couple of poems commenting on the current NZ health system. The final section projects forward into the future, with thoughts of growing old, of dying, of legacies and descendants.

The most noticeable thing about these poems is how they sing. From the opening *Inscription* to the final *My Dead Surround Me*, Rae Varcoe makes superb use of rhyme, cross rhyme and alliteration. This is real craft in action. For the formalists she includes very good pantoums (like the cracking *How can I tell you this in 30 minutes?*), sestinas (*Asylum Notes* and *Hand Made House*), and sonnets (*On Compost* the best of these). But she doesn't just rely on music – she has some wonderfully memorable images. Babies in utero are

lots of soon-to-be-people  
in this room  
all seated on their  
mother's spines  
(Off-beat laughter)

while someone suffering shingles sees

tamarillos dangle from their trees  
like recently released testicles  
(Shingles)

and we are told that

surgically speaking  
while eyes are windows  
of the soul the brain is accessed  
through the nose  
(Thoughts on the Brain)

The absence of endnotes is generally not a problem for following the poems (and does give you an excuse to look up words like “crepitus” and “borborygmi”), although poems like *Handmade House* and *Santa Caterina*, *Heart of the S'nai* would have benefited from some extra information.

There are weaknesses. *Drifting Toward Jerusalem* just doesn't work – the poem tries too hard to be zany, and feels like a pastiche of Cendares' *Trans-Siberian Prose* and *Little Jeanne from France* and Ern Malley, rather than a genuine engagement with modernist/surrealist methodologies. (10 out of 10 for courage and breadth of influence, 5 out of 10 for execution.) And *Double Nipple Ghazal*, while an interesting poem, isn't a ghazal. No refrain, no rhyme, no signing in the last stanza, and the stanzas linked both causally and temporally. Modern ghazals may not always follow all the rules, but if they follow none of them they aren't ghazals.

From an editorial perspective, having three pantoums in six consecutive poems is a bit much – *How can I tell you this in 30 minutes?* is a perfect use of the form, but *Mercy, Mater, Mercy* doesn't earn its repetition, and sets you on the lookout for the next pantoum. (I had a similar issue with Paul Muldoon's “Horse Latitudes” though, so she is in good company.)

Similarly, two consecutive poems beginning the same way – “Happiness. I am scarcely acquainted/ with this.” (*Borderline*) and “Failure. I may have known/ we would end like this.” (*Endings*) – is something an editor should have picked up.

These quibbles aside, this is an excellent book. The poems are personal without being self-absorbed, intelligent without being arrogant, and deeply, wonderfully, refreshingly musical. There are no standout pieces; just (!) eighty pages of really good poetry. Highly recommended.

## ***Haiku NewZ***

*Nola Borrell*

### CONGRATULATIONS

- To **André Surridge** and **Sandra Simpson** for Honourable Mention in the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Competition. Keith Frentz received a Sakura award; Sophia Frentz, a youth Sakura. A haiku household.

I lick the foam  
from my milkshake -  
cherry blossom

Sophia Frentz 15

- To André Surridge for Honourable Mention in the Suruga-Baika Literary Festival Competition. (This is the last time for the festival, which has been held annually for the past 10 years.)

herald of spring  
mountain snow melts into  
plum blossom

- To **Elaine Riddell** for second, and André Surridge for third in Moonset's senryu contest.

gusty wind  
barley heads sweep  
in a mexican wave

- To Elaine Riddell for 2 haiku accepted for the White Lotus Waterlily Anthology (US).

- To **Patricia Prime** and André Surridge for tanka in *Atlas Poetica 1* and forthcoming *Atlas Poetica 2*, *Modern English Tanka* and *Ash Moon anthology*.

- To **Nola Borrell**, **Karen Butterworth**, **Cyril Childs**, **Patricia Prime** and André Surridge for haiku or

tanka accepted for 'NZ Focus' in *Presence* 35 (forthcoming). Vanessa Proctor of Sydney wrote the accompanying notes.

- To **Ernest J Berry** for second place in the *Wisteria* Haiku Contest.

clothesline  
my old maternity gown  
quicken

- To Ernest J Berry for an honourable mention in the Frost Haiku Contest.

- To Patricia Prime for haibun in recent issues of *Simply Haiku*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *LYNX* and *Haibun Today*.

- To Patricia Prime for interviews with Australian poet, editor and secretary of Haiku Oz, Graham Nunn, in *Simply Haiku* (Spring, 2008, vol 6 no 1); and also Jim Kacian, editor and publisher of the Red Moon anthologies in *Haibun Today* 9 (Mar 7, 2008).

Phew! Someone needs to interview Patricia! She is also selection editor for *Gusts* (Canada) and the forthcoming *Take Five Tanka Anthology* (US).

- And take a look at the Promenade exhibition at [www.threelightsgallery.com](http://www.threelightsgallery.com). Work by Andre Surridge, Elaine Riddell and - you've guessed it - Patricia Prime, in an original and artistic presentation.

COMPETITIONS AND SUBMISSIONS (See NZPS website for a more detailed list.)

May 31: Klostar Ivanic International Haiku Contest. Cost: Free. Open theme. Results published on the internet by October 31. Cash prizes. Send to: Tri rijeke, Kolodvorska 44, 10310 Ivanic Grad, Croatia. Or by Email: [dvrozic@optinet.hr](mailto:dvrozic@optinet.hr)

May 31: miniWORDS Haiku Contest. Cost: Free. Limit of 3 haiku. Results on the website. Cash prizes. Entry only via the website: [miniwords2008.sharedspace.org/rules.php](http://miniwords2008.sharedspace.org/rules.php)

May 31: With Words International Online Haiku Competition. Cost: Â£2/haiku, Â£3/5 haiku or Â£10/10 haiku. 3-line haiku only. Cash prizes. Send to: [competitions@withwords.org.uk](mailto:competitions@withwords.org.uk), with 'Haiku 2008' in the subject line. Payment is via the website.

June 30: Penumbra Haiku Contest. Cost: \$US3/haiku. Winners notified by August 31, published on website by September 30. Cash prizes and publication in contest chapbook. Send to: TWA Penumbra, PO Box 3428, Tallahassee, Florida 32315-3428, US.

## PUBLICATIONS

*Quartet: A String of Haibun in Four Voices* by **Jeffrey Harpeng**, Patricia Prime, Diana Webb, and Jeffrey Woodward. Forthcoming. 'Quartet is innovative, refreshing and delightful. The linkages are intuitive and appealing to the western mind - playful, free and sometimes repetitive - rather than rigidly formal as in classical Japanese renga. This approach has resulted in a highly successful, and enjoyable, collaboration that others will be tempted to follow.' *Cyril Childs*

*Stylus* online magazine. From July 2008 the haiku and its related forms section will be published twice a year in January and July. The editor and submission details for *Stylus* (Australia) have changed as Janice Bostok 'retires'. See:

[www.styluspoetryjournal.com](http://www.styluspoetryjournal.com)

*Wing Beats: British Birds in Haiku* Written and compiled by John Barlow and Matthew Paul, with contributions from over 30 other haiku poets, the book is illustrated by Sean Gray and features a foreword by the leading bird writer and BBC producer, Stephen Moss. See: [www.snapshotpress.co.uk](http://www.snapshotpress.co.uk)  
From Turtle Light Press: Michael McClintock's *Sketches from the San Joaquin* won the 2007 Haiku Chapbook Competition. 'A memorable, poignant collection of haiku which will be savoured for a long time to come'.

## NOTICES

### *New NZ Haiku Anthology*

Fresh off the press is the publication keenly awaited by the New Zealand haiku community. Entitled *the taste of nashi - New Zealand Haiku* and edited by **Nola Borrell** and **Karen P Butterworth**, this book is published by Windrift, Wellington.

The title, *the taste of nashi*, encapsulates the haiku's Japanese origins and the sensate nature of haiku, and is taken from one of the haiku featured in the book.

standing naked  
in moonlight -  
the taste of nashi

*Sandra Simpson*

This anthology is the first national haiku collection to be published since 1998 (*the second New Zealand Haiku Anthology* NZPS ed Cyril Childs). It includes 60 poets and over 200 haiku. Many of these haiku have been published in national and overseas journals and have won awards in international contests.

*the taste of nashi* is beautifully designed by Briar Whitehead on high quality paper. It features kanji, the most artistic type of Japanese characters, which were written for this anthology by a Japanese calligraphist. You even get a bookmark.

The book is the result of an open invitation to NZ writers to submit haiku. Four experienced and widely published haiku writers - **Ernest Berry**, **Cyril Childs**, **Catherine Mair** and **Barbara Strang** - selected haiku from a wealth of submissions (a limit of ten per poet).

*the taste of nashi* is dedicated to Jeanette Stace (d 2006), a founding member of Windrift, and also of the planning committee for this anthology. Windrift is grateful to Jeanette Stace and her family for their generous grant, making this book possible. Windrift also acknowledges support from the Hutt Minoh Friendship House Trust.

\$23 (inc p&p) for NZPS members from Nola Borrell, 177A Miromiro Rd, Normandale, Lower Hutt; or Karen Butterworth, 29 Kirk St., Otaki. Please make cheques payable to Windrift Haiku Group. (Order form attached to March issue of *a fine line*.)

Inquiries: Nola Borrell. Ph 04 586 7287. Email: [nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz) or Karen P Butterworth. Ph 06 364 5810. Email: [karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz](mailto:karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz)

## REVIEW

*dust of summers* ed. Jim Kacian et al (Red Moon Press, \$US16.95) ISBN 1-978-893959-68-2 (to order go to [www.redmoonpress.com](http://www.redmoonpress.com)).

*Sandra Simpson*

Each year Jim Kacian and his team of Red Moon editors around the world - including **Ernest J Berry** in Picton - nominate and vote for (though not their own) the "best" haiku/senryu, renku and haibun the English-speaking world has to offer. This 12<sup>th</sup> edition, covering 2007, includes 154 poems, 23 haibun and five essays and makes for diverting reading, even if New Zealand seems somewhat under-represented - Ernie Berry has three, while Catherine Bullock has one, although it is a very good one:

the ascending scale  
as the nail  
is hammered home<sup>1</sup>

The vast majority of writers hail from the US, the largest non-American group being from the "United Kingdom". Poor old Canada is a distant third, while Australia has two authors selected, the same

number as Bulgaria but fewer than Sweden or Japan.

As always with Red Moon productions it's a nicely presented volume which is carefully laid out and easy to read.

Previously, other reviewers have criticised these anthologies for printing a mix of haiku and senryu, labelled "haiku". I believe English-language "haiku" now often does incorporate senryu-type poems with no disadvantage to either if, in fact, true senryu are still being written.<sup>2</sup>

The lack of a season reference in many poems is another matter, although I forgive this haiku by Burnell Lippy (US) anything, even the gratuitous use of a brand name:

after-hours  
hearing the Coke at each bend  
in the machine

However, and this however has stayed with me over several weeks of dipping in and out of the book, this "best of" is a pretty bland affair with little to excite in terms of images – perhaps that was a point in the poems' favour during the selection process which comprised 11 editors from around the globe, including two without English as a first language.

Non-American readers are taxed only with "baseball card", "prairie" and "basswood stump", but American readers are not stretched at all except, perhaps, by "hazel catkins". What would they make of a tui, a waratah or a cream tea, Devonshire, Cornish or otherwise?

This haiku by John Kinory of England makes reference to cricket, but North American readers can easily translate it to baseball, so no stretch there:

distant clouds -  
the batsman slowly  
shifts his weight

One of the problems facing New Zealand (and Australian) writers who wish to be published outside their home country is our startling, and often unique, range of flora and fauna, plus a rich indigenous culture with its own language. It is completely natural to use these images in our haiku, but they have limited, if any, meaning for readers elsewhere. My central city garden plays host to tui and fantails all year round and kaka in the winter, and I've even had the rare pleasure of a wood pigeon passing through. Yet I put those haiku to one side when submitting to US publications and instead send poems about blackbirds, goldfinches and skylarks. Would it be a threat to the integrity of the anthology, which is an absolutely worthy exercise, to sprinkle a few footnotes about?<sup>3</sup>

That way we not only get the "best of", we may even get the "very best of".

Footnotes:

1. Catherine won third place in last year's Kokako Haiku Contest with this gem; *dust of summers* has printed it before the results have appeared in *Kokako* itself. Why do competitions have such a lag between being judged and the results being "official"?
2. My "hell in a hand basket" observation is the continued misuse of the word "presently" to the point, dammit, where it has changed its meaning. Or people not knowing where to put "only" in a sentence. Or ...
3. Personally, I like footnotes – whether by Terry Pratchett or Terry Deary – a quick explanation that doesn't weigh down the main text and we're off again. I once wrote a poem subtitled "a poem with footnotes". Jolly good it was too!

## *KiwiHaiku*

the curl  
of baby's fingers  
jasmine tendrils  
André Surridge

watching you plait  
the seconds  
into an hour  
Owen Bullock

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

## *Tanka Moments*

I watch her rose  
change from cerise  
to dappled  
pink and white  
she is home again  
Helen Yong

this year's resolutions -  
to be mindful  
live in the present  
absorb nature  
learn the night sky  
Shirley May

Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka, even if you've never tried one before. Please send your submissions to: [c.mair@clear.net.nz](mailto:c.mair@clear.net.nz) or PO Box 62, Katikati, Bay of Plenty 3166.

## *Mini Competition*

Congratulations to **Robin Fry**, who has won a copy of *the earth's deep breathing* (ed Harvey McQueen, and courtesy of Random House) for her pantoum on friendship:

### **Friends of the family**

'A friend is someone who likes you'  
he told his daughter who had none,  
'though to have a friend you must be one!'  
She kept her doubts to herself.

He told his daughter who had none  
'old friends are the oldest they last for life.'  
She kept her doubts to herself.  
'Is your friend silver or gold?' she asked.

'Old friends are the oldest they last for life,'  
her father replied, 'they're all gold, pure gold.'  
'Is your friend silver or gold?' she asked.  
'I have a friend called Twister' her brother said.

Their father replied 'they're all gold, pure gold.'  
'No! Brown hair and eyes, just like me!  
'I have a friend called Twister' her brother said.  
'You clown,' they teased, 'your friend's imaginary!'

'No! Brown hair and eyes, just like me!  
though to have a friend you must be one'  
'You clown,' they teased, 'your friend's imaginary!  
A friend is someone who likes you.'

### ***How it is***

*Vivienne Plumb*

...life in Auckland - fantastic weather up here, and I love all the Asian food. I eat out for dinner about two or three times a week as I have two good food halls near me ... But at the same time it is almost like another world up here - the weather makes a different kind of lifestyle...

On the other hand people are friendly (although they HATE Wellington), and things feel relaxed and warm. I really dislike this Wellington/ Auckland animosity. It seems to run far deeper than I ever imagined.

But on a better note, the Poetry Live people are great guys and really keeping poetry alive up here and doing some great readings with their group, 'the Litterati'.

### ***Talk Poem***

*Helen Rickerby*

from: The Glass Essay

Anne Carson

THREE

Three silent women at the kitchen table.  
My mother's kitchen is dark and small but out the window  
there is the moor, paralyzed with ice.  
It extends as far as the eye can see

over flat miles to a solid unlit white sky.  
Mother and I are chewing lettuce carefully.  
The kitchen wall clock emits a ragged low buzz that jumps

once a minute over the twelve.  
I have Emily p. 216 propped open on the sugarbowl  
but am covertly watching my mother.

A thousand questions hit my eyes from the inside.  
My mother is studying her lettuce.  
I turn to p. 217.

“In my flight through the kitchen I knocked over Hareton  
who was hanging a litter of puppies  
from a chairback in the doorway. . . .”

It is as if we have all been lowered into an atmosphere of glass.  
Now and then a remark trails through the glass.  
Taxes on the back lot. Not a good melon,

too early for melons.

[ . . . ]

Out the window I can see dead leaves ticking over the flatland  
and dregs of snow scarred by pine filth.  
At the middle of the moor

where the ground goes down into a depression,  
the ice has begun to unclench.  
Black open water comes

curdling up like anger. My mother speaks suddenly.  
That psychotherapy’s not doing you much good is it?  
You aren’t getting over him.

My mother has a way of summing things up.  
She never liked Law much  
but she liked the idea of me having a man and getting on with life.

Well he’s a taker and you’re a giver I hope it works out,  
was all she said after she met him.  
Give and take were just words to me

at the time. I had not been in love before.  
It was like a wheel rolling downhill.  
But early this morning while mother slept

and I was downstairs reading the part in *Wuthering Heights*  
where Heathcliff clings at the lattice in the storm sobbing  
Come in! Come in! to the ghost of his heart’s darling,

I fell on my knees on the rug and sobbed too.  
She knows how to hang puppies,  
that Emily.

Rather than quote the whole of *The Glass Essay*, I’ve quoted a couple of representative chunks from it – the whole thing is almost 45 pages long, so too long to quote here. But you can read it online at [www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=178364](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=178364), or in Carson’s book *Glass, Irony and God*.

*The Glass Essay* is my favourite poem and has been since I first read it in 1995. I’m sure I won’t be able to encapsulate all of the reasons why I love it so much, but I’m going to have a go at unpicking some of them.

*The Glass Essay* is a narrative poem, though not all that much actually happens. The narrator goes to visit her aging mother. She reads work by Emily Brontë, her favourite author, whom she fears she may

turning into. She wanders on the moors feeling bad about being left by her lover. She and her mother visit her father, who has Alzheimer's, in a rest home. By the end, the narrator seems to have undergone some kind of emotional healing.

Told like that, the story doesn't sound like much, but don't be fooled. It's all in the way it's written, and it's written with language so cool and clear, it's like the glass of the title. It doesn't have the intense, full-of-images language of some poems, but it isn't like prose either; it's richer, and more cut-back and careful. There are some images in it of course, a simile here: "Black open water comes/curdling up like anger"; a metaphor there: "A thousand questions hit my eyes from the inside".

For a poem that deals with such emotional subjects, it has a very cool, detached tone. Actually, I think it's partly *because* of that distance that the poem *can* deal with strong emotion; I have a theory that poetry can turn the most heartfelt emotions into the most banal clichés unless you're very careful. This narrator isn't gushy. She tells us plainly, "I fell on my knees on the rug and sobbed too", and then immediately undercuts it with a bite of humour: "She knows how to hang puppies,/that Emily".

Certainly, this is a long poem, but for a little while after reading it, I find that in comparison ordinary-length poems seem pinched and ungenerous. Unsatisfying. Of course, there is a lot to be said for paring poems back, and usually I'm all in favour of it; but I find the length of *The Glass Essay* gives it space to consider things slowly, time to lead you places. Space for you to breathe.

Another thing that gives you space to breathe is the white space between the short stanzas. The poem is predominantly arranged into three-line stanzas, with the occasional variation for emphasis. And I've just this minute realised that each of the nine sections of the poem begins and ends with a four-line stanza, acting as bookends.

The short stanzas work to pen in the words and emotions, keeping them in check. They stop the long poem from running away with itself. In my own work, I had previously avoided any kind of formal structure, preferring to let the stanzas grow and end organically. But this poem taught me the value of short, regular stanzas, which I've been experimenting with in my own work. And, following on from this, I've recently discovered that pretty much anything sounds much more profound if you put it in couplets. Give it a try sometime!

I've found that I like my literature to be educational. I enjoyed learning about New Orleans when reading *Queen of Beauty*, by Paula Morris, and the only benefit I think I gained from *Moby Dick* was an increased understanding of the business of whaling. *The Glass Essay* gave me new insights into the life and work of Emily Brontë, with its dabblings in literary criticism. It introduces us not only to *Wuthering Heights*, but also to her poems and what other critics say about her and her work.

The final reason I love *The Glass Essay* is because it inspires me. It was either during or immediately after reading this poem that I sat down and wrote my own Emily Brontë poem, 'Passion'. The idea for it had been sloshing around in my head for some time, but I hadn't known how to write it. Reading *The Glass Essay* unlocked something, and it just poured out.

Poetry is impossible. You are trying to make your language do something it never did before. It's never done quite satisfactorily. It's a most extraordinary exercise.

W.S. Merwin

July DEADLINE is 7th June

## MEMBERS' POEMS

### Weight

Time dripped from the hole in the roof  
into a plastic blue bucket  
Walls breathing with the wind  
bored dog playing dead  
the day  
an earthquake waiting to happen  
Faultlines appear on her face

*Emma Furness*

### The tiki

The tiki is lightly mis-shapen by the rise  
of her bosom, more left auricle  
than right. A tiki tongue that springs  
on one side, neaps on the other

Flock me said the seagull  
Yeah, pluck a duck replied his mate

Body hongis the earth, scoop sand  
into my mouth

what do you expect from a slightly palangi?

Only a not-kiwi could coffee  
with such nonchalance  
the emblem of Us  
upon her chest.

*Sarah Blackburn*

### New Sheets

My 350 thread-count sheets  
have lost their straight  
from the packet newness.

One roll around  
with my Kiwi bloke  
and they are softened  
sheen-dulled dotted and spotted.  
Warm  
earthy  
spatterings ingrain the basket-weave.

But I don't care.

I like being rolled  
transported  
carded  
dusted  
blended  
opened  
and combed.  
Drawn, drafted and spun.

In his hands  
I am Sea-Island,  
Egyptian,  
American-Upland,  
Eastern.  
A cotton boll (doll?)

*Barbara Bailey*

### **Winter Canvas**

A blackbird's song  
is splashed  
upon my winter canvas

and near the window  
a rosebud  
unaware of pruning time  
opens its defiant pink  
demands a stay of execution

bird and rose  
untroubled  
by the hanging rain  
unconscious of  
my painter's sombre period  
brush the fettered day  
with colour.

*Mavis Wentworth (from: *The tempest Over*, pub. Rimu, 2005)*

### **Moving On**

There's fear, some trepidation / hopefulness  
    In a vehicle of experience,  
        Somewhat battered  
            Carrying an 'L' plate  
I put a coin in the slot  
        The striped arm lifts.

*Marilyn O. Young*