



a fine line

May 2010

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

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MAY MEETING

Pat White

Current resident of the Randell Cottage

Monday 17 May, 7.30pm

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

Meeting begins with an open mic

\$5 entry (members \$3)

JUNE MEETING

AGM plus 5 with 5

Monday 21 June, 7.30pm

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

The meeting will begin with the AGM, and then 5 local poets will read 5 poems each.

If there is still time, there will be a late open mic. There is no charge for this meeting.

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities / Wellington City Council

FINAL NOTICE

Your membership renewal is due now! Those who haven't renewed by the end of May (with or without their competition entries) will be sadly missed. The form was in the March issue of *a fine line*, so if you haven't got around to reading it yet, now's good.

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Feature Article

Viva la Poesia!

- VI Festival Internacional de Poesia: Granada, Nicaragua, 14-20 February 2010

Sue Wootton

Recently I was honoured to be invited to read at the International Festival of Poetry in Granada, Nicaragua. I was the third New Zealander to attend this festival, following in the footsteps of Michael Harlow in 2008 and David Howard in 2009.

Granada is a small 16th-century Spanish colonial city situated on Lake Nicaragua, about an hour's drive from Managua, the country's capital. Here Nicaragua, one of the poorest countries in the Americas, stages an annual international festival of poetry. This year Granada welcomed 120 poets from 56 countries: from all over the Americas, from Europe, Scandinavia and Iceland, Africa, the Middle East, the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, India, Australia, and New Zealand.

Nicaraguans love poetry. You know it the moment you exit customs and walk into an airport terminus whose central display features the sculpted bronze heads of half a dozen women poets, flanked by towering portraits of two of the country's most beloved bards. Here is a dirt-poor nation whose school children can – and do – recite poetry at the drop of a hat, where every park and plaza displays a statue or a sculpture devoted to a poet and his or her work.

The theme of this year's festival was 'La Poesia es el Angel de la Imagination' – 'Poetry is the Angel of the Imagination'. In a part of the world where repression of free speech is a reality, the word 'imagination' is not used lightly. Underlying political and social realities give an extra charge to Poetry. There's an understanding that a poem is a force – something like the lava running just under the surface of this volcanic country. In welcoming remarks the festival organisers expressed their commitment to literary freedom, explicitly undertaking not to censor any poet's readings. The subtext was also clear, a reminder that clumsily-executed poetry could cause real problems to the festival and to its organisers personally.

But (as the cry went up many times during the ensuing week) *viva la poesia! Viva! Viva!* The Angel of the Imagination held her wings wide open over Granada, and poetry was everywhere. Readings, both formal and informal, were held in Granada's plazas, parks and churches. There were angry political poets (notably from the USA), and there were tender lyrical poets, passionate Latin poets, cerebral European poets, dramatic performance poets, singing poets, dancing poets, ululating poets. We read in many languages: Spanish, French, Turkish, Dutch, Icelandic, Norwegian, Hungarian, Japanese, English, Kanada (an Indian language), Hebrew, Arabic – to name a few. Before each performance we worked on Spanish-language translations with Nicaraguan university drama students, under the tutelage of their lecturer.

At the readings, I would read my poem in English, and my translator would then provide the Spanish version.

A highlight of the Granada festival is its street carnival, a colourful, noisy spectacle which wends its way from a central church to the lakefront. We poets walked (or salsa-ed) behind the flower-bedecked mobile podium, as music played, masked characters danced, and locals thronged the streets and verandahs to cheer us on. Even before we started, we were mobbed by local school children requesting the autographs of the “poetas del mundo” (poets of the world). Viva la poesia, shouted Nicaraguan poet Gloria Gabuardi, giving the signal for the start of the carnival. Viva, Viva, roared the crowd, and we were off. At each street corner the parade halted for a couple of poets to climb the podium and read a poem to the crowd. At the lakefront a coffin was lifted from a horse-drawn hearse, and, surrounded by skeletons and ghouls, ceremoniously “buried” – a “burial of the treason of dreams” – a ritual which marked the rebirth of new, uncorrupted ideas.

One day of the programme was devoted to readings outside of Granada, in villages, towns, universities, schools, in prisons and at the National Police Academy. In Diriomo, the village I visited, we received a mayoral reception, were shown round the town’s tiny sweet-making business, and read to a large crowd of schoolchildren and adults in the town plaza.

Audiences were attentive and enthusiastic. Listeners, poets and non-poets alike, visibly and audibly reacted to the poetry. They jiggled, swayed, clapped, whistled, sighed, laughed, wept. This responsiveness was wonderful, creating an air of celebration, commitment and mutuality. On the final evening, a crowd of 2-3000 people gathered in Granada’s main plaza to listen to our work.

What’s the value for a poet in attending a festival like this? Certainly there’s no money in it – this is not one of the festivals that attracts target funding from the NZ Book Council or Creative New Zealand. Consequently, accepting an invitation to read is financially costly, though the festival pays accommodation, food and internal travel for the duration of your stay in Nicaragua. However, the benefits are huge, both personally and for NZ poetry. The networking opportunities are there for the taking. As a direct result of contacts made in Nicaragua, my work is being translated into other languages for publication overseas. The Spanish language opportunities alone are mind-boggling. I encountered genuine interest in what is happening in contemporary NZ poetry, coupled with a desire on the part of international poets to be read here (an outcome I’m keen to promote). The exchange of information and ideas stretched us all. My outlook has shifted: yes I’m a New Zealand poet, but I’m also a Poeta del Mundo. As are we all. Viva la poesia!

Links - to the festival: www.festivalpoesianicaragua.com

- to my photographs of the festival:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=40817&id=1660914525&l=706a17d769>

- to Youtube clip of the street carnival: <http://www.festivalpoesianicaragua.com/2010/03/canal-audiovisual-del-festival-2/>

It is a sad fact about our culture that a poet can earn much more money writing or talking about his art than he can by practicing it.

W.H. Auden

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

I’ve been having fun with our website. When I first started running the NZPS I took the opportunity to have a free website audit with zeald.com, and subsequently put quite a few of their suggestions into practice. Recently they offered another free look-see, so I jumped at the chance to have an update.

I learned that there are 137 websites linking to ours, compared with 25 three years ago, that the title relevancy to the page content is excellent and there are no broken links on the site (though I found a few afterwards), and that Search Engine Saturation (the number of times a Search Engine, eg Google, has the website in its database) is 210, compared with 0 in 2007. That's gotta help!

However (and there's always one of those, I find), the website is too slow to load, the layout is non-standard (meaning visitors won't find elements where they expect them to be) and lacks a 'search' function, and there isn't enough of either visual stimulation or audio content. Also, there are no links to our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The auditor's conclusion? "It's like tea and Girl Guide biscuits." I happen to enjoy those (even though the biscuits don't taste as good as they did when I was a kid), but it was the nice man's kind way of saying the website is boring.

I started by putting up a photo on the Home Page. He said it didn't matter what photo I used, as long as it was attractive to visitors, so I used one of mine: a baby zebra finch sitting on my fingers – cute! Emboldened by my success at this technical breakthrough, I sprinkled a few more pictures here and there, humour included gratis.

Next, I installed a donation button, as a first step to improve the "call to action" – persuading people to join the Society, donate, contribute their poetry (I've added a page for members' poems) and make it all easy and interesting to interact with.

I now have a digital recording device, so it will be possible to record our guest poets and upload a poem or two from our monthly readings. As soon as I learn how.

It's a work in progress, and worth checking out from time to time, to see how it's getting on. I'm going to need help, as there are improvements I'm not capable of effecting on my own, but I'll do as much of the work as I can. And in the meantime, the site is already starting to look less like a word-lover's private sanctuary, and more like something that will invite people to embrace the joy of poetry.

And now for something completely different: the AGM is coming up in June. Please think about joining the Committee and finding out how it all runs. There is no actual work (since I do it all), but I need people I can rely on to read my emails, offer feedback when required, approve expenditure and occasionally take a turn at ensuring the entry fee is collected at the door of our monthly meetings (not required if you're outside Wellington). That's pretty much all there is to it.

About our Contributors

Liz Breslin lives and writes in Hawea Flat and is co-founder of Poetic Justice Wanaka.

John O'Connor is a Christchurch poet and critic.

Joanna Preston is an Australian-born Christchurch writer and teacher, whose first poetry collection, *The Summer King*, has been recently been shortlisted for the Mary Gilmore Prize.

Sue Wootton is a widely-published Dunedin poet, who judged the Open Junior section of the 2009 NZPS international poetry competition.

A Warm Welcome to:

Owen Bullock Waihi

Anne Curran Hamilton

Bryony Jagger Auckland

Lynne Judge-Tocker Levin

Carolyn McCurdie Dunedin

Juliet McLachlan Christchurch

Marion Moxham Palmerston North

Mercedes Webb-Pullman Kapiti

Letter to the Editor

Member's Poem – the back story

I wondered if you might be interested in publishing this experimental poem, 'Sleepin Ruff', in a *fine line*. I have drawn on two past acquaintances in an attempt to portray an abused, illiterate woman – tough and determined to be heard.

My first acquaintance was a quiet middle-aged woman who was not deprived, but acutely aware of her inability to spell. The other (the narrator) was an older, tougher character – a part-time cleaner I met briefly some years ago in Christchurch. She was homeless, unfortunate – and garrulous! I remember them both with affection, and am grateful to the first for her unwitting help in giving me ideas as to how I might portray the second.

When I worked in Christchurch we used to overlook Cranmer Square, and in summer sometimes watched people who'd slept in The Open Door centre, scavenging the bins for leftovers from office-workers' lunches. Quite sad. Hope it's OK to submit like this??

Jan Vernon (Temuka)

(Ed's note: I'm always happy to consider experimental work if it has something interesting to say.)

Congratulations

Ernest Berry won the Robert Frost Haiku Contest:

moonlight
on my wife's kimono
a heron in flight

He also received an honourable mention.

Sandra Simpson came Third in the same contest:

midsummer's eve -
we lie on the lawn
and talk nonsense

Siobhan Harvey has had four poems published in the invitation-only online literary magazine *International Literary Quarterly*, edited by Argentina-based Scottish poet Peter Robertson and English novelist Jill Dawson. ILQ has featured some very significant names in the world of international poetry in its 10 issues, and it's fantastic to have 2 New Zealand poets added to the mix – Kapka Kassabova is also included in the current issue. The link is: <http://www.interlitq.org>

Helen Lowe is going global! Writers House has concluded a deal which will see her *The Wall of Night* quartet published in the UK and Australia/ New Zealand, as well as in the USA/Canada. And in May her first novel, *Thornspell*, will be out in paperback. <http://www.thornspell.info/>

Joanna Preston's *The Summer King*, which won the inaugural Kathleen Grattan Prize, has been shortlisted for the Mary Gilmore Prize, an award for the best first book of poetry published within the last 2 years by an Australian writer. See: http://asaliterature.com/?page_id=14

Vaughan Rapatahana is the featured poet in the March 2010 issue of *Valley Micropress*, the journal edited, produced and distributed by **Tony Chad**.

Publications

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since the last issue:

Steal Away Boy, selected poems of David Mitchell ed Martin Edmond & Nigel Roberts (AUP, 2010) AUP was kind enough to send me an extra copy and I'm really enjoying it.

Cornelius & Co John O'Connor (Post Pressed, 2010) John's latest collection includes many of the technical variations he's been writing about for *a fine line*. Another collection I thoroughly enjoyed.

Kokako 12 ed Patricia Prime and Joanna Preston (April 2010) Includes Judge Karen Peterson Butterworth's report and the results of the 5th Kokako Haiku and Senryu Competition (won by John Soules, USA or Canada – both given). As usual, the journal contains an inspiring sampling of modern Japanese-derived forms of poetry. I was particularly moved by 'Unseen Threads' (Beverley George and David Terelink).

Noticeboard

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The NZPS AGM will be held in Wellington on 21 June (see below). All current committee members are required to resign at the end of their term, so nominations are now being accepted. Nominations may be sent by post or email, and need to be made and seconded by financial members of the NZPS. All nominations must be **received by 28th May**, to allow time for distance voting to be put in place if necessary. Post to: The National Coordinator, NZPS, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145, or email to: info@poetrysociety.org.nz

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The New Zealand Poetry Society Incorporated will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 21 June 2010, upstairs at the Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington.

Agenda:

- 1) Apologies
- 2) Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2009 AGM
– These are available on the Members' pages of the website, or by sending a SSAE to the National Coordinator.
- 3) Matters arising from the 2009 AGM Minutes
- 4) President's Report
- 5) Financial Report
- 6) Proposed Budget for 2010-2011
- 7) Election of Officers –
 - President
 - Vice-President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Committee Members
- 8) General Business

The AGM will be followed by a reading from 5 local poets, reading 5 poems each. If there is time left after this, we will finish with an open mic. There will be no entry fee charged, though donations will still be gratefully accepted.

TUESDAY POEMS

Novelist Mary McCallum has been doing her bit for poetry in the blogosphere. The Tuesday Poem is an initiative that creates a kind of open mic session in cyberspace each Tuesday morning. Poets post poems first thing in the morning (or last thing Monday night) then link to each other and 'pop in and out of each other's poems all day', as Mary describes it, as well as being visited by other readers. Mary's inviting other poets to join in. Visit the blog at www.tuesdaypoem.blogspot.com

NATIONAL POETRY DAY 2010 – CALL FOR APPLICATIONS; **Deadline: 21 May**

With a new sponsor, New Zealand Post, National Poetry Day 2010 will be held on Friday 30th July. The theme will be poetry in the community - how poetry engages with people on the street, in their homes, work-spaces and community centres.

Co-ordinator **Siobhan Harvey** is calling for applications for registration of and funding for National Poetry Day events. You can contact her at siobhanhrvy@gmail.com or write to Siobhan Harvey, P O Box 125 135, St. Heliers Post Office, Auckland 1740 to request a Registration and Funding Application Pack.

Funding is limited but available, especially for any co-ordinators whose events advance the theme of this year's National Poetry Day. Siobhan will be on hand between now and 30th July to help any interested parties with advice on organising an event.

Surfing the Web

<http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/arts-and-entertainment/Saudi-Woman-Defies-Death-Threats-to-Finish-Third-in-Poetry-Contest-90217847.html> Forget American Idol - you can win \$1m for your poetry in the Middle East, especially if you're a bloke. See also: <http://abcnews.go.com/WN/hissa-hilal-millions-poet-inspires-millions-poetry/story?id=10335007> for a video of this courageous woman.

<http://www.corprew.org/content/loocat-wasteland/> For the modern poet – *The Waste Land* in LOLCat. Starts: "april hates u, makes lilacs, u no can has."

Workshops & Residencies

Whitireia Writing Courses, Porirua. Places are still available in the Year One Poetry and Script-Writing modules at Whitireia Community Polytechnic. The Poetry module **begins on 3 May**, and Script-Writing **on 26 July**. The Poetry module is taught by Mary-Jane Duffy of *Millionaire's Shortbread* fame, and the Script-Writing by well known writer and performer Lynda Chanwai-Earle. For more information on how to enrol please contact Kasey Burns, kasey.burns@whitireia.ac.nz or ph 327-3100 x 3218

The Robert Burns Fellowship - Applications close: 1 June. The University of Otago invites applications for the Robert Burns Fellowship for 2011, from serious writers who are New Zealanders or normally resident in NZ. For information contact: Nicola Richmond, Division of Humanities, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054. Ph. 03 479 5793; email nicola.richmond@otago.ac.nz; website:

www.otago.ac.nz/otagofellows

Second trimester writing courses at the IIML, Wellington - Application deadline: 5 June. Poetry workshop with James Brown and Writing the Landscape with Dinah Hawken begin in mid-July, and last twelve weeks; For information, see: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/modernletters/courses/#200-level>

Or don't you like to write letters? I do because it's such a swell way to keep from working and yet feel
you've done something.
Ernest Hemingway

Competitions & Submissions

The International Literary Quarterly - Call for Submissions from New Zealand Writers. Submissions are welcome with immediate effect. This journal has just published its 10th issue. Usually invitation-only, its current issue includes work by New Zealand poets **Siobhan Harvey** and Kapka Kassabova, see www.interlitq.org In 2011 the ILQ will publish a special feature issue showcasing work in any genre (poetry, fiction and non-fiction) by New Zealand writers. Any New Zealand writer wishing to have work considered to this special issue should send a maximum of 6 poems, 2 short stories or 2 pieces of non-fiction as an email attachment - in Word or rtf format - and send by email to Editor Peter Robertson at: probertsonarg@hotmail.com. Please make it clear in the email that you're sending in work for consideration in the New Zealand writers feature issue. NZPS members **Majella Cullinane**, **Janis Freegard** and **David Gregory** are already listed on the journal's website as contributors. <http://interlitq.wordpress.com/2010/03/25/interlitq-to-include-feature-on-new-zealand-literature-in-2011/>

Shot Glass Journal Submissions are welcome year-round. The September 2010 issue will feature New Zealand poets. You may submit to *Shot Glass Journal* by sending any short poetry that is under sixteen lines to musepiepress@aol.com Short poetry can include short form poetry, free verse and prose poetry. Prose poetry should not exceed ten lines. All poems must be the original, unpublished work of the submitter. Please type in the subject line: "For Shot Glass Journal." Submit the poems only in the body of the e-mail in plain text. No submission e-mails will be accepted with attachments. www.musepiepress.com/shotglass

Bravado 20 Deadline: 14 May. *Bravado* is looking for poetry, fiction and prose for their November 2010 issue, with the criteria of 'bold and contemporary'. Guidelines are available online at www.bravado.co.nz. You can submit by e-mail or send a clearly-presented ms. addressed to the relevant editor to: Bravado, PO Box 13 533, Central Tauranga 3141. The editors would also like to remind potential contributors that they are open to submissions of haikai - Japanese forms of poetry - and black and white artwork or good quality photographs for internal pages.

NZPS 2010 International Poetry Competition. Reminder: entries must be received by 31 May. Entry forms were printed in the March issue of *a fine line*, slightly off-centre but I'll get it right in 2011

***a fine line* - call for submissions. Deadline: 7 June**

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

Bridport Prize (UK) Closing date: 30 June

42 lines maximum (no minimum). 1st = £5000; 2nd = £1000; 3rd = £500. 10 supplementary prizes of £50 each. The top 4 poems are submitted to the Forward Prize for best single poem. Fee: £6 per poem, payable online. [It cost me \$13.50; Ed.] Judging: All entries are judged anonymously. Amateur and professional writers compete on an equal footing. Anthology: The top winning stories, poems and flash fiction will be published in the Bridport Prize 2010 anthology See website for complete guidelines: <http://www.bridportprize.org.uk/>

Margaret Reid Poetry Contest for Traditional Verse (USA) Postmark Deadline: 30 June This contest seeks poetry in traditional verse forms such as sonnets and free verse. Both published and unpublished poems are welcome. Prizes of \$3,000, \$1,000, \$400 and \$250 will be awarded, plus six Most Highly Commended Awards of \$150 each. The entry fee is \$7 for every 25 lines you submit. Submit online or by mail, the earlier the better. http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/margaret/margaret_guidelines.php

Regional Reports

Readers are invited to submit reports on local events as they occur. Please email to editor@poetrysociety.org.nz preferably as attached Word or rtf documents, or send hard copies to PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145.

WINDRIFT, Wellington (February)

Nola Borrell

Creativity flourished at the February meeting of the Windrift Haiku Group, poets leaping boundaries all over, notably in the open category. We're now into our 11th year, and experienced in such criticisms as "hey, that's an epigram, opinion, anthropomorphism", "too explicit, omit that word" and the more draconian "drop that line". Said nicely, of course.

fanned across the wake

...dolphins ...

...surf ...

Jenny Pyatt

teenagers

silicone-based

bipods

Bevan Greenslade

The topic of 'unseasonality' evoked Wellington's summer, took in a snowy Dunedin Christmas, and also monarch butterflies among dandelions.

mid-February morning

the garden and I

battle the southerly

Penny Pruden

Haiku calling for compassion were a bigger challenge. There were striking images (burning rat, thrush hitting a window), but subtlety tended to be lost, shock elicited, and compassion confused with some other emotion. Here's one startling (and original) moment from a new member:

two unborn sharks

appear from their sliced mother

-----teenagers' sudden silence

Harumi Hasegawa

mown field

an oval of long grass

round the pukeko's nest

Karen Peterson Butterworth

Hokitika pukeko-eaters were not present.

Windrift's Convener this year is Nola Borrell (succeeding Karen Butterworth). Bevan Greenslade is Secretary/ Treasurer (succeeding Nola).

ST HELIERS WRITING GROUP WORKSHOP

Peter Buckton, The Writers Room

We held our Poetry Seminar/workshop [in March] and were very pleased with how it all went. Thanks to ... the NZPS for helping with the publicity, we ended up with a full house.

Siobhan Harvey was an excellent presenter and we ended up with a great group of very enthusiastic writers who came along and made it such a success.

The feedback we received from our survey forms suggest there is definitely a good audience for this sort of project again in the future, and it would be nice to think we can arrange something similar again.

We have posted a report on the event up on our website with pictures from the day. If you are interested in checking that out the address is:

<http://seminarseries.wordpress.com/2010/03/13/travels-of-the-mind/> and also:

<http://seminarseries.wordpress.com/2010/03/23/poetry-workshop-submissions/> for submissions from our attendees of pieces they wrote on the day and then had approximately a week to take home and polish up on, using all the great advice that Siobhan was able to impart.

Siobhan was also very generous in her comments back to the committee on her experience of the day:

St. Heliers Writing Group, The Writers Room 2010 – Poetry Writing 2010 Report

The St. Heliers Writing group clearly did a lot of research and organisation to finalise The 2010 Writers Room program. For instance, the venue was very pleasant, and perfectly suited to inspiring creativity. From a teaching perspective, it was exceedingly well resourced. The course I was invited to tutor, Poetry Writing, was widely advertised and attracted a very respectable attendance. Throughout the course, members of the Committee – particularly Peter Buckton – were very diligent and helpful, making sure that I was given all the assistance I needed. If Poetry Writing 2010 was typical of the entire writing program, as I'm sure it was, then the 2010 Writers Room was clearly a well planned and well executed writing resource which reached key sectors of the writing community – new and secret writers; up and coming writers; committed writers in need of help to increase the publishing opportunities for their work. In short, I was very humbled to be invited to facilitate Poetry Writing 2010, and I'm sure I'm not alone in that. *Siobhan Harvey*

So, all in all a great addition to our seminar series, particularly the level of engagement and contribution that our poets brought to the event. It was great to see the enthusiasm.

I hope everyone that was involved had as much fun as we did in organising the event.

WINDRIFT, Wellington (April)

Karen Peterson Butterworth

April host, Harumi Hasegawa, served Japanese tea and snacks. Her haiku,

trimming the clay
the sound is light
beginning of autumn

made us aware of minute seasonal differences, such as the intensity of sound, noticed by Japanese poets. The sky, she said, also appeared higher in autumn.

Often we came up with multiple interpretations of a haiku, sometimes due to lack of clarity, but usually because it was open to varied interpretations, a desirable trait. Some examples:

silent sandstone
micro jack-hammer
inscribing haiku

Neil Whitehead

aftershock
the bristlecone pine & I
hanging on

Ernie Berry

figure in the mist
staring
gone

Jenny Pyatt

morning pashminas
the fog-flat havn
a latte kiss

Bevan Greenslade

metamorphosis
the last rose of summer
fades to a red hip

Sally Holmes Midgely

end of a blustery day
out again to face the wind
all is silent

Penny Pruden

(among the group's suggestions: that the last line simply read 'silence').

POETRY AT THE BALLROOM, Wellington (April)

Laurice Gilbert

Billed as an open mic with guests, music and surprises, this new event on the Wellington poetry scene (the first was held in February) promises to be a popular performance forum. Joint organiser Lewis Scott stated that he wanted poets, singers, dancers, even preachers, to perform if they want to. The April event was attended by a bustling and enthusiastic audience that filled the café to overflowing.

The open mic was the inevitable curate's egg, with both performance and page poetry in evidence, along with singer-songwriters.

The acoustics of the café are awful, and the poets were positioned with their backs to both the light and the noise of the windows overlooking the extremely busy Adelaide Rd/ Riddiford St junction. Despite these problems most of the poets, if not the announcer, overcame the competition and projected adequately.

The open mic lasted an hour – somewhat beyond my attention span – and the audience seemed a bit restless by the break. Some firmness about one piece per performer is probably needed. We heard from Josh, **Tim Jones**, Jennifer Compton (in Wellington as Guest Poet for our meeting the next night), George, Mary McCallum, **Allan Wells**, Abdalla Gabriel, Maggie Rainey-Smith, Phoebe, **Mercedes Webb-Pullman**, yours truly, Mike "The Tights" Webber, Jane Matheson, and a couple of others whose names I didn't catch.

Abdalla's poem was handed around in English translation and he read it in English and then in Swahili. You'll find it on the back page.

Phoebe was a particularly entertaining performance poet, and her humour resonated well with the audience. Someone to watch out for.

You can bet that with Lewis Scott involved (the other organiser being Neil Furby) there'll be an African connection, and the musical interlude was intended to be a performance by a Kenyan drummer. Sadly he couldn't make it, so we were treated instead to a fabulous and very professional performance in Spanish by Carlos, a Mexican singer and guitarist. He was then joined by a young Argentinian man, and they performed a duet sung in Portuguese. An international feast indeed.

For the last twenty minutes the focus was on guest poet, Rachel McAlpine. Rachel has recently published *Scarlet Heels; 26 Stories About Sex* (CC Press, 2010). Each of the stories is told in the first person and is accompanied by a (loosely) complementary poem. Rachel read poems from the collection, presenting a précis and/or reading a little from each of the stories to introduce them.

She is a lively and enjoyable reader, and her poetry is accessible without being frivolous. Of necessity, due to the nature of the publication, the poems are short, but most still manage to pack a punch. I

particularly loved:

Love Song

Your forehead
is the curve
of the world.

Through your eyes
I slide
into a jungle
a tangle
of flying vines
of blood feasts
of jagged cries
of silent
silken
steps.

Your blood
has the beat
of the sea.
It pulls
to the pulse
of the moon.

If I die
before I lie
with you
rocks will rain
from heaven
on my grave.

(Reprinted with permission.)

All in all, a pleasant way to spend a Sunday afternoon, and word of mouth will no doubt ensure the standing-room-only crowd will still grow.

REGULAR POETRY EVENTS AROUND NZ

I have had a request to publish a list of the poetry groups and meetings around the country. What follows is a list of those I have been able to confirm (April 2010). If your group is not included then either it's not listed on our website, or I haven't had a response from the contact details supplied. You are welcome to let me know about it. Names in **bold** are members of the NZPS, and therefore knowledgeable and approachable (naturally).

AUCKLAND

© **Poetry Live** Book yourself in to read at Poetry Live, at the Thirsty Dog, 469 Karangahape Rd, Auckland City. Tuesdays 8 p.m. Guest poets, guest musician & open mike. Contact: MCs Christian, Rachael, Penny, Murray or Miriam by email: poetrylive@gmail.com, putting the MC's name in the subject line. Visit Poetry Live's website: <http://www.poetrylive.co.nz/>

© **Open Mic Night, Waiatarua** (NEW) 7-10pm every 2nd Wednesday. Elevation Café, 473 Scenic Drive. Poets, singer/songwriters, comedians - original performers encouraged, solos, duos & small ensembles only (sorry no drum kits). PA, mics, stands & percussion supplied, 3 items (max 15 mins) per performer. Performers prize draw. To pre-book a spot, E: fionamcewen@clear.net.nz or enter on the night. For more info or restaurant bookings, T: Elevation (09) 814 1919; E: info@elevationcafe.co.nz Free entry.

◎ **306 Open Mic Night** (NEW) Standing invitation every Wednesday night, 8-11pm: 306 Bar & Bistro, 306 Onehunga Mall. Poets, Musos, Singers, Poets, Comedians, other performers... the main focus is the acoustic guitar players & singer / songwriters, but all performers welcome. There is a small in house PA System with 2 microphones. Other than that, musicians should bring their own gear. Free.

CHRISTCHURCH

◎ **Airing Cupboard Women Poets** meet at 10 a.m. every 2 weeks at South Christchurch Library, 66 Colombo Street Street. Ring **Judith Walsh** ph. 03 342 9881 or **Barbara Strang** ph. 03 376 4486.

◎ **Women on Air** with Ruth Todd and Morrin Rout on Plains FM 96.9 in Christchurch - every Saturday at 10am for interviews & news includes a monthly slot on Women and Poetry, with **Helen Lowe**.

www.womenonair.org.nz

◎ **The Canterbury Poets' Collective Autumn season** is held at Madras Cafe Books, 165 Madras Street, Christchurch on Wednesdays (March-April), starting at 6.30pm (\$5 entry). The 2010 Season was the 20th Anniversary of these readings, and ran from 17 March to 5 May. For guest poet list, see

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/poetrynews>

◎ **Catalyst Poetry Open Mic**: First Wednesday of the month, at Al's Bar, 31 Dundas Street, Christchurch.

www.catalystnz.blogspot.com

◎ **Poetry for Pudding**: Meets 7pm - 8.30pm on the third Friday of the month, at the instore cafe, Borders Bookshop, Rotherham Street, Riccarton. This is a relaxed supportive environment where poets of all levels are welcome. Bring a favourite poem - yours, or another's.

◎ **Small White Teapot**, a group for those interested in haiku and related forms, meets 7.00pm monthly, 3rd Tuesday. Beginners welcome. Contact **Barbara Strang** ph. 03 376 4486

COROMANDEL

◎ **Thames Poets Circle**, co-hosted by Greg Brimblecombe and Jill Steadman, meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7.00pm. Venue: The Nectar Lounge, 740 Pollen Street, Thames. For more information contact Greg on 07 868 9947 or email: greg_b@clear.net.nz

CROMWELL

◎ **Cromwell Writers** meet on the last Tuesday of the month in the homes of members on a shared basis. Contact Tom Llandreth ph. 03 4451352.

GOLDEN BAY

◎ **The Golden Bay Live Poets Society** has a monthly Performance Night at the famous Mussel Inn Bush Café at Onekaka. For dates go to <http://www.musselinn.co.nz/entertainment.htm> Visiting poets are most welcome. For news of meetings contact convenor **Joe Bell** at: gbaybell@xtra.co.nz ph. 03 524 8146.

HAMILTON

◎ **Poets Alive** meet on the last Friday of the month from 7pm - 9pm in the LAIN Building, University of Waikato Main Campus. Contact: **Celia Hope** at: poetsalivenz@gmail.com

HAWKES BAY

◎ **The Hawke's Bay Live Poets' Society** meets at 8pm on the second Monday of each month (except January) at the Hawkes Bay Exhibition Centre, 201 Eastbourne Street East, Hastings. Contact Keith Thorsen ph. 06 870 9447.

KAPITI

◎ **Poetry to the People** meets at Lembas Café, Poplar Ave, at 4pm on the last Sunday of the month. A guest poet is featured. Snacks and beverages are available, and the entry price of \$5 covers the poet's koha and general expenses. Any left over is paid to the café as a tip, for staying open late for the event. Contact is **Gill Ward** email: gillii@paradise.net.nz

LYTTLETON

◎ **The Catalyst** poetry open mic. Tuesdays at 8pm. Wunderbar, Lyttelton. BYO poetry, creative writing - all welcome

MARLBOROUGH

© **Poetry Corner:** an informal group for lovers of poetry; meets between 6pm and 8.30pm on the first Monday of each month, at various locations. Readers, writers, listeners and performers are all welcome. Come and go as you please during the allotted time. For more information: June Bowen, at 03 577 9035.

NELSON

© **The Nelson Live Poets Society** meets on the fourth Monday of every month at The Free House, 95 Collingwood Street; 6pm for a 6.30 start. Open mic. Contact: marybell@ts.co.nz

PICTON

© **Picton Poets** (founded by Ernest Berry in 1994) meet at The Cottage, 75a Waikawa Road, Picton at 9.50am on the third Wednesday of each month. Contacts: Ernest Berry at: bluberry@xtra.co.nz ph. 03 573 6881, or Susan Kerr at susanvrm@mlb.planet.gen.nz ph 03 573 8236

RANGITIKEI

If you live in or near Marton and are interested in being part of a poetry group, contact Elizabeth Coleman at c-e.coleman@xtra.co.nz ph. 06-3278106.

ROTORUA

The Rotorua Mad Poets meet every Wednesday night at the Rotorua Public Library at 6:00 pm. All poets and general public welcome to attend. Light refreshments available afterwards. 7.30-9.30 p.m. No contact details available.

TAURANGA

© **Tauranga Writers:** A self-help group established over 40 years ago. We get together regularly to exchange experience and expertise, discuss tactics and techniques and to share work in progress for constructive criticism. We meet twice monthly on the first Thursday at 7.30 pm and the third Sunday at 2 pm at Tauranga Environment Centre, 12 Elizabeth Street. Contact: Jenny Argante ph 07 576 3040, mob 027 316 31 93, or email jenny.argante@gmail.com New members always welcome - but please note: our main intention is writing for publication.

TIMARU

© For poetry events, or to contact Timaru or South Canterbury poets, contact Karalyn Joyce at karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz ph. 03 6147858.

WANAKA

© **Poetic Justice Wanaka:** Wanaka poets meet monthly at Kai Whaka Pai, Ardmore St, for a dose of Poetic Justice. All welcome to read, all welcome to listen. Vote for the best poem of the night - winner gets a bottle of Olssens Wine. For meeting dates and times see: <http://poeticjusticewanaka.wordpress.com/>

WELLINGTON

© **The New Zealand Poetry Society Inc** holds poetry readings on the third Monday of the month, from February to October. In November we launch our annual poetry anthology. The meeting starts at 7.30pm with an open mic, and features an invited guest poet. The meeting is open to the public and entry is \$5 (members \$3). The venue is the historic Thistle Inn at 3 Mulgrave St, CBD, and you can find out the current month's guest poet at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/poetrynews#nzps>

© **Poetry @ The Ballroom:** 4pm - 6pm on the 3rd Sunday of every month at the Ballroom Cafe, cnr Riddiford St and Adelaide Rd, Newtown. Featuring an open mic, Guest Poet and a musical interlude. For information contact: Neil Furby, ballroompoetrycafe@gmail.com or L. E. Scott, (04) 801-7773 (daytime)

WEST COAST

© **Greymouth: Word of Mouth Live Poets** meet each month by arrangement at Franks Cafe, 115 Mackay Street, Greymouth. A friendly, informal gathering of anyone and everyone interested in poetry. All welcome. Convenor: Greg O'Connell www.gregconnell.com

WHAKATANE

© **Live Poets** meet at 7.30pm on the third Monday of the month, in the home of a member. Contact: Margaret Wilson at 07 3072308 (there is an answerphone).

Reviews

Shadow Friend, Julie Leibrich (Rosetta Press, 2009) ISBN: 978-0-473-16092-0

Liz Breslin

Shadow Friend. The name drew me in, always willing to see what's lurking in the shadows. Julie Leibrich's name also rang bells – this is her third poetry collection, after *The Paper Road* (1998) and *Land Below the Waves* (2004). As she's also written children's books, books about criminology and about mental health, there seemed like a lot of potential shadows for poetic exploitation.

About a third of the volume is taken up by her 'Beach Diary', dedicated to the people of Kapiti. This work covers a month of snippets about the beach each day and is accompanied by pictures from her 2007 exhibition. Each day brings a different observation, of variable lengths, concerning the sea, the sand, the gulls, the:

walkers, talkers, sloggers, joggers
straddling the beach.

There are a few nice soundbites; Leibrich finds fun in the seagulls and our reactions to them. They,

Pick a peck. peck a pock.
Pock a peck o'picnic.
Don't think about The Birds.

And, on Tuesday 16th, "chop stick children on pipi spit sand" provide another memorable image.
There is the man with the white stick who blindly shifts

... the driftwood aside, with his white cane,
as if it did something wrong by coming in.

And the woman who 'stalks a shroud'. But in spite of these characters, and the pictures accompanying the 'Beach Diary', I was left wanting more from the month of beach observations. It would be interesting to know if the arrangement of text and pictures is the same as in the exhibition, as I caught myself looking for more of a connection there.

For more colour in the rest of the collection, I was drawn to 'Throwing a Shiraz', where,

Words had whimpered
and scuttled out of the room.
Reason had crawled,
like a bug, round the floor.
Promises pissed themselves
right out of windows.

Unfortunately, the idea of the shiraz hissy-fit is more alluring than the poem itself, which seems restrained and removed from its "winshed of emotion".

Chronologically, the next poem is called 'Your Poems are so Personal'. It's about

...bones laid bare,
faces unwashed, tongues
hanging out to tell tales.

and I can't help but wish for a bit more of just that in this collection.

The back cover blurb says that Leibrich's "poems are personal and profound, which is to say that you need to read not merely the words, but her mind." and I find that's where some frustrations lie, because with lines like, "There is nothing to fear in sadness" (from 'In the Dark Night'), and poems such as this,

CIRCLE OF LIGHT

Years ago, we sat round the fire.
Moon and stars our measure.
The sun, our god.
We didn't pull words apart
to know we belonged.
We simply longed to be.
Discover those times again.
Uncover the meaning in clouds,
your memory of rain.

I just don't have a hinge on Leibrich's poetic specifics. And maybe the point is that she is content for her writing about 'time, space, love and mystery' to speak for itself, for us to interpret the universal, or the conceptual, our way. Sometimes, of course, there can be a sort of strength in our recognition of another sort of universal, the mundane. This is true in 'After the Funeral', when, "...we race home". First one in, first to pee.

Bursting with life, dying to talk
about the service, the people
and when you had tears
and who was the man in the mac?

But I'm lost again on 'A Woman Doesn't Always Know', firstly because I think it's important never to actually admit that. And also because, at the poem's conclusion, Leibrich reveals something important. She writes,
...there are days like this, when a poem
comes to call, knocking on her heart to let it in.

Her poetry comes from the heart. I'm reading it with my head. And unfortunately, that's where they disconnect.

Just This Brian Turner (Wellington: VUP, 2009), 112 pp, rrp \$25.

Joanna Preston

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but in the case of *Just This*, Brian Turner's ninth poetry collection, it's not a bad place to start. The cover is a photograph of the Matukituki River Valley - rugged, craggy mountains rise up from the river like the disinterest of god, and the humanised area limited to a winding road in the shadows and a smatter of green slashed with the golden brown of gorse. Not precisely forbidding, but not interested in making any concessions to human ease or pleasure. But look again, and the colours soften the sternness - indigo for the shadowed riverbed, shifting through blue to green and gold and up into mauve as the mountains lift away. It's very beautiful, once your eye adjusts.

And that's a good description of these poems. Most of them are quite conversational, but it's the sort of conversation of a man walking through the hills with a dog, talking to himself as much as to the animal. So the conversation wanders, meanders, leaps and returns. There's a real restlessness about the poems, and more than a little regret. Lots of poems of loss and absence, both present and anticipated. The humour is generally wry, verging on black, and there's more than a little anger in the background.

There are quite a few times when the poems feel too personal, as though we're eavesdropping, or being asked to read the pages of Turner's journal. Some of the poems become too caught up in their own abstraction and the reader loses interest (always a problem for a collection with so many occasional poems). But then the next poem (or next image) snags you back in, and you find yourself caught up in the conversation again - the structuring of the collection is very intelligent.

One thing that did surprise me was how imagistic some of the poems were, despite their seeming talky-ness. Many start with a semi-abstract proposition, and then shift into a concrete depiction. A pair of

favourite examples (in full):

Joy

He knew what joy is,
the urge
to break into a run
to greet a son
returning home.

and

Umbrella

When you hear of older sods
reflecting on, and accounting for,
their idiot youth, musing

it was because they saw themselves
as bulletproof, you're bemused.
To you, youth was fear, fragility,

the future a fog rolling in at twilight
time. Nothing seemed benign
or rosy for long: dark clouds

massed. An umbrella furled at the door.

Beautiful examples of showing just enough, and of how to turn didactic into evocative. But it isn't always handled this well, and the collection's voice does sometimes lapse into a moralistic drone. Lines such as "Is it too late for her to be de-bugged?" ('A PM in the High Country') insert petulant (or simply ugly) notes into otherwise moving poems. He's aware of it too - in part 16 of the long sequence 'Considerations':

Be serious
and someone
will say
you're silly,
or that they don't
want moral missives
from someone
presuming
to be wise.

But those are risks inherent to this voice, this stance. And, for the most part, the collection works. There is such mastery of craft behind even the simplest of the poems, and the best lines are as sharp as an iron frost. These are bitter times, and Brian Turner gives a damn. You can forgive a little sermonising from a man talking to his dog. To quote from the lovely 'Morning After a Storm':

I could ask
for more, but not today.

Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash.

Leonard Cohen

Voyagers: Science Fiction Poetry from New Zealand ed by Mark Pirie & Tim Jones (Interactive Publications, Carindale, Qld: 2009) 186 pp, rrp \$28.95.

Joanna Preston

When you think about science fiction, do you think of poetry? No? Well it's looking like time you did.

Any anthology has to try and balance the twin concerns of breadth and depth; having enough different contributors to provide interest and multiplicity, whilst maintaining the overall quality and coherence of the collection as a single entity. My initial concern about *Voyagers* was that there simply wouldn't be enough good material – after all, how many New Zealand poets actually write science fiction poetry?

As it turns out, the answer to that question is: quite a lot. More than 70 poets have work in *Voyagers*; from major luminaries like Fleur Adcock, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell and A.R.D. Fairburn, to protostellar entities like Katherine Liddy, Seán McMahon and Meliors Simms. Most are represented by only one or two poems, the vast majority of which are typical modern NZ free verse lyrics. They range in tone and mood from wonder (as in Nic Hill's 'Somewhere Else'), through gleeful weirdness (Helen Rickerby's 'Tabloid Headlines') and 'Martian' strangeness (Tracie McBride's 'Contact' and Jane Matheson's gorgeous 'An Alien's Notes on first seeing a prunus-plum tree'), to the bleakness that has long made dystopian fiction one of science fiction's classic concerns (Fleur Adcock's brilliant dystopian epic 'Gas' being one of the collection's highlights).

In their introduction, editors Mark Pirie and Tim Jones offer a very useful explanation of their working definition of science fiction – a literature of change; often (but not always) set in the future; counterfactual, with deviations from our own universe based on (or extrapolated from) genuine scientific principals. So magic is out, but future (or secret) technology is in. And merely describing things of an astronomical or non-terrestrial nature is also insufficient, unless there is some definite speculative component.

A good definition, although it leads me to question some inclusions. For example, the opening poem, 'the poetry of the future' by Anna Rugis, doesn't appear to have anything to do with science fiction other than using the word 'future' in the title, unless you argue that a change from written poetry to gestural poetry is an example of technological evolution, which seems a stretch. Jenny Argante's 'Space Age Lover' equally fails to convince – it's packed with science fiction terms (like "trans-galactic surge" and "rocket-orbit link"), but they feel like decorations added to help the poem qualify for inclusion. It feels like an exercise, rather than a poem.

That said, the anthology overwhelmingly works. No matter what your particular tastes are ('not so keen on aliens, but I like robots', 'give me Space Opera every time!' or even 'I don't go in for that kind of thing, it's too weird'); whether you're a poetry fan cautiously venturing into science fiction or a science fiction fan venturing out into poetry, *Voyagers* has poems you'll love, and poems that will stretch your imagination. What more could you ask of any anthology?

KiwiHaiku

ancient gate
a burr of wings –
kereru

Helen Yong

evening rain on Tongariro
morning mist billows upwards
cloud birth on the Desert Road

Deryn Pittar

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

Tanka Reflections

- short songs of the human spirit -

small waves gulp the sand,
the moon walks her path to our log,
chilled backs – warm fronts,
bonfire after dark
at Tata Beach

Deryn Pittar

lone pine
on a windswept cliff
leans to the sea –
I am drawn
to your beckoning

Helen Yong

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

Talk Poem

John O'Connor

Cheap Blue

Hill blue among the leaves in summer,
Hill blue among the branches in winter –
Light sea blue at the sand beaches in winter,
Deep sea blue in the deep deep waters –
Prairie blue, mountain blue –
Who can pick a pocketful of these blues,
a handkerchief of these blues,
And go walking, talking, walking as though
God gave them a lot of loose change
For spending money, to throw at the birds,
To flip into the tin cups of blind men?

Carl Sandburg, fr. Wind Song (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960)

Sandburg's not the poet I'd take to a desert island – if I could only take one it would certainly be Eliot. Yet I don't think I've ever smiled simply at seeing a book by the Old Possum.

I smiled when I saw *Wind Song* (Sandburg's poems for children of all ages) at the Christchurch SuperShed. In fact, as the books there are so ridiculously priced, I put back a dictionary of Cook Islands Maori and added the Sandburg to the others I'd gathered: Bernadette Hall's *Still Talking*, Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and the 831 pages of *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema*. That took it up to \$1 – or you can pay 50c per book if you want fewer than four.

Now, Sandburg is a fairly artless type of poet, and strictly without intellectual pretensions. There isn't a lot of music in him either. And at times he's careless; for instance, shouldn't "to throw at the birds" (above) be "to throw to the birds" (idiomatically speaking)?

Yet to me Sandburg has the defining quality of all genuine poets: in his best work he leaves himself behind, or drops the ego, and so lightened manages to hitch a ride on the poem. 'Cheap Blue' I think is a fine example of finding the poetry by lessening the self.

The first five lines are the poet talking; and they're essentially descriptive. In contrast, the inset lines take us elsewhere. Firstly down to the personal level, and a humble personal level at that (almost to a child's level): "pocketful", "handkerchief". And, staying with the plural — lessening the ego allows others in — we walk in company, and have some "loose change" (from a higher source), some of which goes to the (humble) birds and the (needless to say humble) blind beggars.

The changing, large-scale articulated images of the first five lines then become (in the inset lines) an unbroken (metaphoric) journey that the reader can choose to take or not. I suspect one will choose to do so according to one's idea of the self. Those who are at ease with a democratic/ casual, compassionate and magical universe may well sign up. They don't mind the idea of God (of something higher than themselves), of feeding/ sustaining the birds (those symbols of the soul in various cultures), nor the light-hearted/ comradely giving ("flipping") of a coin to the needy.

Others might note the idea of giving back, as the pieces of blue we "pick" and give away are provided for us in the first place. The circularity (sustainability) of good will or grace.

Still others may say that in its simplicity this is a great poem. Paradoxically — however complex &/or erudite some texts may be on the surface — all great poems are essentially simple. It's finding that common, eternal element that makes them so. That element, of course, is the *poetry* of the poem.

American Life in Poetry: Column 258

By Ted Kooser. U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006 (*Reprinted with permission*)

This marks the fourth time we've published a poem by David Baker, one of my favorite writers. Baker lives in Granville, Ohio, and teaches at Denison University. He is also the poetry editor for the distinguished *Kenyon Review*.

Old Man Throwing a Ball

He is tight at first, stiff, stands there atilt
tossing the green fluff tennis ball down
the side alley, but soon he's limber,
he's letting it fly and the black lab

lops back each time. These are the true lovers,
this dog, this man, and when the dog stops
to pee, the old guy hurries him back, then
hurls the ball farther away. Now his mother

dodders out, she's old as the sky, wheeling
her green tank with its sweet vein, breath.
She tips down the path he's made for her,
grass rippling but trim, soft underfoot,

to survey the yard, every inch of it
in fine blossom, set-stone, pruned miniature,
split rails docked along the front walk,
antique watering cans down-spread — up

huffs the dog again with his mouthy ball —
so flowers seem to spill out, red geraniums,
grand blue asters, and something I have
no name for, wild elsewhere in our world

but here a thing to tend. To call for, and it comes.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by [The Poetry Foundation](#), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2009 by David Baker, whose most recent book of poems is *Never-Ending Birds*, W. W. Norton, 2009. Poem reprinted from *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 84, no. 2, Spring 2009, by permission of David Baker and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2010 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

Mini Competition

I expected there'd be lots of poems about food, and instead I received only 3 (all good). Tempting as it is to just go ahead and award the prize, I'm going to give you another chance. Write a poem about food – your relationship with it, your favourite food, ways to improve food, an unusual food story, whatever. The prize is the DVD *Hunger for the Wild, Series 3*, with Steve Logan and Al Brown of Wellington's arguably poshest restaurant, Logan Brown.

JULY DEADLINE is 7th June

MEMBERS' POEMS

Last of the Halcyon Days

She knows where all the kingfishers went,
now the east wind has brought them back,
enough of them to fledge the whole bay.
One tone brighter they would combust*
like peat fires at Kaimaumu.
Copper fumes brewing hot cumulus
stream into a white plume overhead.
Another green wing strokes through her.
Her kingfisher-feather covers are warm
but who was to be with her?***
Alone but for a pied shag alongside,
working the next wave out.
It shakes itself, "This needs more salt,"
goes home to serve up food.

Julie Ryan

*"Kingfishers Catch Fire," Rumer Goden (1907-1998)

**"The roof-tile mandarin ducks were cold,
the frost was bright and thick.

His kingfisher-feather covers were cold
for who was to be with him?"

fr. Po Chu-yi (772-846)

SLEEPIN RUFF

I DOAN SLEEP RUFF NO MORE
YERD THINK WITH GRAY HARE
YERD BE OK
LIKE 2 OLD TER RAPE
DOEN KID YERSLEF

THARES A CHURCH RUME WARE
THER VICKERS GOT SOME BEDS
LETS US OLD GRILS SLEEP THARE
HIS WIVE COMS ROUN
MAKES TEA COFFEE BRED & JAM
WOSH & OUT BY 9
WE SUSS OUT ROUN TOWN
THEN SUSS PARK PICNIC BINS FOR SCRAPS
LIKE BRED ROLLS & BITS OF HAM

ORLWAYS FAG ENDS WET OR DRY

I WAS TOOK OUTER SCOOL BUT
TAUT ME SLEF TO REED & RITE REEL GOD

MOSTLY WORKT IN PUBS & STUFF
LIKE CLEENING
& HIT THER BOOZ & HARE I AM
HAD 3 SPROGS THER GRILS
WENT 2 OZ..YOUNG GAV GOT DROUN
.....A NIPPER GIN DOAN DO NO HARM
THE VICKER FOUN ME ON THER GROUN
& PUT A STOP TER THAT BUT HES A GOD MAN
ALL THE SAME NO DRUGS & NO GOD TO SAY
THEY KEEPS YER CARM IM OK & IF YER THINK
I DIDN RITE THIS MESLEF THEN MINE YER TUNG
I FOUN THER PAPER ON THER WAREHOUS SHLEF
A FAT PAD SO WY NOT USE IT
THAT'S WOT ITS 4 & THEN THER VICKER
WENT & DROPT HIS PEN

Jan Vernon

Silence

Perhaps one day I shall go out into the quieten city and
Recognise myself among crowd of souls, and I will say to them
 “Hey look! there goes the man I really am”
 Would they dare to acknowledge me?
 No one responded, there was silence in the atmosphere,

Silence on mountain top, silence below the universe.
 Then the world would move on restlessly, making its love,
 Greed, pride and money; minding its own business.
 Shamefully, I closed my eyes, then rest my mouth.

As silence is the only language,
 That does not need an interpreter.

Abdalla Gabriel (Guest Poet)