



a fine line

May 2011

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

www.poetrysociety.org.nz

Poetry @ The Thistle Inn

MAY MEETING (Change of Guest)

Monday 16th May, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Mark Raffills (Nelson)

JUNE MEETING

Monday 20th June, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Micah Timona Ferris

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington. Open mic. \$3 entry for members.

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities Wellington Local Funding Scheme.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Annual membership runs from the beginning of April until the end of March the following year, so 2011-2012 subs are due now. Many thanks to those who have renewed already. We accept renewals with competition entries – include your renewal form, and you can pay for both your membership and your competition entry at the same time. The renewal form was included with the March issue of *a fine line* – as a separate attachment for those who receive their magazine by email (sent on 2nd March). You can also download a renewal form from the website, and PayPal payment is available there as well (with a small fee to cover the commission). See: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/join>

Contents

- 2) Feature Article: 'On the benefit of constraints' *Janis Freegard*
- 3) From the National Coordinator *Laurice Gilbert*
- 4) About our Contributors / A Warm Welcome to...
- 5) Congratulations / Publications – what's new on the NZPS bookshelf
- 6) Competitions & Submission Opportunities
- 9) Featured Poet: *Gill Ward*
- 13) Noticeboard / Surfing the Net
- 14) Reviews: *Crumple* Vivienne Plumb *Gill Ward*

- 15) *Twenty Contemporary New Zealand Poets: An Anthology* Eds Andrew Johnston and Robyn Marsack *Keith Nunes*
Dance Dance Dance JAAM 28 ed. Clare Needham and Helen Rickerby *Gillian Cameron*
- 16) *Songcatcher* Robynanne Milford *Vaughan Rapatahana*
- 17) *sometimes the sky isn't big enough: poems* Owen Bullock *Janice Giles*
- 18) Mini Competition
- 20) Members' Poems

Feature Article

On the benefit of constraints

Janis Freegard

About ten years ago, I was lucky enough to be in one of Greg O'Brien's poetry workshops at Victoria University. One of the great things about the workshop, for me, was being introduced to a range of poetic forms. Like most people, I knew about sonnets and haiku, but suddenly a world of sestinas, villanelles and pantoums opened up.

Poetic forms have a particular advantage. The restrictions imposed by, say, a villanelle can make a good poem better. It puts me in mind of Gerard Manly Hopkins' *The Windhover*, a sonnet about a kestrel, where he says:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

There are many ways of interpreting this, but the one I remember from school is that the kestrel was a trained hunting bird, "buckling" under the control of a falconer. (The "chevalier" also represented Hopkins' Christ – made lovelier by his sacrifice.) Hopkins himself, as a Jesuit priest, was under the control of his religion, which, while repressing him in some ways, perhaps gave him freedom in others.

It's about discipline, then – the forces of order and control versus the forces of wildness. If you can get both into some sort of balance, it's better than just having one or the other – to write, you need both wild inspiration and the rigor of sitting down and capturing it on paper or hard drive.

The constraints and controls of a poetic form can bring an extra dimension to poetry. They can help you find a breakthrough with a poem you've been struggling with. And it's fun, like solving a crossword puzzle. The challenge, of course, is to make it look as though the poem has just occurred to you and quite naturally happened to come out with a set number of syllables to each line or some subtle rhyming scheme, rather than looking as though you've just spent the last 14 hours struggling with the third line. Or worse, sounding as though you've chosen the words to suit the form, forcing them into places they don't naturally fit, like glass slippers on Cinderella's ugly sisters.

A fine example of a poem that reads as though the poet just thought of it is Sam Hunt's 'My Father Scything' which starts:

My father was sixty when I was born,
twice my mother's age, but he's never been
around very much...

I'd read this poem with its conversational tone dozens of times before I noticed it's a proper sonnet with 14 lines (8 + 6) and a subtle rhyme scheme (often half rhymes, like born/been above). I can only marvel.

The masters and mistresses of constraints are perhaps the Oulipo poets ("Ouvroir de littérature potentielle" – group of French poets and mathematicians), who use mathematical formulae in poetry or extreme constraints such as Georges Perec's novel, *La disparition*, written without using the letter "e" (no mean feat in the French language, where 'e's are particularly plentiful). The wonderful Christian Bök, a Canadian poet who was in Wellington for a Writers & Readers Festival a few years ago, uses some amazing constraints – his book *Eunoia* comprises five poem sequences, each using only one of the vowels

(ie the words in the first section use many consonants but the only vowels are 'a's; in the second, the only vowels are 'e's etc). And speaking of discipline – the book took seven years to write.

There are three books I've found particularly helpful with respect to poetic forms: *The Making of A Poem* by Eavan Boland and Mark Strand, *The Book of Forms* by Lewis Turco, and *An Exaltation of Forms*, edited by Annie Finch and Kathrine Varnes.

Boland and Strand's book is a wonderful in-depth look at several different forms, generously sprinkled with excellent examples of each. Turco's is a great reference book – he's gone for breadth more than depth (but still includes some examples) and covers all manner of poetic terminology I'd never come across before. Finch and Varnes contains a wide range of essays from contemporary poets on many different forms, metres and stanzas – well worth a look.

Another good source of information is: <http://thewordshop.tripod.com/forms.html>, and *99 Ways into New Zealand poetry* by Paula Green and Harry Ricketts has many great examples of New Zealand poets' use of forms.

Glossary

sonnet - fourteen lines, often in a set rhyme scheme. A formal sonnet consists of an octave (eight lines) which asks a question or states a proposition, followed by a sestet (six lines), which offers an answer or resolution.

sestina – 6 six line stanzas and 1 three line stanza (the envoi). The end words of each line are repeated in a particular pattern (if stanza A is 123456, stanza B is 615243) through the rest of the poem. The envoi contains, in any order, all six end-words.

pantoum – four line stanzas where the first and third lines of each stanza (verse) repeat the second and third lines of the preceding stanza. In the final stanza, the second line repeats the third line in the first stanza; and the last line repeats first line of the first stanza. The rhyme scheme is *abab*.

villanelle – five three line stanzas and a concluding four line stanza. The rhyme scheme is *aba*, with the same end-rhyme for every first and last line of each three line stanza and the final two lines of the four line stanza. The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the second and the fourth stanzas, and as the second-to-last line in the concluding stanza. The third line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the third and the fifth stanzas, and as the last line in the concluding stanza.

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

I have been reading *Being Wrong; Adventures in the Margin of Error*, by Kathryn Schulz (Portobello, 2010), which I picked up from Unity Books when I was forced to spend my Booksellers Book Month vouchers by the end of March. What a revelation it is proving to be. Apparently, there are definite evolutionary advantages to being wrong, and it is only our old friends Pride and Ego that make a big deal of it. If it were not in our interests to create hypotheses, test our suppositions and make frequent mistakes, we would all still be living in caves, living risk-averse little lives and never discovering the pleasure of dried egg whites jazzed up with sugar and a little cornflour and vinegar. After a year in which I was beginning to feel everything I did fell short of my high expectations (other than getting poems published, of which I did rather a lot), I feel liberated to make more mistakes and see where they take me! Turns out Getting it Wrong is good for me, and I might finally have got over my fear of rejection letters.

Competition entries are coming in steadily, which is most satisfying. I have taken a risk and spent money on a paid advertisement on Winning Writers, a US website that lists heaps of competitions, many of them free to enter, in the hope of tapping the vast US market. The ad went out to the newsletter subscribers in mid-April, and I await the outcome with my fingers crossed. If the PO Box throws up a lot of US stamps, I'll know the risk has paid off.

Speaking of stamps, I receive a great many of them in the course of running the competition every year, and in the past they all went to my late father, who saved the ones he wanted and passed the rest on to

someone who knew where to send them for charitable fund-raising. Is there anyone out there who would like to receive them, for the same purposes? I hate to see them go to waste. Most, of course, will be Kiwi Stamps, but there will be lots of Australian ones, some from the UK and a smattering from other countries around the world. Let me know, and they're yours.

The AGM is nearly here. We normally hold it in June, but in response to my comment that it creates a lot of work at the same time as the close of the competition, the Committee has taken pity on me and decided to hold it in July this year. The Notice of AGM that would normally be in this issue of *a fine line* will therefore be in the July issue, which I will be sure to have distributed outside the 15 days' notice required by the Constitution. In any case, the AGM will be held on Monday 18th July.

There's a lot of actual poetry in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed receiving it.

To write something you have to risk making a fool of yourself.

Anne Rice

About our Contributors

Gillian Cameron is a committee member and member of The Academy poetry group.

Janis Freegard's first solo collection, *Kingdom Animalia: The Escapades of Linnaeus* (Auckland University Press), is due out in May. She lives in Wellington.

Janice Giles is a counsellor, gardener, painter, dreamer, and member of Tauranga Writers Inc. Her stories, poems and academic works have been published in New Zealand and internationally.

Keith Nunes was a newspaper journalist. Now he squabbles with teenagers, picks up donkey doo and writes to keep the demons away.

Vaughan Rapatahana lives and works in Hong Kong, although he keeps his house in Te Araroa, East Coast. He is poetry editor of *The Maori and Indigenous (MAI) Review Journal*.

Gill Ward lives on the Kapiti Coast. She organises the Kapiti poetry café monthly event 'Poets to the People', and is widely published.

A Warm Welcome to ...

Christine Borra Upper Hutt

Waiata Davies Oamaru

Kundalini Reiki Enterprises Auckland

Ali McGraw Auckland

Lorraine Ritchie Christchurch

Sandi Sartorelli Upper Hutt

Erin Scudder Wellington

Alecia Steel Auckland

Walter Stephens USA

Anthony Thorpe Christchurch

Orchid Tierney Auckland

Belinda Wong Porirua

Jack Wood Wellington

Congratulations

Ernie Berry: – came 1st, 2nd and 4th in Haiku Ireland's kukai 23. The 1st prize winner was:

alzheimers
the pianist's fingers
remember

– won the Grand Prize in the 2010 World Haiku Competition run by *Lyrical Passion Poetry E-Zine*, with:

terminal.
she skirts
the word

– won 1st Prize in the Haiku Section of the FreeXpresSion Competition 2011, with:

old garden
where the convent was
nodding thistles

along with a Highly Commended, 2 Commendeds, and 2 further haiku shortlisted

– was runner-up in the British Haiku Awards 2010 (Haiku Section)

– received a Fifth Honourable Mention in the 2011 Anita Weiss Memorial Haiku Awards, for:

mountain track
an old sandal
at the rest stop

– had work selected for *Contemporary Haibun Volume 12* (Red Moon, 2011).

Ernie is certainly a staple of this section!

Interlitq 14 is featuring New Zealand poets; Currently on the poetry publication list are: **Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle, Majella Cullinane, Janis Freegard, Robin Fry, Laurice Gilbert, David Gregory, Charles Hadfield, Siobhan Harvey, Tim Jones, Helen Lowe, Stephanie Mayne, Harvey Molloy, and Niel Wright.** Mia Watkins has a prose piece in the issue. See:

(http://www.interlitq.org/issue14/index_issue14.php)

Kristina Jensen's poem 'd'Urville cliffs' was the April 'Poem of the Month' on display in the Hardy Street window of the Nelson Provincial Museum.

Sandra Simpson has won one of the inaugural Touchstone Awards from The Haiku Foundation - seven awards were made to haiku deemed by a panel of judges to be "the best of 2010". Haiku, which were nominated, must have been published in the 2010 calendar year. To read more about the awards, and the judges' comments, go to: <http://www.thehaikufoundation.org/awards/touchstone-archive/> Sandra's haiku, which appeared in *The Heron's Nest*, is:

slicing papaya -
the swing
of her black pearls

Madeleine Slavick had a poem on love and horses selected as a Tuesday Poem, on 22 February. And she has work in the forthcoming *Broadsheet 7*.

Publications

New arrivals on the NZPS bookshelf since last time:

Western Line, Airini Beautrais (VUP, 2010) Her second collection.

The leaf-ride, Dinah Hawken (VUP, 2011) Brilliant, as always.

Kokako 14, ed Patricia Prime and Joanna Preston; includes the results of the Third Kokako Tanka Competition, judged by Richard von Sturmer.

In Vitro, Laura Solomon (HeadworX, 2011)

Competitions & Submission Opportunities

a fine line - call for submissions. Deadline: 7 June Thanks to Creative New Zealand we are able to pay a reasonable fee for Feature Articles, and a small amount for reviews. See guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines>

Biscuit Poetry Challenge (UK) Closing Date: 9 May For poems up to 40 lines. Send a minimum of five poems. No entry form. Send cover page with each block of five poems; include name, postal address, phone number, and email address. Do not include poet's name with the poems. All money raised goes to Hexham branch of Chernobyl Children's Lifeline (CCLL) to support a 4-week visit of 12 Chernobyll children to Northumberland. Top 20 winning poems will be published in the 2011 Biscuit Winners' anthology. Entry Fee: £10 per five poems. Email entries via website: www.biscuitpublishing.com

Northampton Literature Group's 13th Annual Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 14 May Prize fund £1200. Categories: Free Verse, Rhyming Poetry and Humorous Poetry. Free Verse and Rhyming Poetry: 1st £250, 2nd £150, 3rd £50, plus highly commended £10 each. Humorous Poetry: 1st £150, 2nd £100, 3rd £50. Entry Fee: £3 per poem or 4 for £10. Entry forms, rules, enter online at www.northamptonliteraturegroup.org.uk

Strictly Shakespeare Poetry Website Monthly competition (UK) Closing Date: 14 May Poems up to 40 lines. Max. submission of 5 poems per person per month. On the 1st of the month a poetry prompt is left on the Strictlyshakespeare website news page. The competition deadline is midnight on the 14th of the month. Strictlyshakespeare will then choose the ten top entries and open their email accounts for voting. Each day one entry in each section will be knocked out by public opinion. Prize fund depends on number of entries. See website for full details. Entry Fee: £1.00. Contact: www.strictlyshakespeare.com

Call for poetry submissions in support of the people of Japan. Deadline: 15 May A poetry anthology is being planned, with all proceeds to be donated to the Salvation Army or the Red Cross in Japan to help radiation, earthquake, and tsunami victims. The publishers describe the purpose of the anthology as "to display to Japan our feelings of love and concern for the hell they have and are currently enduring", and would also like to send a copy to libraries in Japanese cities and towns that were hit the hardest. The publishers invite submissions of any kind of poetry, as well as haibun, (stating your name, city and country) to svtojapan@gmail.com. A photo or artwork is also required for the cover. Please send your original work to the same address. To donate to the printing costs of the anthology, a gift to the people of Japan, go to <http://theartofhaiku.com>

David Burland Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 15 May Open theme - writing in English or French. Prizes: £500, £100, £30, for each language. Entry Fee: £8 - 1st poem, £4 - each extra poem (US Dollars and Euro accepted) Website: www.davidburlandpoetryprize.com

11th Poetry on the Lake International Competition (UK) Deadline: 15 May Entry fee: \$10. Suggested theme is 'Stone'. Prizes: €400, 2 x €200, 3 x €100. Categories: Open (max 60 lines) - Formal (max.40) - Short (max 10). <http://www.poetryonthelake.org/>

The Times Stephen Spender Prize for Poetry Translation (UK) Closing Date: 27 May Translate a poem from any language, classical or modern, into English. Entries must include a commentary on the translation by the entrant. Open, 18-and-under, and 14-and-under categories. Prizes: 1st – £750, 2nd – £500, 3rd – £200. Under-18 prizes: 1st – £250, 2nd – £150, 3rd – £100. . One prize (£100) awarded in the 14-and-under category. Entry Fee: £3.00 (Entrants eighteen or under on 27th May 2011 are exempt from entry

fee). Full details available at: www.stephenspender.org

Blackmail Press Issue #30 - Submissions open. Deadline: 30 May Liz and Laura from Poetic Justice Wanaka are guest editing. The Bipolarisation Issue: What's your take on it - geographical, psychological, literary, literal, sexual, societal, satirical? This is a multi-media issue, which means they accept poems as MP3 files, videos or your own YouTube clips. Or as Word attachments or in the body of an email. All submissions are to be entitled "Submission for Bipolarisation Issue 30" and emailed to issue30@blackmailpress.com or send work through the Blackmail Press submissions' page - www.blackmailpress.com/SUBS.html. Please submit a maximum of 5 works for consideration. All submissions must include a biography and contact email in order to be considered.

NZPS International Poetry Competition. Entries must be received by 31 May. Entry forms were printed in the March issue of *a fine line*, and included as a separate attachment for email subscribers (distributed on 2 March). They can also be downloaded from the website, and PayPal payable there as well. Unfortunately, our website still doesn't support online entries, but we are working on that.

'Fifty Funny Poems' for Children (UK) Closing Date: 31 May Prizes: 1st - £50 + publication, 2nd - £50 + publication, 3rd - £25 + publication, 47 runners up – publication. Entry Fee: £3.00.

<http://christinemichael.org/fiftyfunnypoemscomp>

Lupus UK International Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 May For previously unpublished poems in English, in any style, on any subject, up to 40 lines. In aid of Lupus UK. Prizes: 1st - £150; 2nd - £75; 3rd - £40 plus two Highly Commended Awards of £10 each. All winning & commended poems will be published on Excel for Charity website: www.easterlightepm.com/excelforcharity
Entry fees: £4.00 for 1 poem, £7.50 for 2, £10.50 for 3, £12.50 for 4 and £14.00 for 5. (5-poem entrants receive a free Sentinel Champions eBook courtesy of Sentinel Poetry Movement.)

Enter online or download Entry Form and Rules for postal entries at:

<http://easterlightepm.com/excelforcharity/lupus-uk-poetry-competition/>

Palabra, A Magazine of Chicano & Latino Literary Art (USA) Submission deadline: 31 May. Submit only original, unpublished work (including work published online or in any other electronic form). English, Spanish, Spanglish or any combination thereof is welcome. Include a brief cover letter. Manuscript format: * word-processed or typed submissions only; use a 12-point standard typeface (e.g., Courier, Times, or similar font) * number all pages * name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address in the top left corner of the first page * title and author name at top left of each succeeding page * No e-mail or online submissions. Poetry: No maximum length. Up to five poems per submission, single-spaced. Work accepted for publication in *Palabra* will be paid for. Authors whose work is published in the magazine will also receive 2 copies of the issue in which their work appears. Response time is 3-4 months. Mail submissions to: PALABRA, P. O. Box 86146, Los Angeles, CA 90086-0146, USA.

Proverse Prize (Hong Kong) Closing Date: 31 May For an unpublished book-length work. Poetry collections should be between 8,000 and 30,000 words. Entry Fee: £30. 1st prize: publication of the entered work and HK\$10,000, (HKD7.80 = US\$1.00). Additional publication prizes may be awarded. Full details are on the Proverse website: <http://www.proversepublishing.com>

War Poetry Contest (USA) Postmark Deadline: 31 May Send 1-3 original, unpublished poems on the theme of war for the tenth annual contest, up to 500 lines in total. Top prize: \$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

Erbacce Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 1 June Winner: a collection of up to 160 pages published, publishing contract, generous royalties, a dedicated sales page, and 10 free copies of the finished book delivered free. Submit: An initial submission of five pages of poetry sent as a single MS attachment. Poetry that is innovative and radical in form and/or content. No entry or reading fee www.erbacce.com

Poetry London Competition (UK) Closing Date: 1 June Poems up to 80 lines. First prize £1000; second prize £500; third prize £200. Entry Fee: £3 (subscribers); £5 (non-subscribers) Entry forms at website: www.poetrylondon.co.uk

Rem Magazine - Call for submissions Deadline: 1 June *Rem Magazine* is an Auckland-based experimental journal with an international outlook. What is experimental? Anything that subverts normative and contemporary aesthetic and literary formats. Currently accepting experimental (avant-garde, vispo, asemic and hybrid) forms of poetry and fiction for the July Issue. Submissions are made through the online sub manager at: <http://remmagazine.submishmash.com/Submit>
Website: www.remmagazine.net

Bridport Prize (UK) Closes: 30 June This is the richest open writing competition in the English language - with £5,000 first prize for a short story (of up to 5,000 words); and £5,000 first prize for a poem (of up to 42 lines). The new category of Flash Fiction attracts £1,000 to be won for the best short, short story of under 250 words. Anyone can enter - so long as the work is previously unpublished. It costs £7 per story, £6 per poem or £5 per flash fiction. Enter online at: www.bridportprize.org.uk or download an entry form: www.bridportprize.org.uk/entryform.pdf.

Keats-Shelley Prize (UK) Closing Date: 30 June Two competitions: an essay and a poem. £3000 in prizes. The poem (which may be a narrative) must be original, unpublished and not a parody. It should focus on the theme 'Glass'. Any length up to 50 lines. Entry Fee: £5.00. www.keats-shelley.com

The Lightship International Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 30 June Prize: £1000 (approx \$1600) For previously unpublished poems up to 200 words. No restriction on the number of entries. Entry fee: £8 per poem. For full details: <http://www.lightshipublishing.co.uk/>

Margaret Reid Poetry Contest for Traditional Verse (USA) Postmark Deadline: 30 June Poetry in traditional verse forms such as sonnets and free verse (basically, anything but prose poetry). Both published and unpublished poems are welcome. Prizes of \$3,000, \$1,000, \$400 and \$250 awarded, plus six Most Highly Commended Awards of \$150 each. Entry fee is \$7 for every 25 lines you submit, regardless of number of poems. Submit online or by mail. Early submission encouraged. See the complete guidelines and past winners at: http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/margaret/ma_guidelines.php

5th Annual Ted Walters International Short Story, Poetry and Playwriting Competition (UK) Closing Date: 30 June Prizes - in each category: 1st, £200 / 2nd, £50 / 3rd, £15 Book Token. Poems on any subject or theme and in any style or form not exceeding 40 lines. Two copies of each entry must be submitted, together with an entry form or covering letter. Entries must be typewritten on plain white A4 paper, with a standard black typeface, using one side of the paper only. Entries to be submitted by post only. Identifying names must not appear on entries, but only on the entry form or covering letter. Entry fee: poems: £4 for first entry, £3.50 for each additional entry. Entry fees payable online using PayPal. Website: <http://liverpoolwriters.com>

Anthology of Sonnets - Call for Submissions (Canada) Deadline: 1 July Submissions are being sought for *The Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: Anthology of sonnets of the early third millennium / Le Phénix renaissant de ses cendres: Anthologie de sonnets au début du troisième millénaire*, an anthology from Aux Éditions Describe Adonis Press, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. The publishers are looking for 5-10 sonnets from interested poets, in English, French, and any other language (provided that poets provide a linear prose translation of sonnets in languages other than English and French. Guidelines are available on the website at <http://vallance22.hpage.com>

Writing is turning one's worst moments into money.

J. P. Donleavy

Featured Poet: Gill Ward

Seven questions

She didn't make the seven.

This is important
those first seven months
-do you remember?
Did we touch
notch our little fingers?
Entwine them maybe?

Were we too hasty
did we need a little extra time
pushing into the world
unready, gasping but still together?

Did you miss me those first months
apart?
Did you wonder or did I
if that warm comfort
had had enough and gone off
to seek a wiser, stronger companion?

Did you know I was there
snuffling softly
every breath an effort
missing you too?

No matter
we made up for it
seven months,
seven days,
seven years
always.

Your seven virtues stood you
in good stead
whereas mine waxed and waned
but now
what good did it do you
your steadfast burning light
fading too early.

Would seven decades be too much
to ask?

Departure

This house
has regained its shape
since they left
it is no more
hiding in corners
sighing desperate sighs
but has lifted its eyelids
and the light is gathering
hopeful and new
again

This house has
a certain placid gladness
wrapping it today.
It is stretching its rooms
and passages
with a languid grace
enfolding us with welcome
and reconciliation

This house has shaken out
the remains of intruders
saying that's ok
and
never mind
and
we are together again
and
all is well.

This house
has forgiven us.

For Paul

for Paul who I write with, or I would if he didn't keep thinking up excuses.

In the land where
the wood is wet
and the fires won't light
and bottles empty themselves
and misery is the sole companion
what better to do but
write a poem
put the pain on paper
that, at least, is
dry and will burn.

So stoke up the fire of words
remove them from the belly
of despair
get them out
polish them sternly
fire them up
bestir
the forgotten flames
of youth.
If it's not too late
for a drink
then not too late for a poem.

Sharpen the pen
summon up the blood
crack a line or two
even if
for old times' sake.

Considerations on Loneliness

You should always
keep a guestroom
in your house
for loneliness

that way when loneliness
visits
she will have somewhere to go
never let loneliness share your bed

and put a ladder at her
window
so that when she leaves
she can do so quietly

without fuss or
disturbance
no wrecking of dreams
or causing uneasiness

no prodding insidiously
at your heart
hunting
for places that
used to be filled.

In fact I would say
prepare
fill an overnight bag
ready with her things

that way
she won't need to
ask you
for anything before
she departs.

Bereavement Weather

(for Jacq)

Yes,
on the drive in
there was the
comfort of hills,
a watery sun and
a momentary rainbow.
But it was cold.

I could not do
you the courtesy
of feeling the way
you would wish.

But
I had chosen not
to believe that
time and tide
wait for no-one.
I had chosen
to dismiss the signs,
the signposts on
the way to your leaving.
Not to ignore completely
the way they pointed,
only the miles left to go.

In spite of the clutching arms
the quiet words
the closeness of grief
it was desolate
a bleak time

But
this morning
when I walked out
the first day you had gone
I knew you were still
gently with me.
I looked upwards
and you were
a soft rain falling.

Noticeboard

You can support the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal by buying a copy of *Flap: the Chook Book 2*, by four talented Christchurch poets (including our own **Catherine Fitchett**), from <http://poetrychook.blogspot.com/2011/03/flap-earthquake-fundraiser.html>

Surfing the Net

American poet David Kirby has some sensible things to say about how to read poetry, in a NY Times book review: "Recently, I spoke with a group of high school teachers who wanted to discuss my famous poem – rather, to tell me what it meant. 'It's about your own poems!' said one teacher, and another shouted, 'I think it's about your children!' They seemed a little crestfallen when I said, no, the poem is about the promises we break, as the title ['Breaking Promises'] and, as far as that goes, the poem itself says.

"The teachers thought that my poem said one thing but meant another, and that it's the reader's job to figure out what the poet is really saying. No wonder poetry doesn't have a bigger audience. All that code cracking. Who has the time?" <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/10/books/review/book-review-beautiful-and-pointless-a-guide-to-modern-poetry-by-david-orr.html?pagewanted=2>

For an interview with David Orr, the author of the reviewed book mentioned above [*Beautiful and Pointless*], see: http://www.salon.com/books/laura_miller/2011/04/05/david_orr

The Poetry Foundation (USA) has awarded translator and poet David Ferry the largest prize in the business, the \$100,000 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for lifetime achievement. We can all dream. <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/david-ferry-wins-the-worlds-biggest-poetry-prize/?partner=rss&emc=rss>

But wait! There's more! New from Canada: The Montreal International Poetry Prize will award \$50,000 for a single poem, to be shortlisted by international judges, and finally selected by Sir Andrew Motion. Closes 8th July – get writing! <http://montrealprize.com/>

The MTA (Metropolitan Transport Authority) in New York is in talks with the Poetry Society of America to bring poetry to the subway. 'Poetry in Motion' is a project that's been popular wherever it's been introduced, including Wellington, and is a sure sign of a thriving interest in the genre.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-lundberg/poetry-intrudes-delightful_b_849767.html

On the other hand, we are not the only victims of ever-reducing arts funding. The Poetry Book Society (UK) has had its funding withdrawn by the Arts Council England, which is, however, planning to fund commercial publisher Faber. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/apr/04/withdrawal-poetry-book-society-funding>

And here's something to make you smile: "Publishers Weekly has published an essay by Craig Morgan Teicher on a significant obstacle in the move toward e-publishing. Well, maybe it's not significant. It's poetry." It seems line breaks are the problem, along with the awareness that much poetry is written to be heard. There are some apps that will share poetry via pdf (so what's new?), but the gist of the message is that until such time as the e-book software developers get the hang of audio files, poetry is still destined for real books.

http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/grief_brought_to_numbers_poetry_defies_the_trend_t.php

The beautiful part of writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon. You can always do it better, find the exact word, the apt phrase, the leaping simile.

Robert Cormier

Reviews

Crumple Vivienne Plumb (Seraph Press, 2010) ISBN 978-0-473-17717-1

Gill Ward

Regarding the title of this volume of poetry – *crumpling* is not something Vivienne Plumb does. She is an exuberant writer and performer whose poetry hides a huge element of truth in its wry and quirky style. It is as if she sees poetry in everything: lists, everyday life, chance encounters and observations. This is, of course, what a poet does, and Plumb does it bravely, “and *crumple* is a word I refuse/ to acknowledge”, she declares in her title poem.

She has written plays, six volumes of poetry, short fiction and a novel. Her writing is straightforward and plain; it makes you laugh then suddenly catch your breath as the realism hits and you need to read the poem again. Her poems have the feel of a French movie – somehow sweet and tart, small slices of life.

Plumb visited Poland, at some point managing to have her leg in plaster, and yet managing to take us along. I know some reading this volume might ask – is this poetry? It depends on your viewpoint, I suppose, on what you want or expect. With Plumb expect the unexpected. Her poetry is often prose in its most poetic form and it is conversations, stories, sights and smells of different places and cultures. She introduces us to small rooms and passageways in Poland, where we witness small domestic scenes and meet the small domestic inhabitants. It is affectionate and vivid. We experience these people by their words and their actions, by what they are saying and doing. She tells us about people she encounters; people she wants to be friendly towards:

It can cost you an arm and a leg
to get a tick from her
it's a treasure hunt, a gold star,
a little train light in the free flowing
darkness.

(‘Gold Star’)

She takes us from Poland to Sydney, China to Italy :

Under the *grande blu* September sky
each delicious Italian word burrows
itself into a distant corner of my mouth
like some memorable meal.

(‘The Geographica of Italia’)

There is an Italian tourist looking from the train window in a short poem (‘Eyeglass’) that rocks along with the rhythm of a train with a delightful surprise in the last line.

Plumb’s poem ‘Dog End’ has a feel of Eliot – “the deep grain of the night”. And we rush around New Zealand: Taupo, Rotorua, Wellington, Dunedin, ‘The Capital City’, endearing: “it smells so fresh ... so clean”.

‘Severe Weather Warning’, illustrates graphically that there can always be a poem in the spoken word, no matter how mundane or everyday it sounds at first hearing. That is, if you are an observant poet and Vivienne Plumb is undeniably that.

The book finishes with a loving and gentle poem on the death of a dear friend. You can’t help but be moved – and that is what poetry should be about.

Whether you think this is poetry or prose you have to concede it is particularly appealing and poetical prose, thoughtful and multi-layered with the lightest of touches.

Twenty Contemporary New Zealand Poets: An Anthology Eds Andrew Johnston and Robyn Marsack (Victoria University Press and Carcanet 2009) RRP \$40 ISBN 9780864735997

Keith Nunes

Another New Zealand poetry anthology? Do we need this? Yes we do! It's an inspired collection with a wide breadth of poetry flavours and techniques; a wonderfully entertaining and informative introduction; and illuminating words from the authors about their works and motivation.

The publication gives credence to the nation's poetical voice. Once a group of far-removed colonists squeezing out a laconic style of poetry, New Zealand's troupe of poets now sound forceful: dynamic and Pacific with a natural knowing that northern hemisphere writers can lack.

A certain predictability haunted New Zealand poetry early on with over-bearing 'Mother' England dominating its voice. But once the irreverent and confessional poets of America took hold, so we turned the corner into a bright new way. This book highlights that transformation and gives some of the best a chance to explain where they're going and what they're seeing on the way.

The anthology begins in 1986 and not only highlights the group of poets who started to make a name for themselves, such as Bernadette Hall and Jenny Bornholdt, but also charts new directions set by 'names' – Allen Curnow and Bill Manhire. Younger writers too get a say, with Tusiata Avia, Robert Sullivan and Glenn Colquhoun commenting in their own way on New Zealand's multicultural society.

No beating around the bush, let's just bring them out into the daylight – the 20 poets are: Tusiata Avia, Jenny Bornholdt, James Brown, Geoff Cochrane, Glenn Colquhoun, Allen Curnow, Fiona Farrell, Bernadette Hall, Dinah Hawken, Anne Kennedy, Bill Manhire, Cilla McQueen, Gregory O'Brien, Vincent O'Sullivan, Elizabeth Smither, C.K. Stead, Robert Sullivan, Brian Turner, Hone Tuwhare and Ian Wedde. And I won't forget the two editors who are just as interesting as the poets: Andrew Johnston and Robyn Marsack. Johnston is a Kiwi poet who lives in Paris with his wife and two sons. He won the 1994 New Zealand Book Award for poetry for his first book, *How to Talk*. He is an editor of the *International Herald Tribune* and edits *The Page*, a digest of the web's best writing on poetry. Marsack was born and grew up in Wellington and now lives in Glasgow with her family. She gained degrees from Victoria University in New Zealand and Oxford University, then worked as a publishers' editor until taking up the post of Director of the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh in 2000. She has translated several books from French and contributes to journals and the Scottish press.

I enjoyed the poets' explanations of their work but I particularly fell for Bernadette Hall's comments: "I like the 'yes but ...' of poetry. The way it digs deep and isn't too concerned about answers. The way it's to do with head and heart. The way it links everything up."

A partnership publication by leading British poetry publisher Carcanet and our own Victoria University Press, this is a fascinating look at the soul of New Zealand poetry.

Dance Dance Dance JAAM 28 ed. Clare Needham and Helen Rickerby (JAAM Collective, 2010) ISBN 1173-633X

Gillian Cameron

Dipping into *Dance Dance Dance* reminded me of a Melbourne art exhibition I went to some years back. A group of Pitjantjatjara people from central Australia – old, young, middle-aged – painted their bodies and danced and sang in celebration of the opening. What struck me was that everyone was involved – the two year toddler dancing with as much enthusiasm as the older members – and that what we think of as separate 'art forms' moved as one.

The idea behind *Dance Dance Dance* is, as editor Clare Needham explains, to get "writers thinking about dance and dancers thinking about writing" and "to gather them together and ask them to perform as an ensemble". *Dance Dance Dance* achieves this – not just for the contributors but for the reader as well. There is a wonderful mix of short stories, interviews, poetry, photos and artwork. While some of the pieces seemed (to this reader at any rate) to have only a slight connection to dance, most explore the connection of dance and writing in thought-provoking ways.

I particularly liked Needham's interview with dancer, choreographer, writer and reviewer Lyne Pringle. Pringle describes the similarities in dance and writing: "Both involve a search for the right language to express ideas; with dance this is a created language ... cutting and pasting phrases, rhythm, dynamic shifts, precision, musicality, use of imagery, the element of surprise and a desire to communicate with and emotionally engage an audience..." Interestingly (and challengingly) Pringle finds writing reviews a creative process, reviews as works of art in themselves. The reviewer is "a witness ... [and] their primary role is to advocate for their art form." Interviews with dancer and writer Michelle Powles and writer, director and production designer Sam Trubridge are similarly engaging.

Mikaela Nyman's 'The Obituary' of her grandmother Arja Kuusamo and her lost legacy of Icelandic Rumputa was entrancing with its depiction of Arja dancing the seasons, the land, the birds, even a harsh judgment of death in the boggy marshland around Lake Inarijarvi. "Her feet brought back the cranes in the spring and danced with hundreds of them of them among breaking ice floes.... From deep within, she'd find an ancient voice, pitched between moose and crane, that carried across the moorland, joyful and mournful at the same time." So entranced was I, I went online to find out more about this incredible woman, the Koit language and Rumputa – only to draw a complete blank and to find she was, well, really incredible! Full marks, Mikaela!

Short stories from writers that I had not previously encountered – Kate Baggott, Simon Minto, Nina Seja and Julie Hill - glide across the dance floor and leave me wanting more. Linzy Forbes' 'Netsuke' with its "dark forest"/"white forest" is subtle and intriguing. I was initially disconcerted by the opening paragraphs of Tim Nees' 'The Way She Moves' because of its obvious parody of Lorie Moore's 'Dance in America.' While Moore's story is poignant, finishing on an uplifting note, Nees' is brutal and finishes in a flatter but, arguably, more down to earth trajectory.

Poetry is well represented. Jo Thorpe's 'Hunt the slipper' weaves a breathless spell of seduction around legendary prima ballerina Marie Taglioni. In 'Dancing on lego' Anna Jackson skillfully skitters and slides between the "bits of lego and plastic cars/ still covering the floor" and the performance of writing, "I know not to look at the faces/ lined up to judge" thinking only of the "rhythm and the next step/ in the sequence". Extracts from Janis Freegard's 'The continuing Adventures of Alice Spider' have whetted my appetite for more about "Alice Webster". Nicole Taylor's 'Jerry's Dance' underlines dance as an integral part of the human experience:

Jerry crawls on his
knees,
... "If you can move your eyes,
your fingers,
you can dance".

And that's just the tip of the ballerina's pointe. There are many more poetry morsels from Barbara Strang, Jennifer Compton, David Eggleton, to name but a few.

Last but not least, Kesha Robert's photos provide a sizzling display of Latin American dance festivities. My copy of *Dance Dance Dance* is now looking very well thumbed! Congratulations to Needham and Rickerby on an excellent toe tapping extravaganza.

Songcatcher Robynanne Milford (Whitestream Press, 2009)

Vaughan Rapatahana

The poet, a South Island, Aotearoa-New Zealand physician, likes to play with words, languages, shapes. Always with an iota of irony; a wistful wisp.

Her collection - her first, as here published by Whitestream Press - is a plenitudinous patchwork of le difference à la Derrida, a mélange of sorties into variegated styles - from the two-legged shape 'White Hot', to a more austere landscape *ruri* (short topical poem) 'Lake Hauoko', skimming over a range of her own Southern alp-and-valley life experiences. Except at the end, a mausoleum of memory for New

Zealand war dead, including her own closekin.

Sometimes overwritten, as if she clutched a regurgitant thesaurus as she wrote, ['katabatic' keeps calling, as does 'susurrate']; sometimes using *nga kupu Maori* (Maori words) as if she has gone direct online to find a straight transliteration (as, for example, in *Korowai whakakaingoa for Tohinga* [sic] - which for me just doesn't work), rather than meld the two alien languages into a newly holistic code-switched via media -à la Powhiri Rika-Heke (1991) - Milford, when she hits her straps, IS a forceful and fine poet.

Let me return to the abovementioned 'Lake Hauroko'. I will quote it in full.

in deer blood dawn
stealth
six boots stalk the
roar
rain mutes groin thwack
root trap ankle
in serious mud suck
saves
crazed orange hats
fall
off bluff way down
back body bag
te mauri
te urupa o te tupuna

where water listens to wind
whenua tapu, te taonga o Ngai Tahu

Concise, scalped imagery with a tangible taste of *te reo tuatahi o tenei whenua* (the first language of this land), this poem rivets Lake Hauroko deer-hunting terrain into immediate focus, yet at the same time bolts the vista onto the anvil of long-range history once and for all. An efficiently effective poem, methinks.

Another very good poem is the frontispiece verse to the largest division in this collection 'come white in' (with its especially blanched references) - namely 'On this train of thoughts'. Some damned good imagery not straining the electric fence that is poetry at its very best. What about "She leans into elbows of the land" and "off the tracks willowrivers braid through her"? These give me a hit or two.

& then there is the excellent and contrapuntal 'Mourning chorus'. SFA *te reo Maori* here, but a *moteatea* (song-poem) nevertheless: repetitive, recurrent imagery structured as a *waiata tangi* (song of loss) *mo nga manu ngaro o tenei whenua o matou* (about the lost birds of our land.) What we have all done to extirpate, once and for all - *huia*, Stephen Is. Wren, *Piopio*, orange *kea* and their feathered cousins. Sad, moving, plangent.

There's an intelligence frolicking throughout this spume-ride of verse. *Serious mud* indeed.

Whakatuhi pumau koe tau moteatea Robin [Robynanne] - kaore he manu ngaro koe.

Always write your poetry Robynanne - you are no lost bird.

sometimes the sky isn't big enough: poems Owen Bullock (Steele Roberts, 2010) RRP \$20 ISBN 978-1-877448-86-7

Janice Giles

A first collection of Owen Bullock's longer poems, *sometimes the sky isn't big enough* follows his 2009 selection of haiku, *wild chamomile*, and is presented in two parts. These seem mainly to represent themes of lost and found, journey and return, with some overlap, and despite references to a Cornish childhood and travels away, his poems are clearly located in New Zealand by place names and other local references.

The first part contains reflections on endings, lovers lost or absent, and childhood memories. A feeling

of restlessness, and noting the child in the man are echoed in poems such as 'a true come dream'; 'photograph'; 'heart in the night' and 'daylight'. There is hope in these poems, however, and an awareness of transition and pending possibilities.

For example in 'ample alone':

the field empty but for sound waves,
one man, a child who hadn't found himself -
there's still time on the clock
the future has arrived

Or in 'the orchard' when the poet observes "the fruit almost ripe."

Some poems in the second part tend towards more abstracted excursions, distant from the simpler life depicted before. Other poems reflect an arrival into ontological acceptance focused through the lens of a life more carefully lived. The sense of stillness and review returns, as in 'sea-line':

I'm at home in the world
when the estuary's emptied out
and write about a memory
because I can do little else

Owen Bullock's works have been published widely, both nationally and internationally. Those who know and enjoy Owen's longer poems will be delighted with this collection.

Mini Competition

Well, as good Kiwis, there are many of you with special places you love to write about, and I'm glad I had more than one of the prizes to give away for this one. Congratulations to Eric Dodson, Lynn Frances, Janet Newman, Maureen Sudlow and André Surridge. A copy of Dinah Hawken's *Garden Poems* is on its way.

As usual at this time of the year, I am taking a break from the mini competitions, while I focus on the Big Competition, but here are the 'place poems' I particularly liked.

urutara stream
along the haiku pathway
susurrations

André Surridge

Dry Spring in Kaipara

When we awoke
low clouds
smudged
washed out sky
coloured in old eyes.
The horse
stood
a white shape
against the grass
waiting for the rain.

Maureen Sudlow

Summer Still

you ask for words...

let the wind speak
translucent waters
weave ripple-shadow

pohutukawa
signal the season

gold-ribboned clouds
trail streamers of glory

astonished the hills
stand sudden-silent

there are no words...

life's interruptions
bring new ways of seeing

how can I tell you
if you don't know

Lynn Frances

When I am distance

From the tufted paddock
the Tararuas are a purple pelmet.

The foothills gather
in heavy green folds.

The foot track is crowded
with matai armchairs and a sofa.

It smells of moist breadcrumbs
and brewed tea.

Behind a blind of dappled konini
the river gargles.

Through an opening
sunlight draws mirrors and windows.

The water spangles. I lie in it.
A cockabully flings into shade.

My footsteps colour the stone.

Janet Newman

Nostalgia

As you try to recollect the good times
on a trip to old haunts,
at the house where you spent your childhood
you look up to the room you were born in

on a trip to old haunts.
Strangers live there now.
You look up to the room you were born in
perhaps some were happy in that same room.

Strangers live there now
where mother laughed and played
perhaps some were happy in that same room
she came back to in old age.

Where mother laughed and played
in grandfather's immaculate garden
she came back to in old age
admiring his red and blackcurrant bushes.

In grandfather's immaculate garden
you remember aunties and uncles sitting in deck chairs
admiring his red and blackcurrant bushes.
Standing there thinking I'm the only one left,

you remember aunties and uncles sitting in deck chairs
at the house where you spent your childhood.
Standing there thinking I'm the only one left
As you try to recollect the good times.

Eric Dodson

MEMBERS' POEMS

Semaphore

Two scouts
finding fun in a far-flung alphabet
by gestures' clockface exercise
swore silently across a valley.

Would have peevd an earnest Baden Powell.
Furthermore, like Morse it should be serious.
B-A-R-S-T
Oh, flag it.

Hugh Major

Earthquake

Christchurch 22/2/11

Concrete, furniture, computers,
rocket against walls, floor, ceiling.

I shrink my shoulders, kneel
and slink under my desk like a fox,
crouch, don't move. The silence gallops
like a shadowy mare.

I trawl in the concrete dust,
push it into and out of my lungs,
listen to their efforts, like the hands
of a clock, winding down, struggling
for its last beat;

then, like the fox, sneak from my lair,
lick moisture to my lips,

stand, stare at death's confident
punctuation;
lifeless workmates beneath the grammar,
of the concrete moment.

I look down from the window and see a dog
straining his head through the detritus;
See firemen pointing water hoses.

My feet won't move.
Someone from the street looks up, waves.
Hope shivers through me.

Caroline Glen

Poetry Workshop, Bath (UK)

Last night I went to Mr B's again,
trod the creaking treads to the upper room,
where in a circle eleven women
sat waiting for me, and for Mr B.
How good it was to be back among friends:
shelves of new books lining old walls, smoke of
incense setting the scene, an eastern journey
to the realm of renga with Mr B.
Ah, how I wish every day could be spent
leaping through seasons, summer balm beaches
to autumn's crescent moon, the heavy wraps
of winter to a spring of bluebell blooms.
At Mr B's I would be ever content
writing poetry. Of this I have dreamt.

Margaret Beverland

After the Holidays

Cold, impersonal, blind square worms of journey
lift us up and down, but never out
to where we want to go.

Views framed by steel, and glass, replace wide spaces,
of verdant naturous willowy waftings,
and indigo, well - deep watery dives.

Wistful thoughts and smell of warm grass,
impose themselves, nudge and niggle themselves
into the minds eye.

Remembering the dog day, swim sore, sun-beat
afternoons of laze and languidness,
it's cold comfort that the bank balance
is in the black again.

Susan Howard

JULY DEADLINE IS 7TH JUNE