

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

MAY 2012

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

ISBN 1178-3931



NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
PO BOX 5283
LAMBTON QUAY
WELLINGTON 6145

PATRONS
Dame Fiona Kidman
Vincent O'Sullivan

PRESIDENT / NATIONAL COORDINATOR
Laurice Gilbert

EMAIL: info@poetrysociety.org.nz
www.poetrysociety.org.nz

WELLINGTON MEETINGS

Monday 21 May, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Siobhan Harvey
(Auckland)

Monday 18 June, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Harry Ricketts
(Wellington)

Meetings begin with an open mic.
Entry \$5 (\$3 for members).

For members only:

Before each meeting there will be an informal workshop session in the main bar. Bring a poem to share and a problem to be solved, and work on it together. Workshop begins at 6.30.

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Contexts of Editing

Owen Bullock

An editor, even when a poet, is in a rather different position to a contributor. He or she may read hundreds of poems in a week, including a dozen on the same topic; the poet might only see their own work. Topics do seem to go in phases, so much so that one begins to be more than curious about the idea of the collective unconscious: suddenly everyone is writing about the colour blue, or barges, or holidays in Ireland. It's not for anyone to say that a poet shouldn't write about these things - a poet can and should write about anything and everything, but the need to balance subject matter comes into play when one is assembling a magazine.

Most poets don't do enough reading. I'm a poet, too, so I know how involved we can become with our own work. But it's also good to try to keep an eye on the topic and future of poetry as an art form. In other words, I'm suggesting that our poems aren't as important as poetry itself. Which leads me to a first point about what hinders a poem from being as good as it can be. One factor is the over-emphasis of our own perspective. This covers not only our tendency to write about ourselves and our own lives, but also our way of looking at the world. The discipline of writing haiku is one which encourages the human animal to acknowledge that things (in nature) are what they are, and that endlessly anthropomorphising doesn't help clarify an observation. Which isn't to say that we can't use elements of our unique purview, or of personification, but that each of these techniques of poetry, along with things like simile and assonance, need to be used in moderation.

The writing of poetry is a kind of search for truth. By this, I don't mean some ideological overview that can be used to bully others, but a process of honing the contents of a poem so that it says what we really want it to say; I'm sure we've all had the experience of originating an idea which we love but can't get on to the paper. A student of mine once described the need for a programme which would download an idea from the human mind directly onto paper. It's a great thought, but the technology isn't there yet and may never be; and the process of shaping and editing a poem is usually a long one.

Another tendency I notice frequently is our inclination to express something that has already been said in a previous line of a poem. The implicit idea is the more subtle one and, I think, needs to be the one we value most, otherwise we insult the intelligence of the reader. Often a poem 'hammers it home', or as some poets say, 'I just wanted to make sure the reader got the point'. We need to trust the reader more than that.

Some poems suffer from what I call 'last line blues' where the last line is simply a reiteration of the penultimate one, which is often much more powerful. Its power isn't visible, of course, until that last line is stripped away. Sometimes the poet is emotionally attached to that last line, but in the process of editing, which is where the more rational element of writing comes in, there is little room for sentimentality. The idea that one's own voice will be obscured or cut off by editing is juvenile. One can over-edit, yes, but fewer poems suffer from over-attention than the opposite. If in doubt about a line, why not remove it even temporarily and consider the poem without it. Be aware that the very lines we are most attached to can harbour a weakness, a meaning or reference that is ours alone, but to which a reader cannot relate.

At the other end from the finale of a poem, I notice a tendency for the first few lines to be weak, particularly if a poet hasn't written for a while. In this situation, we're actually just getting into gear. Naturally, this leads one to ponder a more general point, that we need to write regularly. Dorothea Brande, one of the first writers to teach creative writing with any great commitment, made the comment that most so-called problems with writing are 'anterior' to the need to spend plenty of hours writing.

Our writing is affected by what we read. We need to read a lot. The myth that this also might affect our 'voice' is misleading in the extreme. It can happen that after reading a very large number of works by a single writer their style begins to inhabit ours, but this phenomenon soon dissipates when we move on to other poets. And there's something quite natural about learning from the masters. Students of music composition find themselves imitating the style of the classics to see what can be learnt from them. Potters and woodworkers spend time visiting other workshops to see what's out there, and what's possible. Film-makers watch dancers and dancers look at tailors and blacksmiths: one art form stimulates another. There are a few poets who seem to assimilate trends without much reading of their contemporaries, but, in my experience, they are rare creatures and usually some kind of genius. However, persistence is more important, for the finished article, than genius. Remember, too, to read your work aloud; that brings up many inconsistencies. But because you can be persuaded by your own voice, get someone else to read your work before sending it off to an editor.

Good composition is like a suspension bridge; each line adds strength and takes none away. ... Making lines run into each other is not composition. There must be motive for the connection. Get the art of controlling the observer – that is composition.

Robert Henri, 1865 - 1929

First Asia Pacific Poetry Festival, February 2012, Vietnam

Sue Wootton

The first Asia Pacific Poetry festival took place in Vietnam in February 2012. Organised by the Vietnamese Writers' Association, and attended by 85 poets from 24 countries, its theme was "Peace and Co-operation in the Asia Pacific Basin". For most New Zealanders peace and cooperation are worthy, if abstract, concepts. To the Vietnamese, these words mean something far more concrete. Vietnamese society has been deeply affected by war: by violence, migration, cancer, inter-generational genetic damage, economic hardship and difficult new starts. Against these harsh realities, poetry might seem a flimsy force for growth and healing. Yet, especially when a culture's very 'voice' is threatened, poetry is particularly powerful. In Vietnam, poetry is also infused with Confucian and Buddhist influences, which teach that the ancestors are present and must be honoured. Thus, throughout the festival ancient and contemporary poets shared the stage, perhaps most movingly in an opening ceremony held at Bai Tho, or Poem Mountain, in Ha Long Bay.

Ha Long Bay has UNESCO World Heritage status for its natural beauty. It is sprinkled with nearly two thousand time-sculpted limestone islands – spat out as jewels, legend says, by a diving dragon. In 1468, King Le Thanh Hong composed a poem here, which was carved into rock overlooking the bay. We were welcomed to the Buddhist shrine at the foot of Poem Mountain through an aisle of smiling teenagers in jewel-bright costume. The girls held red helium balloons; the boys posed like sentinels, their yellow silk banners undulating in the slight breeze. Low cloud shrouded the peaks, but oratory, song, dance, drumming and music filled the natural amphitheater with rhythm and colour. Each poet was handed a stick of burning incense to offer at the shrine. We were from far-flung and diverse corners of the globe, and we represented

many religious and cultural traditions. Nevertheless, elbow-to-elbow at the shrine, the fragrant smoke drifting and dispersing, there was a powerful sense of literary lineage and of our shared affinity as poets.

From the shrine we moved the few metres to the shore. Someone handed me the string of a red balloon. Hanging from a bamboo rod attached to the balloon was a poem first written centuries ago. It was inscribed in black brushstrokes on a square of yellow silk. A flotilla of these poems hovered, tethered to the earth by the arms of living poets. We released them en masse, and they slowly vanished into the clouds. It was time to attend to the poetry of 2012.

During the festival every poem was read in its language of composition by the poet, before being read in Vietnamese translation. Without access to a poem's literal meaning, the ear is fully opened to its sounds. A poem – as we know – is crafted language, composed with an ear to audible patterns such as rhythm, metre, repetition, consonance and assonance. Hearing poetry in other languages is all about taking it in through the senses other than the intellect – poetry as embodied experience. This, of course, taps the ancient roots of poetic practice.

We visited the 11th century Thay Pagoda, near Hanoi. Its first Master Monk was a poet, and poetry has been honoured here ever since. The incumbent Master Monk and poet, Thich Truong Xuan, described poetry as an everyday activity for people in the region, who compose or recite when working on routine physical tasks like planting rice. Generally speaking, in Vietnam the intertwining of earthly considerations with spiritual nourishment is seen as essential for a whole and healthy life, and is actively valued, not just by Zen Buddhist monks or peasant villagers, but also at the highest official levels. In Hanoi, for example, we had a ninety minute audience with the Vietnamese President, Truon Tan Sang, who spoke about the importance of literature in the nourishment of Soul and Spirit. 'Soul' and 'Spirit' are matter-of-factly accepted as parts of a human being, as real and essential as Leg or Liver.

On Vietnamese Poetry Day we read at the tenth century Temple of Literature in Hanoi. Normally a contemplative haven, on Poetry Day its walled courtyards were thronged with people – an audience of several thousand squeezed through the gates to hear readings from Vietnamese and international poets. Revered poets present included now-elderly veterans of the Independence Wars. I was asked to read the English translation of 'Homeland' by Giang Nam, which grieves the killing of the writer's guerilla fighter sweetheart half a century ago. It ends:

In the past I loved my homeland because of butterflies and birds...

Nowadays I love my homeland since in each handful of the earth

Lies the bone and flesh of my darling

That the Vietnamese Writers Association was able to welcome international poets to the Asian Pacific Poetry Festival, and that we were given platforms from which to speak, must be seen as an important milestone for writers in that country. As poets we know how volatile and subversive poetry can be underneath – sub-verse – its birds and butterflies. Poems like Giam Nam's 'Homeland' cross new, sometimes dangerous, territory. They can detonate long-hidden landmines, disclose blood in the soil, leave blood on delving hands.

My involvement in the Vietnamese festival has resulted in a global network of poetry contacts. More importantly, it reminded me that poetry really matters – and that here, too, we have a land to speak for. The second Asia Pacific Poetry Festival will be held in Cambodia in 2014. I can highly recommend the experience and am happy to speak to anyone who'd like to attend.

For images from the festival visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/APPF2012>

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

We've come to the end of another financial year, and I want to say a big thank you to all of you for seeing us through another one. I know it's trite to say an organisation is sustained by its members, but it's nevertheless true. Without you-all there'd be little point in my sitting at my computer day after day doing what I do. Knowing you're out there enjoying the magazine, emailing me poems, entering (and being successful in!) the competitions I find for you, attending our readings (when you can), makes me happy. I'd like to send you all flowers and cards to thank you for supporting the NZPS, but I've got a magazine to get out, so I hope you will take this message personally. If you're on our membership list, then I really do mean it for you.

I really enjoyed the six sessions I attended of the Writers and Readers Week of the International Arts Festival, and encourage those of you who can to attend the upcoming Festival in Auckland. Surrounding yourself with other literary fans is rewarding and stimulating, and a valuable addition to the downtime we all need as artists. I had the pleasure of hearing: three Christchurch writers talk about the effects of the earthquakes on their work; readings from a group of poets of their often-anthologised poems alongside favourites that no-one seems to want; Robert Shearman, who wrote

the episode of 'Dr Who' in which the Daleks came back, with the episode playing on the big screen as he talked; a poetry Masterclass with Bill Manhire and three poets selected from the 250 (including me) who submitted for the chance to be included; Sandra Coney, Germaine Greer and Marilyn Waring talking about the 70s feminist movement, and where we've got to since then; and Michael Corballis, Professor Emeritus of psychology at The University of Auckland, on interesting facets of the human brain, as discussed with Kim Hill. (My degree was in Psychology, hence the interest.)

Various projects have been absorbing my time as well, though I swore I wouldn't take on any new projects this year, while I work on my collection. In association with Printable Reality we have been expanding the First Page Project – a series of poems based on the first page of a book – and will be having a reading in Wellington on the 8th of May, at Meow Cafe in Edward St. (The first reading of the series was in Auckland in early March.) The plan is eventually to have enough to create an anthology of First Page Poems. More on this in due course.

About our Contributors

Owen Bullock has published poetry, fiction, non-fiction and haiku and its related forms, as well as editing a number of magazines.

Mary Meyerhoff Cresswell is a Kapiti poet and one of the co-authors of *Millionaire's Shortbread* (OUP, 2003). Her work appears in a variety of print and online journals.

Janis Freegard's first full-length collection is *Kingdom Animalia: the Escapades of Linnaeus* (Auckland University Press, 2011). She lives in Wellington with an historian, a cat and various spiders. <http://janisfreegard.com>

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

Vaughan Rapatahana is a poet, educationalist, and language activist who lives in Hong Kong but considers the small town of Te Araroa near the East Cape of Te Ika a Maui to be his home.

Sue Wootton is an award-winning poet and fiction writer whose work includes three collections of poetry (*Hourglass*, *Magnetic South* and *By Birdlight*) and the children's book *Cloudcatcher*.

A Warm Welcome to...

Anisha Achankunju Auckland

Annette Esquenet Porirua

Barbara Smith Morrinsville

Bill White Christchurch

Cynthia Rowe Australia

Jeremy Roberts Auckland

Julie Prince Auckland

Katie Boardman Ngongataha

Kev O'Donnell Wellington

Kirsten Le Harivel Kapiti

Rob King Wellington

Wes Lee Wellington

Congratulations

Ruth Arnison, the coordinator of Poems in the Waiting Room (NZ) has announced the results of the inaugural PitWR competition (judged by Kay McKenzie Cook) at <http://waitingroompoems.wordpress.com/> **Catherine Fitchett** took the third place prize. PitWR is also spreading – Ruth worked with Lis Bastion, the CEO of Varuna (Australia's national residential writers' house) to introduce the project to Australia, and it is now live there as well.

Ernie Berry was one of the Prizewinners in the Asahi Haikuist Special/Setouchi Matsuyama Photo Haiku Contest. See: http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/culture/AJ201201300012 He also received two Highly Commended certificates in the FreeXpresSion 2012 Literary Competition, Haiku Section. Another of Ernie's haiku was mentioned by the judge of the British Haiku Awards as a "very near contender for a prize".

Janis Freegard is about to have a chapbook of the adventures of her character Alice Spider published by Anomalous Press. Read all about it on Janis's blog: <http://janisfreegard.com/2012/03/18/alice-goes-to-america/>

National Coordinator **Laurice Gilbert** is Featured Poet International at Muse-Pie Press: <http://www.musepiepress.com/index.html>

Siobhan Harvey is one of 25 featured NZ poets on the Poetry Archive (UK) website, as part of a project to showcase more New Zealand poets. Our Patron, **Vincent O'Sullivan** is already there. You can see Siobhan's entry at: <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=15762> and Vincent's at: <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=11992> For the full story of the 25 NZ Poets project, see: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/news>

Kristina Jensen has had her poem 'Teach Me How To Be' accepted by Forward Poetry for an anthology, to be called *Turning of The Tides*.

Maris O'Rourke will appear as the Featured Poet in the upcoming issue of *Poetry NZ* (#44), guest-edited by **Owen Bullock**.

Sandra Simpson has taken up the position of South Pacific area editor for the annual Red Moon anthologies, after a 10-year stint by **Ernie Berry**.

Rowan Taigel was featured in the University of Auckland news after being the March 2012 Featured Poet in a *fine line*. See: http://www.cce.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/news/template/news_item.jsp?cid=470795

In haikai news, **Owen Bullock**, **Andre Surridge**, **Catherine Mair** and **Patricia Prime's** shisan renga 'Remembered Kiss' won joint second place in the *Journal of Renga and Renku's* Contest and is published in their latest issue. Patricia has had a haibun accepted for the Red Moon Press's contemporary haibun anthology Vol. 13, and Patricia's essay on a poet's life in tanka entitled 'Poet and Tanka' is to be published in the August issue of *Ribbons*.

Noticeboard

ADVANCE NOTICE OF AGM

The NZPS Annual General Meeting will be held at The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington, at 7.30pm on Monday 16th July. A full agenda and minutes of the 2012 meeting will be issued at a later date.

HAIKU FESTIVAL AOTEAROA 2012

There's still time to register for the Festival, with all non-residential registrations to be finalised and paid for by 1st June. The programme is a full and exciting one, and worth a look, at: <http://hfa2012.wordpress.com/programme/>

ADVANCE NOTICE OF CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Behind every war there are good women - Exhibition, Call for Submissions (Australia) Deadline: 11 November "To Australian and New Zealand female poets - the proposition is: Behind every war there are good women. Interpretation is up to you, the writer, but the principal aim of this exhibition is to present a diversity of views, ideas and perspectives from women about women and the commemorations and anniversaries of Australia's and New Zealand's military conflicts, together with the emotions these evoke. To achieve this, a diversity of poets is required, from those well known in the literary world to others whose poetry may only be known to family and friends."

I met the coordinator of this project, Tasmanian poet Graham Lindsay, in April. He is keen to get the 2015 Gallipoli Centenary commemoration off the ground from 'bottom-up' before the Governments' official 'top down' celebrations start. He is looking for everyday interpretations of the issue, and (to use his analogy) is more interested in receiving lots of tatty \$5 note poems than a pristine \$100 one. He fully intends this to be a cross-Tasman collaboration, and it will result in a multi-genre art and poetry exhibition in a Tasmanian venue, with printed material for distribution. Worth supporting. For full details and submission instructions, see: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutwomenandwar>

Competitions and Submissions

Northampton Literature Group's 14th Annual Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 12 May Free Verse (Category 1) & Rhyming Poetry (Category 2): 1st Prize £250, 2nd Prize £150, 3rd Prize £50 plus three Highly Commended @ £10 each. Humorous Poetry (Category C): 1st Prize £150, 2nd Prize £100, 3rd Prize £50. Entry Fee: £3.00 per poem or 4 for £10. Entry forms, rules, enter online: www.northamptonliteraturegroup.org.uk

FBFT Sports Writing Competition (UK) Closing Date: 13 May Free entry. Entries may be poetry, prose, fiction or non-fiction. Maximum of 1500 words and must be related to sport in some way. First place, £50; Second place, £30; Third place, £20. Submit directly through the form on the website: <http://www.freebetsfreetips.com/blog/fbft-sports-writing-competition> or by email: sportswriter@freebetsfreetips.com

May Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 15 May Small competition run by an online teacher of English who also offers poetry critiques. First Prize: £100; runner-up £25. Entry fees: £4 per poem, or 3 for £9. Entry guidelines and online payment at: <http://www.marycharmansmith.co.uk/competition.html>

The Baltimore Review "Heat" Theme Contest (USA) Deadline: 30 May Work considered in the fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry categories. 1st place prize \$300, 2nd place prize \$200, 3rd place prize \$100. Submit all contest entries, regardless of genre, through the submission system's online Contest category. \$10 entry fee. First-place winner will be published. All entries considered for publication. For more information: <http://www.baltimorereview.org/>

Poetry Lostock Competition (UK) Closing Date: 30 May Celebrating 40 years of *The Joy of Sex* 1972 edition. For poems of up to 40 lines. The subject is 'The Joy of Sex'. First Prize: *The Joy of Sex* (Alex Comfort) 1972 plus £100; second Prize: *How to Be a Good Lover* plus £50; third Prize: *The Illustrated Karma Sutra* plus £25. All poems plus 20 shortlisted to be included in a new anthology: *The Joy of Sex 2012*. Entry Fee: £3 Website: <http://poetrylostock.blogspot.com/> Pay for entry/entries at website then send poems to: poetrylostock@gmail.com

Bridport Prize (UK) Closing Date: 31 May Poetry Judge, Gwyneth Lewis. Poetry Prizes: £5000, £1000, £500. Ten runners-up of £50. Maximum 42 lines. Entry Fee: £7. Full details: <http://www.bridportprize.org.uk/poems.htm> Expensive to enter, but worth it, for the very generous prizes.

The Erbacce Prize for Poetry (UK) Closing Date: 31 May No Entry Fee. The winner receives a contract with Erbacce Press and publication of a full paperback collection of poems. Two runners-up receive a prize of a pamphlet collection being published by Erbacce Press. Full details and competition rules at: www.erbacce-press.com

Field Poetry Prize (USA) Deadline: 31 May Submit unpublished poetry manuscripts between 50 and 80 pages in length. The winning manuscript will be published in the FIELD Poetry Series and the winning author is awarded \$1000. Manuscripts are accepted electronically during the month of May at <http://www.oberlin.edu/ocpress> under the 'Submissions' tab. Contest reading fee is \$28 and includes one year's subscription to *FIELD: Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*.

Frogmore Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 31 May For poems up to 40 lines. 1st: 200 guineas and a 2 year subscription to *The Frogmore Papers*; 2nd: 75 guineas and a year's subscription; 3rd: 50 guineas and a year's subscription. Entry Fee: £3.00 www.frogmorepress.co.uk

Peace and Love Poems Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 31 May 1st £100 plus website publication, 2nd £50 plus website publication, 3rd £25 plus website publication. All 3 winners will have their poems published in the next *Bards At Blidworth and Beyond* Anthology. Entry Fee: £3. Website: <http://www.thynkspublications.co.uk/competitions>

"Monstrosities of the Midway" Literary Contest (USA) Deadline: 31 May Accepting poetry, fiction, CNF and essays. All entries should consider the theme, 'Monstrosities of the Midway' (think man-eating paper flowers, bearded ladies – anything that questions identity or performance). Entry fee is \$15. Grand prize is \$1000 and publication in *Midway*. For complete contest details: <http://www.midwayjournal.com/Contest.html>

The Edwin Morgan International Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 4 June In association with Strathclyde University and the Edinburgh International Book Festival. First prize of £5000 and lesser prizes of £1000, £500 and £50 (x 2). Entries can be in either English or Scots. Maximum of 60 lines per poem. Entry Fee: £5 per poem (max 3 poems per entrant). Full details on website: <http://www.edwinmorganpoetrycompetition.co.uk>

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>

Bitter Oleander Press Library of Poetry Award (USA) Deadline: 15 June \$1000 award plus book publication by The BOP for best manuscript from any English speaking poet with at least one previous standard book publication. \$25 entry, reading & processing fee. Manuscripts must be 48 to 80 pages. No e-mail submissions. Complete guidelines online at www.bitteroleander.com

Pighog Moss Rich International Poetry Prize (UK) Closing Date: 29 June For poems up to 30 lines. Entries must be written to produce a humorous or satirical effect. Each poet may enter up to 4 poems. Entry Fee: £3 per poem or £10 for 4 poems submitted together. Electronic submissions at <http://www.pighog.co.uk>

Keats-Shelley Prize (UK) Closing Date: 30 June For poems up to 40 lines on the theme of 'Gold'. Maximum of two poems per entrant. Full details and entry form on website: www.keats-shelley.com Entry Fee: £5 per poem. Entries can be emailed in Microsoft Word format to: susanna.seekings@talktalk.net

Ledbury Poetry Festival Competition (UK) Closing Date: 3 July For poems of up to 40 lines. Categories: Adult (18 and over), Young People (12-17), and Children (11 and under). Cash prizes for Adult and Young People categories. Children's category winners receive book tokens. Adult 1st prize includes Residential Course at Ty Newydd. Entry Fee: £5 first poem, then £3 per poem (adult); first poem free, then £1.50 per poem (young people and children). Website: <http://www.poetry-festival.com/poetry-competition.html>

Segora Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closing Date: 7 July 40 lines max. First prize £150. Winning entries will be read at the bilingual LitFest in Saint Clementin, 79150, France. Entry Fee: £3.50. Full details at: www.poetryproseandplays.co.uk/

Eclecticism (Australia) As the name suggests, *Eclecticism* aims to draw a diverse range of creative minds, styles and genres. Each issue has themed and open sections, and is seeking contributions from writers of prose and poetry, illustrators/artists, and beat-musicians. *Eclecticism* is free – a non-profit e-zine that aims to showcase current writers, expose emerging writers and artists and provide an avenue for those with one or two stories within them. Readers are encouraged to subscribe to the e-zine to build its fan base and be the first to receive notification of each issue's release. <http://www.eclecticzine.com>

Hoot (USA) \$2 submission fee, shared amongst successful entries. A literary magazine on postcards! Postcards are small, so we are seeking small work-poetry, fiction, CNF with <150 words. Guidelines: <http://hootreview.com>. We publish one piece in each issue (monthly). Our authors are paid a percentage of the contributions we received in the month prior. We also publish 1-4 pieces online monthly. We are happy to give you feedback before (yes, before!) you submit in our free (yes, free!) online Wednesday workshops. <http://www.hootreview.com/workshops> [This is a great website - worth exploring thoroughly.]

Hue & Cry (NZ) is an annual literary/art journal, established in 2007. Guidelines can be found on the website: <http://www.hueandcry.org.nz/about.html>

Shot Glass Journal (Online, USA) Submissions are welcome year-round. Send short poetry (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. Make sure that what you send is your best work. Please also make sure to 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. If for some reason attachments might be necessary, contact the editor, **Mary-Jane Grandinetti**, at the above e-mail address first, so that a plan can be formulated to receive your submission. www.musepiepress.com/shotglass

Takahe (NZ) Published three times a year. Publishes short stories, poetry and art by established and emerging writers and artists as well as essays and interviews (by invitation), and book reviews in these related areas. "Grants from Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa have enabled us to make a small payment to local writers and poets for work published. Overseas contributors receive a year's subscription to the magazine." Guidelines: <http://www.takahe.org.nz/submissions.php>

The **Takahe** 2012 Poetry Competition has opened, and will be judged by **Kerrin P Sharpe**. Entries must be received by 30 September, and entry forms can be downloaded from the website. Entry is \$5 per poem.

Tuesday Poems (NZ) The Tuesday Poem is an initiative that creates a kind of open-mike 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 initiator **Mary McCallum** describes it, as well as being visited by other readers. Visit the blog at www.tuesdaypoem.blogspot.com

Tyneside Poets - Call for submissions from New Zealand Poets Poet Dave Freeman, in association with the NZPS, invites New Zealand poets to submit to the Tyneside Poets blog: "The 'we' is me and fellow blog editor Keith Armstrong. We met back in the mid-1970s through a group of writers styling themselves as the Tyneside poets. We produced a reasonably regular journal, *Poetry North East*, and performed readings in pubs, clubs, at festivals and on local radio. The group ran its course and we all moved on to other things. A few of us continued writing and maintained informal links. Then a couple of years ago poetrytyneside.blogspot.com was born [now <http://poetrytyneside.blogspot.co.nz/>], initially to archive on-line material from PNE, copies of which are archived at Durham University. However, we soon began to use the blog as a vehicle for former Tyneside Poets to post current work as well. "From the 1970s onwards the TP had international connections in Europe, so as I was going to NZ it seemed a good idea to form links there as well. Thus our invitation for submissions. Hopefully it will be fruitful collaboration." Send 2 or 3 poems in a Word attachment to: tynesidesubs@hotmail.co.uk As always, we advise you to visit the site before submitting, to see what kind of poetry they publish.

Wet Ink (Australia) Australian based journal *Wet Ink* accepts submissions on a regular basis. Poets who have work accepted are paid (\$50). All submissions have to be previously unpublished and not currently under consideration elsewhere. Submissions should be made in hard copy, but if a piece is accepted you will be asked to re-send it as a MS Word document by email. For poetry: • Please send no more than three poetry submissions. • Only hard copies considered. • Include a cover letter with the title of your work plus all contact details for each submission. • Put your name on the cover letter but NOT on the poem. • Include date and line count. • Text should be in Times New Roman 12pt. Submission criteria appear here: http://www.wetink.com.au/assets/pdfs/Wetink_submit_write.pdf Writers' standard form covering letter should be used with submissions: <http://www.wetink.com.au/assets/pdfs/Wetinkcoverletter.pdf>

Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine (Australia)

Pays \$AUS10 per poem "So ... why does the world need another SF magazine? Because not enough humorous SF & Fantasy gets into print Because SF can be printed AND entertaining at the same time Because it's not the size of the sword, it's where you stick it. Because too many 'light-hearted, un-serious' stories are rejected. Because first-time authors have a hell of a time getting into print. And because six issues a year for A\$49 is too good to resist." Website: www.andromedaspaceways.com/

Talent is like a faucet; while it is open you have to write. Inspiration? A hoax fabricated by poets for their self-importance.

Jean Anouilh

Featured Poet

Janis Freegard

Jumping Ship

afterwards they wondered why
all it was
(there hadn't been time for a note)

was the pull of an obsidian sea
frosted with turquoise and foam
there'd been no sadness

just the sudden need
for a change of scene
she'd known

(of course she'd known)
the cold would knock the air from her lungs
that propellers churned beneath

but she couldn't shake the notion
of mermaids advancing: an underwater empire
somewhere *different*

The South Shields Town Hall is the closest thing I've got to a marae

Ko Marsden Rock te maunga

I thought it was something to rely on:
the massive limestone arch with its feet in the waves
and a korowai of kittiwakes and cormorants
right where Jack the Blaster gouged his cliffside grotto
and where, at night, the ghostly screams
of John the Jibber can still be heard –
hung in a bucket to shiver and starve

I didn't see the arch crumbling into the sea
didn't hear the blast that toppled the pillar

in another hundred years, they say
a new arch will form at Marsden
(Mare's Den)

Ko te North Sea te moana

Henry Greathead and William Wouldhave laid their claim
a lifeboat still sails proud on Ocean Road
(all the lives saved since)

we took the wakarere to South Africa
the *SS Marconi* to Australia, then Aotearoa
(the South Seas)

Ko te Tyne te awa

the North Tyne rises at Kielder Water
the South at Alston Moor

you can watch the salmon
return to their birthplace to spawn

and here are the wooden staithes
for getting the coals to Newcastle

Ko South Tyneside te rohe

this is where I walk on my ancestors' bones
this is where the wind lifts their songs over the sea

Ko Geordie te iwi

or is it Ngati Hori?
King George's men fighting the Jacobites
or the miners' George Stephenson lamps?

(like *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* I tell people)

Ko Sand Dancer te hapū

when the grey of the sky meets the grey of the sea
and the air softens with the promise of rain
you can just about see them – all together
crossing the shores of the Tyne

Ko Newcastle United te tīma

Aa might have grown up in the shadow of the silver fern
but howay man, you cannit change
what you were born with
the day me and Peter watched Shearer score
at St James Park – that was a day
ee, that was canny, like

Ko Janis ahau

My waiata is the Blaydon Races

'Genii Cucullati' was first published in Surface Online (now defunct)

'Prefabricated' was first published in Magma (UK)

Genii Cucullati

Housesteads, Northumberland

we three still beat
beneath the fort
(Hadrian – that
Johnny-come-lately
we well outlived
his Diana)
you'll hear our names
in oak leaves
read them in the flick
of a squirrel's tail
you'll feel us
in your pulse
listen hard
it's an age
since we danced

Prefabricated

at the back of the prefab was a small room
where girls stood on scales at lunchtime
plotting progress on charts

we cut out pictures
for our back wall collage:
sunsets, surfers, Rod Stewart

in winter, the chewing gum on the heaters
melted on to our dresses
we sewed the ladders in our tights with hair
– mine, mostly, being longest and blondest
then

two girls are dead now (car crashes)
another's an anaesthetist
one went to London
came back

Signs

Today, even the hothouse
isn't warm enough –

Do not smoke or eat.

Do not sit on the beds.

but the distribution of frangipani flowers
is not forbidden.

When I tossed the coin in the well
I thought I knew what I wanted

but happiness would have been
a better thing to wish for.

Look but don't touch.

Leave your dog outside.

Regional Reports

WINDRIFT, FEBRUARY 2012 WORKSHOP

Nola Borrell

Haiku are expected to elicit the unexpected. The 'free choice' category included dreams and finches, sea dog, wheelchair, silk tree, and even a 2 word senryu.

overcast day

finches on the shingle road

stones taking flight

Kerry Popplewell

the sky lightens - how soon

the space between dreams and waking

slips from my mind

Penny Pruden

only the bones of mackerel

remain

on my father's plate

between the leftover dinners

in the corridor of the ward

Harumi Hasegawa

We were challenged by the second exercise: Haiku on 'humans or animals exercising power or persuasion'. Humour triumphed.

airport strike
a suspended spider
circles the globe

Ernest Berry

fat spaniel
back from the neighbours'
a little fatter

Karen P. Butterworth

With 'wind' (including gales, cyclones, gusts, breezes, whatever), the third category, we felt more at home.

duckweed swirls
glass windows unmask
the tadpole

Jenny Pyatt

behind her ex
a gust
slams the door

Lynn Francis

The 'unexpected' also coloured afternoon tea. Kerry advanced, bearing a birthday cake with glowing candle. For me!

Correction

The report of the October 2011 Windrift workshop (in the March issue of *a fine line*) mis-attributed one of the haiku. Here is the haiku, with the correct name.

she tells of the holocaust
i watch the passion
of her hands
for Susanna Williams

Karen Peterson Butterworth

Reviews

Western Line Airini Beautrais (VUP, 2010) ISBN 9780864736499 RRP \$28

Vaughan Rapatahana

This is Airini Beautrais' follow-up to her 2007 release *Secret Heart* – named as best first book of poetry in the 2007 Montana book awards.

I have to admit to being a trifle disappointed overall with *Western Line*, for although Beautrais certainly has genuine poetic flair, in this collection it is episodic and indeed the final section is without question lacking in poetic panache as it is out-and-out prose: it runs off track more than somewhat. I question why it is included, for much of it reads rather as a travelogue omnibus to slurp on while on boring train journeys. Here is one such example:

Takapu Road

A boy with a Mohawk is pissing in the agapanthus.

A ticket collector says 'Takapu Road! Arohata, for all you ladies going home for dinner. What, no takers?' No one smiles. Nobody even lifts an eyebrow at him.

A man by the doors is wearing a loud shirt. Another ticket collector says 'Do you think it's summer or something? It hurts my eyes to look at that.'

'Well, it makes you happy, doesn't it?' he replies. 'That's good.'

'Course it's good,' says the collector. As she clips her way down the aisle, she says 'Every day above ground is a good day.'

I am inclined to say 'so what' as regards these training exercises. I knew Takapu Road very well, as my grandfather had a dairy farm way out the back of it, but this quoted piece is no appetite-whetting junction for any plangent past recollections at all. Why did V.U.P incorporate these passages, I muse, amused. What are their criteria for publishing suchlike? Again, I'm back on my locomotive steaming on about 'academic' poems and their equally 'academic' publishers as being somehow flat, often emotionless, so I'll cut the steam right now before I get totally derailed.

The earlier poems – except for the somewhat trite sidetracks in two – are far more of a pleasing journey – especially the vitriolic zone of Curses, which are nasty, revengeful, acerbic and often quite delightfully percipient. Here's a fine example of where Beautrais really conducts her fare so well (I would have placed the excellent 'Curse for a Fickle Man' here, but it's too long, eh.):

Curse of a Child of Woe

Fish will swim away from your hook
water will work its way
into your every pair of shoes.
You will be accused when you are innocent
your friends will turn on you in numbers
You will lose years like insignificant coins
your first grey hairs will find you mapless
in a land without tracks.

It's a pity more of her poems here could not have been so honed and focal. And downright splenetic!

More, like all good train rides the circuit tour ends back at the beginning: at the start of the trip I pointed out that Beautrais certainly has flair and here are some examples, eh:

"To move in the muscle of the wind"
"Bees are passing away
in the arms of flowers"
"With the space beside you
empty as a drunk's cellar"
"The valley propped itself up on its elbows"
"she pours cream into her voice"
"And only your pockets to hold your hands"

There is one other – significant – point to make here too. Where are the allusions to the alternative cultures of Aotearoa? Given that many place names and plants in te reo Maori are incorporated - which have all become subsumed deep into the English language carpetbag these days anyway – only one freestanding word of Maori graces the pages: wharenuī. Indeed there is a smarmy prose piece on page 77 – ‘The Places We Go’ – which totally abnegates Maori geography and history. A bunch of schoolboys snort the boringness of Maori language place names in New Zealand and complain further about having to provide financial details for their purchase of iPhones, for Chrissakes!

There is not a whiff of anything approaching ethnic divergence on any of the 80 pages of this collection, which is somewhat disturbing, given the multicultural ambience of Aotearoa nowadays. Beautrais seems more inclined to write about long dead animals than dead people actually, as witness ‘The Making of a Whale’ and ‘The Making of a Horse.’

The entire tome could be read as somewhat of a middle class trawl to nowhere in particular, were it not for the above-mentioned scattered gems of imagery and also the now-commented-on metaphysics of Being pervading one or two other pieces, such as ‘Charm for a Thing’:

It is the thing
that makes atoms spin
the scribe of the four letters
that makes us ourselves.
It is a helix of beads and pipe cleaners
soft bleeds of paint on paper
a red and green treeness
the thingness
of things.

Martin Heidegger would have smiled when he read this, given that my late, great university philosophy professor Clive Pearson said Heidegger only had one book on his shelves at Heidelberg : Holderlin’s poems. And he would have known as he (Pearson) went to meet Heidegger waaaaay back in the 1950s. Heidegger would never (had) read Beautrais. But it’s as though she has skimmed Heraclitus and Parmenides here sometimes.

Indeed, there is a koan-like attribute to SOME of Beautrais’ work in this volume – some poems do require a few readings before you glean their depth.

So what station are we at now? Curate’s Egg is the stop where I am going to alight from the *Western Line*: a higgledy-piggledy mish-mash of bright and banal, prosaic and poetry, the brief and the loooooong repetitive playing-with-German-vocabulary in ‘Glesien’, which is abstruse and as hugely discordant to the other poetry in the book as are the prose tracts. It sure as hell is no paen to dasein either: more a karate-kid kaleidoscope through Leipzig and its environs.

Come on Airini. Get some dirt on your hands and open those fingernail screeching vents. Stoke the full frontal furnace and really steamroll down the line. Curse a bit more, eh. We want to see you on your iron horse roaring right out West, all stops barred, staying on the mainline

Shift Rhian Gallagher (AUP 2011) ISBN 9781869404871 RRP \$25

Vaughan Rapatahana

Rhian Gallagher comes with big wraps: indeed that esteemed man Manhire has noted that she is one of the quiet, astonishing secrets of New Zealand writing.

Indeed if one reads her great poem ‘Burial’ – as below – one applauds and wolf-whistles better than any GC wolves squadroning around the white in ‘The Grey’.

Burial

The shovels stood in a sticky underbelly of earth
as we stepped from the sidelines for him,
peeling our jackets, the boys loosening their ties.
Soon there was clay on our church-going gear

and his voice coming out of our childhood
coaching us to put our backs into it.
Flowers and fine words had never touched the man
like work, grunts behind a shovel's bite,
the clean sound of clods as we heaved them in.

Digging,

we bowed in memory of his stooped solid shape.
The dark damp weight of earth,
a provision, a very last word.

This is an economic, tight, sound-honed clump of a poem: no spendthrift-ness here. It fully earned its creator's place in the recent *The Best of Best New Zealand Poems*.

But there's the rub of the green, eh. To me, there is nothing quite as good, as sheer makes-you-want-to-grab-it-and-smear-it-on-your-face about the poems in this, Rhian Gallagher's second collection. Of course Rhian can write poetry very well, as witness such gold-flecked lines as, "like a lover, pushing your tongue into the folds" and "the plane trees are undressing in the rain" and "un-tensing past, present, future" and "feeling the hood of London streets" – but muted pictures overlay such glimmers throughout. It's often the chrome, the formica, the veneer of city routes squeezing away the lush buds, the squawking birds, the colour.

The poems here are all spare, somewhat Spartan vis-à-vis vivid imagery; somewhat bleak in tone, rather reflecting the grayness of the book covers. All is rather subdued, muted – and especially anglophilic (not just because the poet lived for 18 years in London on an extended OE which, sure as ham spam chips and jam shows in her use of words like 'cover-all' and 'lorry'.)

Indeed, when I read these poems I am reminded somewhat of Auden of all people: the same austerity and sadness pervades throughout – just think of his famous funereal piece entitled 'Funeral Blues'. The similar polite incorporation of arbitrarily prescribed matters of metre and line-length and stanza and the rigid word arrangement on the page. Almost as if the poet has been taught how to write poetry according to an historic thin modernist template (she did, of course, attend Mr Manhire's VUW composition course. I ponder if Larkin and Donne played roles there, as both cameo in this collection.)

The one significant exception to my latter point is Rhian's delve into the inverse passive subject-object co-ordinate, as in "the air felt ingrained" and "You were awaited" while phrases like, "The outside filled the inside" and "seeing through then seeing the through" are akin to Gary Snyder snorkeling for koan.

Rhian seems a lonely poetess – dealing with lost family members (in this case her twin sister, who of course meant massively to her) and lost lady lovers – one in particular. Lost her way and lost her homeland. Moving through a triumvirate of stages – from shift away, into her butterfly metamorphosis, back to shore. Still seeking fullness/ripeness, and since her 2005 hokinga ki te kainga (return to the homeland), a complete antipodean apotheosis.

In the same way many of the poems in *Shift* seem also to be crying out for screechy fingernail-on-the-blackboard emoting propelled further by some eye-watering images and words that scream out their rage as they rattle Rhian's cage. And the readers'.

I would dearly love to see Rhian Gallagher enter her poems through the front door and throw out invectives, throw away inventories of inherited stylings: to shrill her subjectivity, her sexuality, her dislocations, her "fragmentation and confusion" **MORE MORE MORE MORE**.

O.K. Rapatahana, you need to give credence to such statements. Because inevitably people will say Rhian's subdued/disciplined way of writing a poem is to foreshadow the unstated and that they like poems like that. They don't want lectures in their faces, they want delicacy, decorum, distance from this auteur.

But surely, I respond, they also want some humour, some wryness: there is none of the former and not enough of the latter in this collection. There's an ambient restrictedness palling vast tracts in this collection.

So, let's all sight a sample of what I am trying to say here. I cite:

The Nor'wester

The Southern Alps are black.
It is February and the rocks are breaking,
paddocks give up their ghosts,
blood slogs in vein. Change
keeps to its promise, comes again.

Temperature ascends,
logical arguments of town lawyers
melt into a joke: barometer plunges,
doctors hear strange voices
through their stethoscopes.
The earth feels so upset.

The mountaineers are in trouble,
The windsurfers are in heaven
And our lives are covered
With small dead insect wings
And the ground bones of rabbits and birds.

A fine poem - and for Gallagher here a slight modification away from her general style via the use of italics – but it reads as if covered by a thin layer of gauze, indeed as if filtered through these “dead insect wings”; at a remove from even a poetic persona, as if it were sacrilege to smash into one’s verse via one’s own viscerality.

No path of Plath trails through *Shift*, yet I would wager millions that the poet feels wrath, rift, wrong...these emotions seep through in quiet globules and hover slightly before they morph into the cinereal ether. Take for example the trio of grieving poems, further examples of the endemic sorrow pervading this collection: ‘My Sister’s Country’, ‘My Sister’s Dead Perfection’, ‘My Sister Remade’. There is indeed angst in these portraits, but it is not from Munch.

More than this, I guess that I am also trying to construct a genuinely New Zealand poetic, to concretize once and for all – after all, decades have elapsed since we were compelled to sing ‘God save the Queen’ at films and at school assemblies – our own ways of writing poetry and subsequently of expressing what it IS to BE a Kiwi, which would also incorporate some reference to indigenouness (as being native to a land) and Indigenouness (in being the original settlers in a land). This will be no easy task when we consider just how endemically entrenched is the chariot of English language and thus Anglo-culture in the silt of our shores – see my *English Language as Hydra* (Multilingual Matters, U.K. forthcoming June, 2012.)

It goes without saying that *Shift* has not one full-on reference to any (othered) culture at all, let alone language (I am not here referring to matters of sexual orientation either.) My concern here is that nor is there any comprehensive ascription of what it means to be a New Zealander – of whatever ilk – per se. We have to nit-pick our way through the threads she sews here and there like Goldilocks in the forest to even sew a semblance of who Rhian Gallagher is, what she wants, where she is going, given that she sometimes doesn’t seem to know herself: “the poems are working with versions of self and of place and attempting to find a way through”

To extrapolate further, I feel it is time to step out from behind the moribund perspective of CK Stead and his now quaint – or as Rhian writes here – “made queer” – notations such as “the time has come to stop apologizing for our European culture, as if it was something that compromised a true local identity” written back in 1990-1991 in the TLS, yet which still echoes across far too much of our poetic zeitgeist.

Let’s cease being junior fags for our long-gone English public schoolboy mentors from the upper sixth, and write not only (post) postmodernist, but post-imperialistic poetry: thematically and concomitantly, stylistically – which, of course many, many excellent New Zealand poets ARE doing, eh.

Rhian Gallagher is back in Aotearoa. I am certain that her next collection will be inspiring and gutsy and that she will really capture her own physicality as well as her nation’s rampant physicality, in poems that wrench you off the floor with

your eyes-popping and your larynx shrieking for more.

Shift, taken in its entirety, doesn't quite give me goosebumps,

Greyness reefs across the inland, ...

[I] wait for the curtain to lift.

(from 'Morning Fog')

poetic explanations Gill Ward (Kupu Press, 2011) ISBN 978 0 473 18793 4 \$20.00 (available from the author: gillii@paradise.net.nz)

Mary Meyerhoff Cresswell

"This book of poetry is an autobiography," says Gill Ward in her blurb, "a written acknowledgement" of the people with whom she's shared her life. It is also a witness to her vitality and spiritual strength – sharing goes both ways, and I expect quite a few people acknowledge her, too.

The 'poetic explanations' of her title are sometimes celebrations. In 'Weekend away', we are:

weaving our tales
our grief, our joys
our losses and treasures
and so we burnt the pie in the oven
we choked on our wine
with delight for being

'Swimming with a friend' shows:

The ebb and flow of it,
the up and down
the tuning of currents
the relaxing
and the ease of it.

But to balance our celebrations, there are devastations. Ward dedicates the middle section of the book to poems about her twin sister's death and the horror of being left without her:

O do not hand me that
traitors' baton
it will sear me right through
if I take it alone.

...

Do not leave me
to run alone.

(from 'Loser take all')

The word 'loneliness' appears over and over in the book, as though it weren't a static condition but rather a way to examine hope and longing – and the tension between them. One way to live with that tension is by noticing small things:

Small offerings do not engulf
do not necessarily flower

into a garden nor forest.
They are koha
a word, thought, look,
shrug, smile, poem even,
sent to nurture
in a way
hope and longing never will.
(from 'Instructions')

So the world rolls on, and the process is (for the moment) eased. Ward plays with a wonderful metaphor in 'Bread making':

First, then, the thump and thwack
the front and back,
the pummel and push
the warm wrestling
and the sugar seeping sweetly
yielding to the yeast.

For some feelings, it's good to remind them that they have a place:

You should always
keep a guestroom
in your house
for loneliness

that way when loneliness
visits
she will have somewhere to go
(from 'Considerations on loneliness')

Many of us dream of a house as a metaphor for one's self. 'My album', like the poem just quoted, speaks from this:

I barely remember
some rooms
I dare not go
the doors are still swinging
and you are balanced
on the edge
of hope and wonderment
and joy

All our lives are works in progress, and Ward's is very much so. Look at her language, lots of -ing words, the progressive tense pulling us into the future and reminding us of action. We may never reach the end of the story, but we never stop heading towards it, either.

Nor should we forget the beginning of the story. The past can be devastating, but it's not all bad:

We see her still in the black cardigan
left on a chair.
Hear her still in the squeak of the door.
Reach for her warmth
at the foot of the bed.

(from 'That cat')

Portals Robin Fry (Earl of Seacliff Workshop, 2011) ISBN: 978-86942-131-1

Liz Breslin

Portals is Robin Fry's fifth collection, following *Weather Report* (Inkweed, 2002), *Daymoon* (HeadworX, 2005), *Inside It* (ESAW, 2006) and *Time Traveller* (ESAW, 2010). There are twenty-four poems contained within the slim covers.

About the covers. The front cover design is by Micah Fry. It's a writhing arrangement that seems part floral, part animal. A nice accompaniment for the writing. The back cover says the title is "Portal to another dimension", whereas the info page inside calls it "Time machine/interdimensional portal". Never mind. We get the point!

The first poem we come to is 'Portals':

When Thomas was eight
we sat drawing together
I am his grandmother.

The intricately decorated
flowers bordering his page
are portals, he says.

"Portals?" I ask

"Yes – doorways – portals
to other worlds."

Thus this poem provides a portal of sorts itself into the main body of the book.

The subject matter here ranges from Mozart, Rachmaninov and Neruda to cat biscuits and trampolines. Fry likes the way that Neruda approached the everyday –

Neruda – the poet's poet
the one who loved objects, appreciated things
because of their intricate histories
...
uniting us through a common love of poetry
and a love of common things.

These lines come from 'Christmas with Neruda', which starts with the pain of lending a precious book.

But where there is pain in lending out, there is also pleasure to be found between the covers (of an anthology) in 'The reader'. That feeling of finding the one poem in the collection that does it for you –

here it comes
surprising me at last –
the rare, the numinous one
like the flick of a silver tongue
light falling
from another room.

If I had to pick a poem from *Portals* to that effect, it would be 'This poem is'. Fry attributes the form's invention to Iggy McGovern. It's a kind of nonsense poem with the form of three rhyming things in each line. Hence, from around the middle of the poem, This poem is:

a poet's muse, some crossword clues, a blown fuse
a Christmas goose, a chocolate mousse, a tooth that's loose
rolled oats, horse floats, John o'Groats,
a Sunday roast, a scary ghost, and burning toast

and so on and so forth. I'd love to hear Fry read this poem out as the scansion is exuberant and moveable. As a fun form poem it works better than 'Wet & windy' in double abecedarian form, which is apparently a sort of acrostic thing where the lines start with each letter of the alphabet in order. In a double whammy, the lines have to end with the letters of the alphabet in descending order. So,

About 12 hours ago, enjoying a Shiraz
before dinner – no thought for the next day
cold, wet & windy though it is – a hex
days like this but – just go with the flow

See how it works? Or doesn't, depending on your point of view. Still, as well as the fun forms, there are moments of seriousness in *Portals*, like in *Mujahidin*:

perhaps this prayer
was your pillow on the ground
your coat to wear in the snow.

We are also given facts along with the poems. Learn a bit about Mozart's family – the loss of siblings and children. Did you know...

The loss of his infant daughter
gives Mozart's Symphony No.40
its tragic minor key.

Music rears its head again in the symphonic dances of 'The last note'. Another recurring theme is, naturally, writing. Writer's block is addressed in a poem of the same name.

Of course 'The poem that wasn't' is actually everywhere. Fry cleverly ekes out the poetic moments here, asking

Where was it
when I felt the soft lump
under the garden seat
knowing it for a secret
spider nursery
brimming with new life
& tiny futures?
...
Had I only known it
it was here - & here
& here...

Like the best bits in this book. Worth looking for.

Members' Poems

Uplifted

Earth moves and you are given a new vocabulary
like a local dialect, understood by few EQ, liquefaction
You could build an experience around it.

These words are addictive hard to withdraw from, recovery by years

This is a dictionary of cordons, colour coded in zone
Red for munted, no go leave valuables for looters
Orange uncertain remediation on hold wait

Wait Wait Wait please hold

Green, chance you're on a shingle shelf in swampland, uninsurable
White hills marked by ghostly departure await assessors
Hard to value where cliffs have fallen for waterfront views.

We shall refer to the Old city in the east, Mercali and Richter

While Demo boys and Waste-compactors fill in sink holes
Temporaries, gap fillers and pop ups the new normal, there is a premium on
containers.

Sydenham contemporized and arts in Hagley Circus

We concatenate new gods, Orion, Cera
in the dark heart
a compilation seismic in implication

Robynanne Milford, Christchurch

JULY DEADLINE: 7 JUNE