

# a fine line

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*a fine line* staff

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## Quotations of the Month

Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful.

—Rita Dove

Writing presents a brave act of magic, and an aid to survival.

—Raewyn Alexander

Poetry is music set to words.

—Dennis O'Driscoll

A poem compresses much in a small space and adds music, thus heightening its meaning.

—E.B. White

## Feature Article



### Titling Poems

#### Some tips and tricks to consider

by Annie Neugebauer

Is your poetry folder chockfull of files called “Untitled 1”, “Untitled 2”, and so on? You’d think that if we poets can find inspiration, impart meaning, write a poem, revise it, and polish it, that we’d be able to just slap a title on the thing — but it’s rarely that easy.

Many poets struggle with what to call their work. Some poets think it’s the hardest part about writing a poem, so in this article, I’m going to do my best to help poets beat those title-searching blues.

#### What a Title Should Do

- **Intrigue the reader**

A really catchy or compelling title will spark a reader’s interest so they want to read the poem.

- **Fit the poem**

Your title is your first impression, so you want it to be accurate. If the theme or tone of your title intrigues a reader, but then it doesn’t actually fit the poem, they might end up feeling disappointed. You want the title and poem to convey the same feeling, so they attract and please the right reader.

- **Further or support intent**

Poems are short; we have no space to waste. Not a single word should go unutilised, and the title is no exception. Ideally, the title should further the intent of the poem — that is, it should add more meaning to the poem’s message. If that’s not possible, the title should at least support the intent of the poem.

#### What a Title Shouldn’t Do

- **Spoil the Ending**

Nobody likes spoilers! So why on earth would you include one in your title? I think many poets title their poems after they write them, so they often forget that the title is what a reader encounters first, not last. This is especially applicable if your poem has a twist or unexpected ending — simply go back to it, or even give it to a critique partner for feedback, just to make sure your title doesn’t give too much away.

- **Wear Out Your Phrasing**

I often see a super catchy title that draws me in to read a poem, only to see that title repeated (sometimes often) in the poem itself. The intent here is obvious: the poet has come up with a good or unique phrase. So intent are they in putting their best foot forward, they use it as the title, too. The problem that then arises is that, the more you use a unique turn of phrase,

the less unique it seems. Of course this is subjective, but it may be useful to get some critique partner feedback, to be sure you're not wearing out your best phrases by using them as a title.

- **Mislead**

A strong title is important, but not at the expense of the poem itself. As I mentioned above, you want your title to fit the poem. If the title is snazzy but sets up false expectations, the snazziness might just backfire. If the only special title you can come up with doesn't fit your poem, I'd recommend going with a more ordinary title and writing a new poem that does fit your special one.

### Brainstorming Help

Now that we've established what a good title should and shouldn't do, let's talk about brainstorming. It should be said upfront that not all of these title options will work for you or your poem. Each poem is different, and therefore each title has different needs. This list is just intended to get you unstuck if you've run out of ideas.

Okay, why not re-read your poem, and then read this list, jotting down any and all ideas that it gives you, no matter how silly they seem at the time. No one will see this but you, and you never know when a weird notion will spark the right idea. You can

- summarise your poem;
- look up your poem's subject in an encyclopaedia and find relevant jargon (preferably ones that add to or support the poem's intent);
- label your poem (think how you'd describe it to a friend);
- look up synonyms for your poem's label;
- come up with a beautiful turn of phrase that's not in the poem;
- take a beautiful phrase from your poem, make it the title, and change it in the actual poem;
- state the message outright;
- list several unique words;
- state the most shocking aspect of your poem's message;
- use the strongest verb in your poem;
- use an adjective that encapsulates your poem;
- choose an uncommon noun relevant to your poem;

- find a word that has a double meaning when looked at in the context of your poem (this is one of my personal favourites);
- find a word that brings new or additional meaning to your poem;
- give vital, grounding information in your title (such as a setting, time period, or location);
- use the location and/or time of where and when you wrote the poem;
- ask a question that your poem answers;
- use your last line to inspire a title; or
- find a title that changes meaning once the poem has been read.

Still stuck? Try bumping the first line of your poem up as title — this now leads directly to your second line, which has, in turn, neatly transformed into your new first line.

### Other thoughts

Poems are short! It's easy to write lots of them, so why not use them as an opportunity to be adventurous and creative? Maybe you wouldn't title a novel something that's an entire sentence long, but a single poem? Well, why not? If it doesn't work, you can always try something else with the next one.

If you have a collection of poems, keep in mind that not every poem can have a spectacularly unique title. In fact, I don't think they should. If a reader has picked up your book, they're going to read multiple poems. You don't need to *hook* them with each title — that would become sort of wearisome. Instead, consider playing with your titles throughout by bringing in poems with linked titles, a shared format, theme, or some other way of making them *play* together.

Of all the many options, the worst title is a trite title. Clichés and melodramatic phrases are the fastest way to put off a reader and spoil an otherwise solid poem. If you have to choose between a trite title and a plain title — I would choose a plain one every time.

That's it from me on titles! Do you struggle with titling your poems? Feel free to share your questions, experiences, and tips with other NZPS members via [editor@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@poetrysociety.org.nz)

# The NZPS International Poetry Competition 2017

Closing date 31 May 2017

Visit the website

<https://poetrysociety.org.nz/2017/03/26/the-nzps-international-poetry-competition-2017>

to enter.

## From the Editor

Ivy Alvarez



Autumn marks a transition towards a time of seeking comfort and warmth. In this May edition of *a fine line*, discover a full six-course menu of writing that will take you from soup to entrée, mains and dessert, finishing off with a hot beverage of your choice.

Ever wanted to tighten up your titles to attract your reader's attention? Annie Neugebauer has some do's, don'ts and helpful hints for when you get stuck — plenty to reflect on for when you draft your next poem. And if you're considering entering this year's NZPS International Poetry Competition (mark your calendars for 31 May deadline), let Vaughan Rapatahana's advice-laden letter guide you towards a favourable nod from the judges.

Speaking of deadlines, for our August edition, its theme is TRANSFORMATION. (Perhaps Bernard Spragg's caterpillar, above, will spark a poem?) I would love your articles, letters, reviews and, from our members, up to four poems (40 lines max), sent by **10 July 2017** to [editor@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:editor@poetrysociety.org.nz)

With this edition's focus on FOOD, our magazine's metaphorical table is gasping under an absolute feast of piquant poems, including work from Anne Collier Ruddy, Valeria Boruch and many others.

I am also delighted to introduce something unusual: a Featured Poets section, with work from Violeta Ionescu, alongside Romanian translations by NZPS member Valentina Telici, who edited *Poetical Bridges – Poduri Lirice* (Napier: Scripta manent, 2016).

Don't forget the 10-12 November dates for the NZ Poetry Conference and Festival, in Auckland. Contact [conference@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:conference@poetrysociety.org.nz) or visit Facebook: [facebook.com/events/299460997085195](https://facebook.com/events/299460997085195)

And lastly, warm congratulations to NZPS Patron Dame Fiona Kidman for being Auckland Writers Festival's Honoured New Zealand Writer for 2017! In a free special event chaired by Paula Morris, a celebration of Dame Fiona Kidman's contributions to literature takes place on Sunday, 21 May, 6pm at the ASB Theatre, Aotea Centre. Please check Auckland Writers Festival's website for more details. See you there!

## About Our Contributors



**Valeria Barouch** lives in Geneva, Switzerland and writes poetry in English, French and German. Since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017, she has been the co-editor of *Einunddreissig*, an online magazine for German Tanka.

**Anne Curran** lives in Hamilton with her cat Misty. She is very grateful to those family, friends, and mentors who have encouraged her to keep writing.

**Ruth Hanover's** writing, shaped through ESOL teaching (Cairo and Stockholm), an English degree and being in therapy, appears in *London Grip*, *Manifesto Aotearoa*, and NZPS anthology *Penguin Days* (2016).

**Suzanne Herschell:** Former teacher. Artist, curator, selector and judge of national exhibitions. Poet published in *Meniscus*, *Shot Glass Journal*, NZPS's *a fine line*, *Plate in the Mirror* anthology (2016), *The Ghazal Page*, *Eastbourne Anthology* (Mākarō Press). National Poetry Day winner – Nelson & Upper Hutt.

**Cherry Hill** is a retired teacher of Chinese and Japanese languages. She is a partner in a deer and sheep farm on the edge of Lake Ellesmere / Te Waihora.

**Violeta Ionescu** was born in Galați, Romania, where she currently lives. She has written poetry, played piano, and painted since her adolescence. Violeta has published six books and is a co-author of another six books.

**Kristina Jensen** is a 'poet afloat', freelance writer and musician living a life of voluntary simplicity in the Marlborough Sounds. She is an enthusiastic advocate of wild foods, loves to get out on the water whenever possible. Her poems, articles, essays and stories are published in New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

**Katie McLean** is a writer, painter, and general creative. She is currently studying a BA/BSc at the University of Auckland, where she is Vice President of the Auckland Write Club.

**Annie Neugebauer** is an author/poet with work appearing in more than seventy publications, including *Apex*, *Black Static*, and Bram Stoker Award finalist *The Beauty of Death*. Find more at [AnnieNeugebauer.com](http://AnnieNeugebauer.com)

**Keith Nunes** (Rotoma) has had poetry/short fiction/reviews published around the globe, and placed in competitions. His book *catching a ride on a paradox* is in bookstores.

**Vaughan Rapatahana** continues to be busy. In the last fortnight of April 2017, he was MC at the Lounge readings in Auckland; participated in the University of Santo Tomas book launch in Manila; and was first place winner at the Proverse Poetry award in Hong Kong.

**Anne Hollier Ruddy** grew up in NZ but lived in England and Australia for some years. She has been writing poetry since 2006.

**Valentina Telici** was born in Romania. She has lived in New Zealand since 2002. Valentina has published 14 books in Romanian, French and English, including works of sociology, poetry and stories for children.



## On winning poetry prizes

### A letter of advice from a prize-winner

Kia ora tātou katoa,



Late in 2016, I received email notification that I had won the inaugural Proverse Poetry prize for a single poem — which makes me feel very honoured, especially as it is an international competition, and many poets entered.

The monetary value is not the reason I initially entered, by the way — although I won't say no! Really, I entered because such competitions prove a very useful yardstick to measure one's overall ability as a poet. Also, if one achieves success, it can be utilised as leverage towards more opportunities to be published, and so on.

I stress however — although I do not enter many poetry prizes — that I have found the entire process of entering such competitions somewhat of a lottery. Even if you send what you consider some of your best work (which is often later snapped up and published elsewhere), there is, of course, absolutely no guarantee that your poem or poems will place, let alone receive any recognition whatsoever.

I have no insights into the mindsets of judges and can only counsel entrants not to become upset or discouraged if their fine poems receive no feedback.

Indeed, sometimes there is the reverse process, whereby a later winning entry had been declined in earlier submissions elsewhere. The poetry submission process is a veritable minefield.

Moreover, poetry competitions also attract some damned fine poets, so don't get discouraged if the winners and place-getters are established greats. You are in exalted company. Mind you, if you do succeed, you have probably joined their fold — again, depending on the range and prestige of the competition.

**Keep on entering**, I reckon, but my further advice is, only enter when you feel comfortable with your poem(s), and when you have the time and are in a relaxed frame of mind to peruse the competition outlines.

Also, if this is relevant, make time to **check out other already published poems** from previous relevant awards.

Don't just send any old poem and hope for the best. If you have no suitable poem(s) ready to enter, don't enter any at all — especially if you are also having to pay an entry fee! So, **take time to prepare** and to, maybe, write a whole new poem or poems, if you have the time and forbearance to do so.

Again, only enter competitions and prizes that have some relevance to your present position as a poet. Perhaps **start by entering local**, Aotearoa New Zealand competitions first, and then building on from there — this could be a good, initial approach... Start small.

Do I have any other advice? Yes. **Prepare entries that have some relevance and relationship to your own life experiences**, for I believe that such poems are always more honest — more *real*, if you will.

As I noted earlier, given that such competitions are somewhat of a gamble at the best of times, their judges are generally established poets themselves, and they will, hopefully, be looking for entries that ring true experientially, rather than as sheer, postmodern, wordplay exercises of linguistic logodaedaly.

My winning poem in the Proverse Poetry prize, "*tin yan don*", was based intimately on my own experiences around our home in Hong Kong SAR. I knew what I was portraying and this meant I was closer to the poem.

One other tip: always take time to scrutinise exactly what the competition organisers want in terms of **presentation of your entry**. This means check their requirements. For example, the guidelines might specify

- a particular font
- a certain number of lines
- a permitted number of poems
- how to submit
- the fees involved
- whether they will accept previously published online poems

... and so on. Who knows, perhaps your entry might not even get considered, especially if you do not follow the criteria. You don't want that.

I do not have any further insights. I have been pretty lucky, I guess, with competitions over the years, including being a place-getter in the 2013 *erbacce* poetry prize, selected from over 6,000 entrants; a semi-finalist in the inaugural international Proverse Literature prize in 2009; and placing second in the local *Plate in the Mirror* poetry competition last year.

However, I have totally missed out on several other competitions, too, sometimes becoming annoyed with myself afterwards for not following the guidelines I had set myself, usually being underprepared, by rushing into things, or through leaving the entry until the very last

minute. Or even by entering a contest that wasn't really suited to my poetry in the first place; for example, when the rules call for haiku only — and I had no track record of penning these!

Meanwhile, I will — occasionally and erratically, and when I have the time, space and right frame of mind to do so — continue to enter. Who knows what might happen, if I sit down to prepare and then submit what I consider my best and appropriate work, to a competition that seems to suit my writing style and topoi?

Because I will share one final reflection here: there is no greater, and more pleasant surprise than to learn that your work has been judged by your peers as having poetic merit. Makes your day, eh! As does the actual presentation ceremony. I went back home to Hong Kong in April to receive the prize at the annual Proverse Publishing Spring Reception.

He waimarie ki a katoa [Good luck to all.]

Kia ora.

*Vaughan Rapatahana  
Morrinsville, Aotearoa New Zealand  
Tin Shui Wai, Hong Kong SAR  
Pampanga, Philippines*

## Featured Poets



*Violeta Ionescu's poems, with Romanian translations by  
Valentina Teclici, appear in Poetical Bridges.*

### September of Leaf

Why do you snuggle inside me  
Like the tree in its seed?  
Let me pick your sunset  
And hide it underneath wet ferns  
And sit beside it  
And watch it.

September of shadow,  
You are now coming  
Sneaking under the door  
Just as I was closing my eyes.  
You come with your arms full of  
White petals of butterflies and you tell me:  
Let's glue them together  
Two by two.

September of fog  
Stop me when, because of the too tough afternoon  
I'll migrate.

Romeo and Juliet  
Manon Lescaut and Des Grieux  
Daphnis and Cloe  
Are only simple stories  
Comparing to our love  
Which no one will write of.

### Septembrie de frunză

De ce te strângi în mine  
Ca arborele în sămânță?  
Lasă-mă să-ți culeg înserarea  
S-o ascund sub ferigile umede  
Să mă așez alături  
Și s-o privesc.

Septembrie de umbră, acum chiar vii  
Te strecoari pe sub ușă  
Tocmai când închisesem ochii  
Vii cu brațele pline de petale  
Albe de fluturi și-mi spui:  
Hai să le lipim  
Două câte două.

Septembrie de ceață  
Oprește-mă când de prea grea amiază  
Voi migra.

Romeo și Julieta  
Manon Lescaut și Des Grieux  
Daphnis și Cloe  
Nu sunt decât simple povești  
Pe lângă dragostea noastră despre care  
Nu se va scrie niciodată.

### Is it You or Me?

Is it you or me  
Sitting at the window of no resemblance?  
Starlings come in the morning  
And drink rain from my palms.  
In the evening, they go back and fall asleep in the air  
With their beaks leaning against your shoulders.  
When it snows at my place,  
It rains roses at yours.  
It's the same one, you know

That unreal snow  
That went through this separating window  
That has no resemblance.  
When it's daytime where you are  
It seems night-time where I am  
Suddenly we wake up  
Robbed by several meridians.  
We wave, and it seems we can hear one another.  
Where is the magic boundary?  
The sand storms around us.  
Seconds crack  
And fall one into the other  
Someone turns the hourglass  
Is it really true that there is sunshine where you are?  
Is it you or me  
The one who is touching with their eyesight  
A window or something similar?



## Reviews



*I am Minerva*. Karen Zelas. (submarine, a Mākaro Press imprint, 2016). ISBN 9780-9941299-70. RRP \$25. Paperback. 90pp.

*Reviewed by Vaughan Rapatahana*

*Introductory note: Minerva was a Roman goddess, the custodian of creativity, words and wisdom.*

There is no doubt whatsoever that Karen Zelas is a very good poet, well capable of penning fine poetry. Indeed, this new collection serves and swerves to show us this in spades.

But I will briefly — and only here — also add that, at times, there is a tendency for her to overwrite and that some of her images and word choices don't quite come off, where a more oblique word usurps a simpler one. This poet — like so many of us — is actually more convincing when more concise, such as sampled in the first two entries in the slim volume entitled “In camera” (p.13) and “Bride song” (p.15).

As a couple of examples of poetic overbite and also an occasional weary cliché, cast your eyes on these few snippets —



### Ești tu ori sunt eu ?

Ești tu ori sunt eu  
La geamul fără asemănare?  
Graurii vin dimineața și beau  
Ploaie din pumnii mei  
Seara se-ntorc și adorm în aer  
Cu ciocul rezemat de umerii tăi.  
Când ninge la mine  
La tine plouă cu trandafiri  
E aceeași, să știi,  
Prefăcută, trecută ninsoare  
Prin geamul acesta despărțitor  
Și fără de asemănare.  
Când la tine e zi  
La mine se pare că-i noapte  
Deodată ne trezim că suntem  
Văduvite de câteva meridiane  
Facem semne, se pare că ne și auzim  
Unde e magica limită?  
Nisipul viscolește în jurul nostru  
Secundele se surpă  
Cad unele-ntr-altele  
Cineva întoarce clepsidra.  
Chiar e adevărat că la tine e soare?  
Sunt tu ori ești eu  
Cea care atinge acum cu privirea  
Un geam sau ceva asemănător?

& as your ship breaks on my shore  
I shall draw you to me through  
dangerous waters & calm  
 (“Waypoint”, p.15)

you  
breached the testosterone citadel  
 (“La gondoliera”, p.32)

while the grotesque cohort  
of my own iniquities materialise  
cavort in the foreground  
 (“Keeping us in line”, p.35)

I am tears falling  
from the eye of the world  
 (“Slow”, p.52)

my bitch vacuums the berm  
("Losing the way", p.69)

Enough.

Now, let's get back to positivity. The collection is divided into two sections (*The act of breathing* and *There's no circus without clowns*, augmented by a tidy Notes section), both rather focused on the poet's past.

It is the second section, however, that finds Zelas at her best, methinks. For here, she zooms right into the meta-personal: her *whānau rāua ko mātua rawatia* (family and especially parents); her long-suffering *tipuna Hūrai* (Jewish ancestors); the sprightly and spirited recollections of being reared in Wellington. She is never afraid of calling a spade a spade, of using four letter words; of demarking illness and rampant bodily decay — Zelas is an upfront, unpretentious and honest poet with rather a serious agenda. Graphic depictions of the Holocaust and orchitis are not *hors d'oeuvres*, but full-on verse repast.

At her frequent best, she also dresses her themes in a distinctive broken-spaced appurtenance and wordplay that reveals her fascination with both abstruse vocabulary, extended metaphorical excursions and alliterative chains (especially in her final poem "Born of the head of my father", pp.84-85!). This is exemplified in the following poem, which to me is one of the best beasts in the Zelas zoo, here reproduced in its clever entirety.

### Foreplay

I know what gets you going:           let's whip  
over to Freedom                           all that spanking  
black leather  
  
*sublime lounge suite!* you choke       tweak  
a thong                                   stroke curve of back & seat  
& table!                   trace a shapely leg   *more* you sigh  
flushed skin slick you slip row to row  
from La-Z-boy to sofa bed           with passion  
move deep in the belly               hold out  
your Amex gold                       gasp *I want that one!*

(p.51)

The sexual sensuality apparent here is also a presence in several other poems throughout, even in the first slightly more distanced section and its concentration on travel to and through more exotic and erotic locales. "The reading" (p.22) is one such *d r a w n* out double-entendre paean to oral poetry. As evident here —

& she yields

in your mouth  
tumbles  
with alliterative consonants

...while "Moon slips in" (pg.53) unleashes similar connubial couplings:

*don't wake my husband*  
you stroke the length of me  
play me  
like a harp or fool  
*don't think I'm easy*

Indeed.

Zelas is quirky in both form and content and births some quaint notions across both parameters. In "To a stranger god" (p.36), we are left to reflect on her final ruminations about a good shepherd sheepdog —

what if dyslexia  
plagued the chroniclers of old  
& the name was Dog?

In the end, a poet's mettle is settled by their ability to delight the reader with something cleverly salacious — an image out of left-field; some words strungtogether into a nitid necklace that takes our breath away; a complete poem that is bigger than its variegated devices and descriptions. That Karen Zelas is — generally — in fine fettle here is obvious, as we scan some powerful suchlike—

tarnished  
pegs of teeth  
("Hanging in the old hood", p.64)

& (Zelas likes to use the ampersand too, by the way!)

I found her hearing aid  
singing in a drawer

I plumbed her eyes  
deep pools  
& surfaced empty-handed  
("Wanted", p.70)

and

I catch him in an unguarded moment  
notice his clothes are growing  
hang from his shoulders like a memory  
("Rich humours", p.83)

Then there is an entire poem, "This is how it feels" (p.47), which is a rampant parade of convincing images of what the earthquake meant to the people of Christchurch, such as "It is a thump from young thugs after your wallet is stolen", and "it is finding your daughter is on the streets".

Karen Zelas casts herself as a poetic slattern, yes (see "I, the slattern", p.82), but Minerva also slinks deep in to share her four-poster bed, so that when she is ready to rise and 'birth a poem', she is well accomplished in producing poetic fruits ready for us to palpate and plunder. As in this, her third collection. I believe the fourth will provide an even more bountiful harvest.

Kia ora e hoa.

*An echo where you lie.* Polina Kouzminova  
(Wellington: submarine, a Mākarō Press  
imprint, 2016). ISBN 9780-9941299-49. RRP  
\$25. Paperback. 45 pp.

*Reviewed by Keith Nunes*

The Siberian wilderness of her former home seems to haunt poet Polina Kouzminova, and while she now lives in New Zealand, she appears to linger between lives, waiting for the new person, the new home to become whole.

Her debut poetry collection is a slim volume — 25 poems in 47 pages — but covers plenty of emotional ground. I don't remember seeing the word *absence* so often in one place before and that speaks to her sense of loss (romantic and physical place) — a sort of serial sadness. It's an understated but moving voice that resonates in the poem "At the airport" (p.28):

My nails are bitten by the nerves,  
and eyes cast down onto the undone  
sole of the shoe.

I fell in love with the poem, "I know your daydream" (p.36), with its playful touches: 'get lost in a cab, exhaust the radio'; its melancholia of barely remembered nights: 'white pillows / with my mascara drawings on them'; and finally its sense of disconnection and yet, as with Kouzminova, a sense of hope threaded with curiosity and unease:

I don't know where you parked

your daydream. But if I did,  
where would it take me?

("I know your daydream")

With these lines from "Limit" (p.38) — 'Visualise me, I cannot see myself' and 'I wasn't engineered correctly' — I found a robust expression telling of a raw angst that hides behind the eyes, alluding to self-doubt, a lack of self-confidence.

In "The fall" (p.13), she outlines her tenet — she goes through heartbreak, she finds herself, and then doubt eases in through the cracks of human frailty.

I admire her depiction of three-dimensional characters (herself?) and her avoidance of rom-com happy endings:

I stare bewildered at the wild, the universe  
pushing me to say this out loud:  
that I do not love you anymore.

And then Kouzminova moves on saying:

I will be  
pure again, without the need  
for laughter between the sheets,  
without the need for absence or presence.

The narrator shows strength and resilience in the face of a relationship collapse but again there is that gnawing doubt when she says later in the poem:

The water runs gently,  
a small stream of quiet; that tightening,  
under the evening street lights –  
and I am there. I am always there.  
("The fall")

In the poem "Distance, or when death ascends" (p.30), she conjures the *lonely in a crowd* scenario, with a dejection resulting from appealing for recognition and having it go unanswered:

The silver-green thread unseen,  
as we can be unseen at times,  
despite our best efforts.  
("Distance, or when death ascends")

These poems carry gravitas; they place you in an uneasy space with Kouzminova if you're willing to go there. The speaker stands as a solitary figure reaching out

with apprehension aware of the potential pain of rejection and attendant lack of understanding and empathy – *the stranger in a strange land*.

I was enthralled by the poem, “The wedding” (p.16), which shot me through with stark steely imagery that is unsettling, and takes me geographically and emotionally to places that I might not ordinarily choose to go:

The snow’s sparkles fell in brisk segments –  
the winter story unfolding beauty all around.  
Some fell on my pink fingers – a pauper’s gesture,  
outstretched and uninvited.

And further on in the poem, she adds:

I felt the need to go deeper,  
much deeper than before.  
But I couldn’t feel my heartbeat  
for whatever reason,  
and I’m not sure I wanted to.  
 (“The wedding”)

In “Christchurch” (p.26), she unnerves the reader by offering up a tangible and loving relationship, then withdrawing it and suggesting nothing is present: ‘I wonder why we have to be ghosts / when we are still alive.’ She portrays a sense of wandering this earth without being noticed or without having the sense of *being*. Are we just an array of ideas, beliefs, fears and hopes encased in an optical illusion? Is this the greatest of all sorrows, that we are here but there’s no substantive acknowledgment of our presence?

In the following stanza from “Weightless” (p.43), I believe she encapsulates the essence of the collection – the duality, the paradox, the two-halves of life (love and pain, joy and anguish) and that one is never far from the other and that’s just the way it is.

But I’m not lost. I’m merely found,  
among the most exciting times within this life,  
even if it’s all about banging doors, leading me  
from room to room, a corridor of lives I care  
and care not about.  
They speak to me the same way in return.  
 (“Weightless”)

Kouzminova’s delivery is straightforward and makes for an undemanding read, while still managing to surprise and challenge. *An echo where you lie* is a moving, memorable collection and, I believe, just the beginning of a poetic vocation.

## Members’ Poems



### Three Pantuns

Citrus grandis within a thick peel  
Cocoons a fruit of little weight.  
He makes you swoon, but you feel  
Kisses and promises are hook and bait.

For every fruit a sharp thorn,  
Barberry jam is earned with pain.  
Not every shrew deserves your scorn,  
Some only argue with a sharp brain.

On a bowl of walnuts filled to the brim,  
A pouring of sugar will find enough room.  
The boat is full — many sing that old hymn,  
Slighting own roots that allow them to bloom.

—Valeria Barouch

### Borabu

She and her family  
leave before the rooster  
has time to  
screech his ritual.

Their oxen walks free  
but she is yoked,  
a plastic bucket  
each end of the pole.

Red dirt stains her feet  
on paths twisting  
out of the village  
to their livelihood.

Now the sun wakes  
and glares down on  
triangular straw hats.  
They plod their furrows.

A few minutes to eat —  
one bucket has sticky rice  
in the other a coke bottle  
of well water, once cool.

Feet, arms, hands work  
in a rhythm that  
coaxes chaff away.  
Their backs throb.

Returning in slow motion  
thankful for shadows,  
her stomach growls wanting  
a few sardines with rice.

Neighbours arrive at the shack  
bearing a little rice wine  
to smudge the edges  
of carbon copy days.

### **It's My Party**

Park your cars and come into the hall  
Bring those platters groaning with food  
Flaunt your pretty dresses and hug me  
Hibiscus behind your ears look good.

Place your birthday cards on the table  
I'll read them in the weekdays to come  
Be seated for the speeches will be long  
You'll be able to dance when they're done!

Show everyone my letter from the Queen  
Clap your hands as I bow with a smile  
The band strikes up, my sons are singing  
Those songs from the heart, Island style.

Forget our family squabbles, turn a new page  
Today I am one hundred years of age!

—*Anne Hollier Ruddy*

### **Butter & Barley Soup**

some days it doesn't come easy  
my mind wants out, blank page relief  
no free-flow, no lofty sentiments  
I'm being dragged down  
by late nights chewing the fat

voices that chant in an  
ominous monotonous:  
can't,

give up,  
never,  
who are you trying to fool?

anyway, and therefore,

it's time for soup  
butter and barley,  
pumpkin and green curry  
to densely intensify the mood

far more nourishing  
than destructive chatter,  
the fitting recipe

for success

—*Kristina Jensen*

### **driving to Cambridge**

I drive past the exit  
Cambridge West  
another exit passes me by  
Cambridge East  
ten minutes up my sleeve  
so I just keep driving  
wondering where I might end up  
I want to arrive at the main intersection  
to Cambridge township  
as I remember it  
when visiting Nana and Granddad  
or to browse through dusty books  
and slip on an antique ruby ring.

I am driving to see a movie  
that takes me all the way back  
to American Literature III  
my driving companion  
gone to the rescue of a friend  
his car broken down  
so I overshoot my destination  
lazily, but make the turn  
cursing my aversion  
to an abundance of changes en route  
a traffic cop in view

—*Anne Curran*

## Presage

talking to yourself aloud to better know  
screws the throat dry  
with the psychology of the fallible  
over quick blue cheese and walnut bread  
soft and fragrant  
flick him off  
it's easier than kneading ego  
your time pungent with thyme picked fresh  
from out there in the therapeutic garden  
the buttermilk use by date is nigh  
solid and dimpled disgorged from the carton  
like albino afterbirth  
bloodless white  
blue vein  
and a sprinkling of grated parmesan  
roughly chop walnuts toasted under grill  
omega 3  
fold gently  
shape lightly  
slash carefully  
take care not to cut all the way through dough  
as he to the quick  
of invisible sensibilities  
rest  
cook on high cool on rack  
test  
analyse  
he's sightless unless that in his sights is useful  
otherwise  
best sampled while slightly warm still

—Suzanne Herschell

## Latke

When my mother made potato latke  
she grew watchful  
  
there was the weight, the added freight of the dish  
in the transport to the table  
  
she would set down the dish, turn from us  
turn back, to the stove.  
  
She was, I see it now, too guarded, too careful  
for 'Eat already!' But the gesture, to begin.

Latke was the one time she would never sit to eat  
but saw to it that we did.

There was an arc from reticence to pleasure — no  
scale no book no measure —  
nothing to get in the way of my mother and the latke  
  
back at the stove the slotted spoon, she would take  
an amount,  
drain a little for the hot oil not to spit, not so much  
as to leave the flavor.

In her search for evidence she would turn from the  
stove in that watchful way  
look to us to give her some sign

what we thought of latke, my brother and I, was  
significant  
in ways we could not understand

in increments she would become transformed, stand,  
her *back*  
to the oven — *everything* forgotten, even that.

And how it would end? With my mother's detachment  
her small chair drawn in to the kitchen bench, her  
tearing

of a piece of latke, the portion that of a child's  
on the wide plate.

—Ruth Hanover

## Free

Let me be hollow and weightless and  
light; let me dance  
as a dandelion fairy set loose on a wish

Don't take away from me  
control; it is all I have left

*Give us this day our daily bread*  
*Give us the power to refuse*  
*Give us our own bodies*

Have you considered that

Maybe  
I want to fade away?

Force yourself down my throat  
(you can't, I won't let you)  
I will vomit  
up your platitudes without repeating a sound

*Give me this day my daily bread  
Give me the power to fall if I wish  
Give me my own body to fall with*

—Katie McLean

### Where's the marmite?

There are people  
who don't like marmite  
It's true. I made this discovery  
quite early in life.

It's possible, there are people  
who don't like shortbread, too,

just as some don't like art  
or have *never read a book  
since they left school,*

and say that  
with a complacent air  
for they are always rich.

There are others who sit in the sun  
inviting who knows what disaster  
yet just shrug and say *life's a beach;*

they're into philosophy.

Then there are people,  
probably unbalanced already,

who don't feel sick in cars;  
as for marmite, disguise it as you will  
in pretty jars; eat it with butter

on fancy crackers,  
or imported breads,  
the taste remains the same.

Oh. Where's the marmite?

Sorry, there is none.

Yes, all gone.

—Cherry Hill

# Opportunities



## Prose, Poetry and Prose

*Prose, Poetry and Prose* is open to submissions of fiction, creative non-fiction and poetry. Our submission guidelines are here: [prolebooks.co.uk/submissions.html](http://prolebooks.co.uk/submissions.html)

We are also taking entries for our prose writing competition, The Prolitzer Prize. We have a £300 prize fund and the excellent Angela Readman is our judge this year. Full details are here: [prolebooks.co.uk/prose-competition.html](http://prolebooks.co.uk/prose-competition.html)

*Prose* was recently voted best Literary Magazine 2016 at the Saboteur Awards.

## Brief

*Brief* is an independent print journal, founded in 1995. It appears biannually and publishes poetry, prose, essays... and things that are difficult to categorise. We are always looking for interesting, experimental, adventurous, or challenging new writing, from both established and emerging writers.

## Mimicry

Now open for submissions.

Check out the YouTube video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjCBVeU\\_fIY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjCBVeU_fIY) for more information.

## The Bridport Prize

Poems: 42 lines maximum, no minimum. All entries submitted can be on any subject, and written in any style or form.

The deadline date for entries is 12 midnight (UK time) on Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 (postal entries postmarked 31<sup>st</sup> May but received later will be accepted).

Visit [www.bridportprize.org.uk/content/competition-rules](http://www.bridportprize.org.uk/content/competition-rules) for more info.

## The Poetry Kit Spring Competition 2017

This year's competition is for poetry on any subject.

There are no style or length restrictions but it should be stressed that a short poem is just as likely to be selected as a longer one.

1<sup>st</sup> prize is £100. The top ten poems will be published in a special edition of *Caught in the Net* (CITN).

Visit [poetrykit.org/comp-spring.htm](http://poetrykit.org/comp-spring.htm) for more info.

## Wundor Poetry Contest 2017

The winner will receive 500 pounds (UK)

Deadline 31 May 2017 – winners announced end of June 2017

Visit [www.wundoreditions.com/wundor-editions-contests.html](http://www.wundoreditions.com/wundor-editions-contests.html) for more information.

## Bread and Roses Poetry Award | Closing Date: 31-May-17

### Details:

In partnership with Unite the Union, Culture Matters is a web platform ([www.culturematters.org.uk](http://www.culturematters.org.uk)) that promotes a progressive political approach to the arts and other cultural activities. The purpose of the new Award is to encourage poets to focus on themes which are meaningful to working class people and communities, and to encourage those communities to engage more with poetry. There is a £500 cash prize for the winner, £250 second prize and £100 third prize. The judges will be Andy Croft from Smokestack Books, and Mary Sayer from Unite. Entries should consist of three poems, each no more than 50 lines long. Entry is open to everyone regardless of trade union membership, and is free. Entries should broadly deal with any aspect of working class life, communities and culture and show commitment to the common people, the common good and the common music of poetry. The winners will be invited to an awards ceremony at the Unite conference in Durham in July.

Entry Fee: £0

Contact: Poems should be sent via email to: [info@culturematters.org.uk](mailto:info@culturematters.org.uk), or by post to Culture Matters, c/o 8 Moore Court, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 8QE.

## Neon Literary Magazine Is Now Open To Submissions

After a longer-than-planned hiatus, submissions are now once again open for future issues of *Neon Literary Magazine*. We're seeking the best fiction, poetry, artwork and graphic short stories we can find. Have something you think might be at home in the magazine? Feel free to send it along – full guidelines can be found at [www.neonmagazine.co.uk/guidelines](http://www.neonmagazine.co.uk/guidelines)

Keep up-to-date with all the latest opportunities on the NZPS website ([www.poetrysociety.org.nz](http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz)) and Facebook [www.facebook.com/NewZealandPoetrySociety](http://www.facebook.com/NewZealandPoetrySociety)

We are also on Instagram: @nzpoetrysociety and Twitter: @NZPS

## Regular events around New Zealand



### Auckland

Poetry Live Auckland: Book yourself in to read at Poetry Live, at the Thirsty Dog, 469 Karangahape Rd, Auckland City. Tuesdays, 8 pm. Guest poets, guest musician & open mike. Contact: MCs Dietrich, Rachael, Penny, Tim or Michelle by email: [poetrylive@gmail.com](mailto:poetrylive@gmail.com), putting the MC's name in the subject line.

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

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

Inside.Out Open Mic for Writers (est. 2012): Open mic readings and performances with guest musicians, once every month. All writers welcome to share fiction, poetry, non-fiction, performance poetry etc or come as audience, meet other writers & get updates on what's on. Five-word-challenge with three book prizes. 7–10 pm, One2One Café, 121 Ponsonby Rd, Auckland. Email for more info: [anitaarlov@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:anitaarlov@hotmail.co.nz)

Titirangi Poet's Sessions are held at Titirangi Library, 500 Titirangi South Road, between 2 pm and 4 pm on the second Saturday of every month. More info, email: [piers@wwandd.co.nz](mailto:piers@wwandd.co.nz)

Orewa Writing Group: an informal writing group of three active writers looking for more writers to join in our group in Orewa NZ. We meet on the first Monday of each month. Email [ricpacifica@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:ricpacifica@yahoo.co.nz).

## The NZ Poetry Conference & Festival AUCKLAND

10 – 12 November 2017

Contact [conference@poetrysociety.org.nz](mailto:conference@poetrysociety.org.nz) or visit Facebook: [facebook.com/events/299460997085195](https://facebook.com/events/299460997085195)



## Christchurch

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

The Canterbury Poet's Collective Spring Season: Wednesdays at 6.30 pm, CPIT Students Association (CPSA) Hall, 5 Madras Street. Canterbury Poets Collective (CPC) presents open mic and guest readers. Audience votes for the Best Open Mic Poet. The programme will be posted when it is available.

Catalyst Poetry Open Mic: First Wednesday of the month, The Twisted Hop, 616 Ferry Rd, Woolston, Christchurch.

Beat Street Sessions, Christchurch: Third Thursday of the month at Beat St Cafe, corner of Barbados & Armagh Sts. 6 pm for music and open mic sign-up; 7 pm for guest poets. Entry: \$5 if you can.

Poetry For Pudding: Meets from 12–1.30pm on the second Friday of the month, at University Bookshop, Ilam. This is a relaxed supportive environment where poets of all levels are welcome. Bring a favourite poem – yours, or another's – to share.

Selwyn Writer's Salon: First Tuesday of the Month, upstairs at The Laboratory, 7–9 pm. Free Admission – all welcome.

Small White Teapot: Meets regularly at 7 pm on the third Tuesday of the month, for about a couple of hours to hear, discuss and critique the haiku. We do not stick to the 5-7-5 format of the Japanese language style of three line haiku, as some thinking is that if Basho, the master haiku writer had spoken and written in the English language, he would have used the syllabic format which has developed. The same guidelines apply: environment, season, nature, the moment, imagery, etc. usually in three lines. Sundry cost of \$3. Venue: Avebury House, Eveleyn Couzins Ave, Richmond. The SWTHG will be pleased to welcome you.

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

## Coromandel

Thames Poets Circle, co-hosted by Greg Brimblecombe and Jill Steadman Read, meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7 pm. Venue: SpeakEasy, 740 Pollen Street, Thames. For more information, please contact Greg on 07 868 9947 or greg.brimblecombe@gmail.com and jills1@xtra.co.nz.

## Cromwell

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

## Dunedin

Live Poetry With The Octagon Poetry Collective: We meet monthly (most months) in the Dog With Two Tails

Cafe and Bar in Moray Place, a few doors up from the Rialto Cinema, at 8 pm, on the second-last Tuesday of the month. For specific details, check out our Facebook page: Octagon Collective/Dog with Two Tails Poetry Readings. To contact us, email octagoncollective@gmail.com and cc: cmccurdie@xtra.co.nz

## Golden Bay

Golden Bay Live Poet's Society has a monthly Performance Night at the famous Mussel Inn Bush Café at Onekaka. (For dates, go to Mussel Inn.) Visiting poets are most welcome. For news of meetings, contact convenor Mark Raffills at mark@drycrust.com or 03 544 4975 ext. 210

## Greymouth

Word Of Mouth meets every month on the last Wednesday, 7.30–9pm at the Left Bank Art Gallery, 1 Tainui Street. A friendly, enthusiastic gathering of poets and poetry fans. All welcome. Contact Greg O'Connell W: (03) 768 5597 H: (03) 768 5222 M: (027) 759 0531 E: greg@gregococonnell.com

## Hamilton

POETS ALIVE meet on the last Friday of the month from 7–9pm. For more information, contact Celia Hope at poetsalivenz@gmail.com

## Hawke's Bay

Hawke's Bay Live Poetry Society meets at 8 pm on the second Monday of each month (except January) at the Hastings Community Arts Centre, 106 Russell Street, Hastings. Contact Bill Sutton on 06 844 4196 or email suttb70@gmail.com

## Kapiti

Poets To The People meets at Hightide Cafe, 44 Marine Parade, Paraparaumu Beach, 4–6pm, on the last Sunday of the month, February to November, except October. Guest poet each month. Open mic at 4 pm. Snacks and beverages are available. Entry price of \$5 covers the poet's koha and general expenses. Contact Michael Keith, mickeith@ihug.co.nz

## Marlborough

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

## Nelson

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

## Picton

Picton Poets: (founded by Ernest Berry in 1994) meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 10.30 am at the Picton Library. Poets share their own original poetry and comment in an encouraging way. New members and visitors to Marlborough are welcome.

## Palmerston North

Stand Up Poetry: Open mic poetry evening and special guest poet. First Wednesday of the month, 7–9 pm, Sound & Vision Zone, Level 1, Central Library. Organiser: Helen Lehndorf. For more information on this and other happenings, contact (06) 351 4100; email: [promotions@pncc.govt.nz](mailto:promotions@pncc.govt.nz); website [www.citylibrary.pncc.govt.nz/](http://www.citylibrary.pncc.govt.nz/)

Contact person at the library is Jenny Veller.

## Porirua

Poetry and Music At The Metro. First Sunday of every month, 3–6pm at the Metropolitan Restaurant and Bar, 7 Lydney Place, Porirua City Centre (opp. Railway Station, behind Bus stop). **Programme:** 3–5 pm, Open mic for any performance poetry, song, instrumental, original or covers, dance etc, any genre – traditional or contemporary, pop, rock, folk, rap, whatever. 5–6 pm, features, invited guest artist – poet, musician, singer, band, soloist or combination. Come along and put your name on the blackboard and have a go, or just listen and enjoy. Koha collection taken for guest artist. Food and drink available from bar. We are always looking for guest artists, whether musos, poets, dancers, or any other type of performers. For more information, contact Phil O'Connell (04)237-9902; mobile 027 786 5542; email [philjoconnell@gmail.com](mailto:philjoconnell@gmail.com) if you are interested and available.

## Rotorua

rotorua mad poets meet every Wednesday night at the Rotorua Public Library at 6 pm. All poets and general public welcome to attend. Light refreshments available afterwards. 7.30–9.30 pm.

## Taupo

Live Poets: A friendly group of Taupo poets and writers who meet for informal readings at 5.15 pm on the last Wednesday of each month at the Taupo Museum. These are open to all, and readings of original poems and those by favourite authors are encouraged. Email Geni for more information: [genirayjohnston@gmail.com](mailto:genirayjohnston@gmail.com)

## Tauranga

Tauranga Writers: A self-help group established over 40 years ago. We get together monthly to exchange experience and expertise, discuss tactics and techniques and to share work in progress for constructive criticism. We meet on the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm, at The Alzheimer's Society House, 116, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Tauranga. Contact Jenny Argante on 07 578 5757 and 022 053 48 68, or email [jenny.argante@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.argante@gmail.com)

All genres and new members always welcome. Enquirers may request a complimentary copy of *Update*, our monthly newsletter, to find out what we're all about.

## Timaru

For poetry events, or to contact Timaru or South Canterbury poets, contact Karalyn Joyce at [karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz](mailto:karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz) / ph. 03 6147858.

## Wairarapa

Wairarapa Word meets on the first Sunday of the month, 3–5 pm, at Almo Books, High St, Carterton. All welcome: poets, novelists, lyricists, story-tellers, more. We read aloud our original work and the work of others. Free entry. Cash bar.

## Wanaka

Poetic Justice Wanaka: Wanaka poets meet sporadically for open mic nights and workshops. They have a growing programme of national and international performers. See the website for meeting dates and times: [facebook.com/Poetic-Justice-Wanaka-116992045162321](https://facebook.com/Poetic-Justice-Wanaka-116992045162321)

## Wellington

Poetry In Motion happens on the first Wednesday of the month at Meow, in Edward St. It is an inclusive event that aims to raise the profile of poetry and spoken word as a fun, engaging art form and challenge people's notions of what poetry is. This is a forum for sharing ideas, laughter, tears and views on life with a community of people who love words and performance in a lively bar atmosphere. No open mic as such, but people can book a 'Stage' slot during the first half of the show and read/perform for 5–6 minutes.

POETRY AT THE FRINGE: 4–6 pm on the 3rd Sunday of every month at the The Fringe Bar, Allen St. Featuring an open mic, Guest Poet and a musical interlude. For information, contact Neil Furby, [ballroompoetrycafe@gmail.com](mailto:ballroompoetrycafe@gmail.com)

## Whakatane

LIVE POETS meet at 7.30 pm on the third Monday of the month, in the home of a member. Contact: Margaret Wilson at 07 3072308 (you can leave a message).

## Whangarei

ONEONESIX, 116 Bank Street, Whangarei, 5–8 pm, third Thursday of the month.

Contact [pietn@outlook.com](mailto:pietn@outlook.com)

# The New Zealand Poetry Society Inc.

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