



Newsletter

November 2005

New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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☞ This Month's Meeting ☞

Turnbull House
11 Bowen Street, Wellington
Thursday 17th November
Launch of the NZPS Anthology
Hear poets read their work from the anthology
MC for the night is Laurice Gilbert
Start time: 7pm, refreshments will be served
For further information call:
Neil Furby Event Manager
027 489 6066 or getsmart@paradise.net.nz

Incidental Images

Stephanie De Montalk

The laptop's on, the printer's loaded and coffee's in the cup. I have an idea for a poem or a piece of prose but the words are hiding.

The most useful thing I can do when the keyboard is silent and the screen doesn't move is open a scenic calendar or thoughtful pictorial magazine like *National Geographic*, or pocket my notebook and take a walk, lose myself in a movie, visit an exhibition of art, photography, sculpture, a futuristic arrangement of seaweed ...

For it seems to me that there is something about releasing the mind from the conscious, earnest and familiar search for details and words and engaging with random images that provokes the imagination and encourages subconscious thinking – the real genesis of writing – about the topic to rise to the surface.

Sometimes the impetus will be a small detail, like the calendar photograph of an impoverished elderly couple counting white beans arranged in rows on their bed into a bucket, that provided me with a theme of subsistence living for 'Fifth Quarter' (*The Scientific Evidence of Dr Wang*, VUP, 2003) – a disquisition in which a group of well-fed friends planning a reunion dinner decide to serve offal as a novelty dish.

Sometimes detail and setting will matter less than, say, weather and mood – a stillness that speaks of loneliness or hope, a wild wind of energy or despair; or a prevailing sense of stories that might be winding their way beneath the surface.

In 'Dog on a Mountain' (*The Scientific Evidence of Dr Wang*), a filmed landscape became the key to a poem I was trying, unsuccessfully, to write about exile or separation and the emotional distance of unfamiliar surroundings. As the film festival was on, I left the concept to simmer and went, without expectation, to a documentary about throat singing. The film included footage from, as I recall, Mongolia. Of course, there was nothing about throat singing that was remotely relevant to exile. But there *were* connections in the mood of the stony Mongolian landscape from which the backdrop to the poem would later be established, as well as in the fragments of geographical isolation, including a lonely road and a dog howling 'from the back of its throat', that wove their way into the work.

Frequently, surprising associations occur. In 'Waxing and Salting' (*Cover Stories*, VUP, 2005), an essay on mutton-birding, accompanied by dramatic photographs of shearwaters above the sea preparing to land on their nesting island, cleared the way for a poem about loss and recovery in which the return of a misplaced thought is compared to the unlikely spectacle of mutton birds making their seasonal way back to their burrows.

In addition to developing an idea, incidental images can also suggest an idea, or subject, to develop. For instance, the catalyst for two poems, 'Fish Sometimes Swim in Pools' and 'At the Border' (*Animals Indoors*, VUP, 2001), were black-and-white photographs of oriental rugs in an advertisement in the daily paper.

In the case of the first poem, as I studied the rugs I was reminded of the obvious: the carpet/ rolled/ in which the last Caliph [of Baghdad] was murdered' – as the last lines of the poem were to run. I then started to think about what the design on that particular carpet might have looked like, and the individual significance of the borders and designs on exotic rugs. This thought in turn led to consideration of the ancient art of hand-weaving and personal attachment

to hand-crafted carpets, and by this means to the second poem which became a flight of fancy about a couple of rugs which I and a traveling companion might have purchased in Afghanistan after 'the monarch/ had been deposed', only to encounter, on leaving the country, a border official with 'the long rolls of our carpets/ and the gleam of our beads in his eyes'.

As Ted Hughes observed of 'the feelings that come over us confusedly and fleetingly' when we encounter 'those few key things that open up our human excitement' – when 'we see some striking scene, or feel the unique atmosphere of some place' – we write more readily and revealingly about unexpected and unfamiliar scenes and situations than about the view from our bedroom window.

✎ From the Editor ✎

Writing a poem can be a bit like living your life, you may think you've got the direction sussed but shifts of heart or health or luck can lead to some surprising outcomes. You only really know what the final shape is at the end of the process.

With poetry, I think it's most often metaphors that lead us astray. Metaphors seem to think ahead of us, they are mysterious, like shape changers. Poets are often advised that a poem should surprise the reader in some way. Most often, a poem surprises the poet. I'm not suggesting lack of control, or that the poet is a 'vessel' for a poem from somewhere else. I'm thinking that notated scripts of poems by famous poets are fascinating for, yes, examples of the meticulous re-workings of a poem, but they are also fascinating because in some way they chart a journey the writer probably never expected to take.

Here's a wonderful poem by African American poet Rita Dove:

Dusting

*Every day a wilderness—no
shade in sight. Beulah
patient among knickknacks,
the solarium a rage
of light, a rainstorm
as her gray cloth brings
dark wood to life.*

*Under her hand scrolls
and crests gleam
darker still. What
was his name, that
silly boy at the fair with
the rifle booth? And his kiss and
the clear bowl with one bright
fish, rippling
wound!*

*Not Michael—
something finer. Each dust
stroke a deep breath and
the canary in bloom.
Wavery memory: home
from a dance, the front door
blown open and the parlor
in snow, she rushed
the bowl to the stove, watched
as the locket of ice
dissolved and he
swam free.*

*That was years before
Father gave her up
with her name, years before
her name grew to mean
Promise, then
Desert-in-Peace.
Long before the shadow and
sun's accomplice, the tree.
Maurice*

✎ Upcoming Events ✎

Victoria Continuing Education

Summer Writing School

Ignite your creative imagination and spend four days on a word fest in Wellington, the literary capital! This Summer Writing School covers three different strands of story telling – fiction, poetry and scriptwriting for stage and screen. (Participants are asked to select one of these areas only). Each group will work and learn separately but end the day together with talks and readings from the tutors and guests. Small groups and a focus on the practical will give you maximum opportunity to further develop writing skills and keep creativity flowing.

The Poetry Workshop

This workshop with poet James Brown focuses on both the reading and writing of poetry. The skills of reading and responding to poetry will be considered as an important part of the writing process. Writing opportunities will come from exercises designed to stimulate and stretch the imagination. Through a combination of writing, work-shopping and cheerful banter, you will gain a better understanding of how words work and, thereby, how to improve your writing.

James Brown was the 2004 Writer in Residence at Victoria University and is a former editor of the literary magazine *Sport*. His books of poetry, *Go Round Power Please* (winner of the 1996 Jessie Mackay Best First Book of Poetry Award), *Lemon* and *Favourite Monsters* are all published by Victoria University Press. He lives in Wellington with his partner and two children.

The workshop runs from Saturday 21 January – Tuesday 24 January, 9am – 5pm (NB Monday 23 January is Wellington Anniversary Day). Rutherford House, 23 Lambton Quay, Victoria University, Wellington. Fee: \$395 incl. GST, or \$355 for current VUW Alumni Association members, full-time students and community services cardholders.

Enrolments open on Monday 28 November. For further information or to enrol visit www.vuw.ac.nz/conted phone 463 6556 or email conted@vuw.ac.nz

Report by Andrea Cochrane Programme Manager (Personal Development) Victoria Continuing Education Te Whare Pukenga

The Whanganui Summer School of the Arts

Brochures are out for the famous Whanganui Summer School of the Arts, 8 – 14 January 2006. The school provides people from New Zealand and abroad with the opportunity to participate in a week of intensive workshops. The tutors are leading national and international artists selected for their special knowledge and their ability to inspire others.

Twenty-one workshops will cover the full gamut of artistic practice including: painting, printmaking, drawing, mixed media, botanical art, book arts, photography, sculpture, ceramics, glass, jewellery, illustration, writing and culinary arts.

Apirana Taylor will take a workshop entitled 'The Power of Words.' In this workshop you will not only develop and improve your writing – you will develop your senses and become aware of how much poetry there is in our daily lives. You will play with words and learn their power. You only have to hear Apirana recite one of his poems to be sure of his power source.

Apirana has written several books of poetry, short stories, a novel and several plays, and has written for radio and television. He has won awards for his poetry and short stories. His poetry has been translated into German, Italian and Russian and is published in most major New Zealand anthologies. His latest collection of poetry, *Te Ata Kura*, has just been published by Canterbury University Press, and he has recently released his second poetry CD, *Footsteps in Tears Thumbprints in Blood*.

Class sizes are limited and enrolments are due by mid November. For a brochure or more information contact Summer School Co-ordinator, Jodie Dalgleish at Whanganui UCOL, (06) 905 3800, j.dalgleish@ucol.ac.nz or go to www.ucol.ac.nz to download a brochure and enrolment form.

Report from Jodie Dalgleish

Beatspeak

Enjoy an evening of spoken word and music at Lopdell House Theatre, Titirangi. Sunday 4 December 2005.

The evening features 'the beautiful losers' – poetry by Shane Hollands with Paul Williams on 'cellotronics.' See:

www.beautifullosers.co.nz

Also, Sally, Raewyn Alexander, Murray Haddow (punk poet extraordinaire), Genevieve McClean.

Soundscape – Matt Reece on didgeridoo, Kevin Timm on guitar,

The Three Mulleeters – Dave Alley on guitar, Rod Redgrave on bass/drums, Jono on mandolin and fiddle

Licensed bar and cafe open from 6.30 pm. Concert starts 7.30 pm. \$10 presales / \$15 on the door.

Tickets available from: Earth Seed Organics, Glen Eden, Da Vinci Books, New Lynn, Titirangi Village Pharmacy or email truegreens@xtra.co.nz ph (09) 826 4615

Amnesty International's 40th birthday celebrations

An evening of poetry, dance and music by well-known local artists in celebration of Amnesty International's 40th birthday. Artists include: Terence Dennis, Ana Good, Bronwyn Judge, Daniel Belton, Hone Tuwhare and Elizabeth Isichei. Compere: Peter Chin. Friday 28 November, Dunedin, 7pm. Entry \$15.00 (no eft-pos).

Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 30 The Octagon, (03) 474 3240.

A Summer Affair: Workshops for Art, Writing, Language and Culture, Auckland

Earlybird discounts of \$25 for enrolment before 4 November; deadline 12 December. Courses run Monday 9 January 2006 to Friday 20 January 2006 and are fully catered.

The 2006 'Poetry Shed' will be taught by Jen Crawford, BCA (Hons), PhD

Class Number: 60271, 4 sessions, Thursday – Sunday, 12 – 15 January, 9.30am – 4.30pm. Room 221, Bldg No. 734, Tamaki Campus, Morrin Road, Glen Innes. Cost: \$360.00 For more information or to enrol phone: 0800 864 266 or visit www.cce.auckland.ac.nz

Report from AUP

International Poetry Festival

Disarmament and Peaceful Dialogue are the themes for the third Wellington International Poetry Festival. WIPF offers a range of events to stimulate, educate, entertain and celebrate cultural diversity and peaceful poetic dialogue. The events are accessible and diverse; most are free of charge and at various times of the day and evening. The festival runs from Thursday 3 to Sunday 6 November.

Guest list includes: Sam Hamill (US); Hinemoana Baker (NZ); Prabal Basu (India); Grant Caldwell (Australia); Jim Christy (Canada); John Deane (Ireland); Doc Drumheller (USA–NZ); Andrew Fagan (NZ); Olivia Macassey (NZ); Ban'ya Natsuishi (Japan); James Norcliffe (NZ);

Vincent O’Sullivan (NZ); Angelina Polonskaya (NZ); Elizabeth Smither (NZ); Carmen Tafolla (Mexico–USA); Tendo Taijin (Japan); Denys Trussell (NZ) and Ahmed Zaoui (Algeria). The full programme is online at www.poetryfestival.org.nz

Valuing Cultural Knowledge

We live in a society in which cultural knowledge is devalued, and in which ‘facts’ – science and technology – are the forms of knowledge with most value; dancers, writers, artists, curators, and academics in the humanities are used to being seen as marginal to the prosperity of our country, economic and otherwise. We know that ‘creativity’ isn’t well paid, unless it’s called ‘innovation’ in the business sector. Yet the knowledge produced in the interpretation of our world, whether in the form of scholarly research, as art exhibitions, theatrical productions, or dance performances, contributes greatly, and valuably, to all aspects of all our lives, personal and professional; the humanities are, after all, concerned with what it means to be human, and that’s a central part of all our work, including that in the economic, scientific and even technological sectors. Talking about cultural knowledge shouldn’t just be relegated to debates about national identity, and it should be as well funded as other forms of knowledge.

The Council for the Humanities aims, through research-based advocacy, to advance the position of the arts and humanities in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is being launched with a conference and a free series of events which aim to kick-start this debate: ‘The Humanities/Aronui, Cultural Value and the Public Good’, 23–24 November, 2005, Wellington.

Please come and have your say in the future of the arts and humanities in New Zealand. For more information, including a full programme of events and a registration form, please visit www.humanitiesresearch.net, or email Louise O’Brien at admin@humanz.org.nz

Warm Welcome

Jenny Bornholdt – Wellington
Bruce Palmer – Auckland

Other News

Small White Teapot Group

There was standing room only left for the October presentation by David Rosen, visiting American professor of psychology, on ‘The healing spirit of haiku’. This is also the title of a book of linked haibun written by David and Joel Weishaus. Cheers also to the several enthusiasts who expressed interest in joining SWTG.

Webpage Update

See the November posting at www.poetrysociety.org.nz/haiku.html for a focus on tanka, including an article written specially for the webpage by Patricia Prime and journal and contest news. As usual, the haiku webpage has been updated for next month and has new listings for contests and haiku happenings.

NZPS Member Heading to Oxford

NZPS member Simon Perris will be spending the next three years studying at Magdalen College, Oxford. Simon has been awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue a PhD in classics exploring modern poetic reworkings of classical texts. Simon, who has work in the NZPS 2005 anthology, *Learning a Language*. He will be following some significant writers to Magdalen College. Previous students include Oscar Wilde and Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney. NZPS congratulates Simon and wishes him all the best for his studies and travels.

Publications

***The Dark Lord of Savaiki: Collected Poems* Alistair Te Ariki Campbell**

An important event in New Zealand poetry took place in Wellington on 22 September. Fishers Art Dealers in Featherston Street was the venue for the launch of Alistair Te Ariki Campbell’s new *Collected Poems* (Hazard Press, 2005, \$39.95).

A strong turnout of both whanau and literary personalities was seen: Harry Ricketts, Vincent O’Sullivan, Chris Orsman, Harvey McQueen, Chris Else, Roger Steele, Michael O’Leary and Bill Manhire were just some of those who turned out in support of Campbell’s lifetime achievement as one of New Zealand’s most admired poets.

Nelson Wattie MC’d the evening with the book being launched by publisher Quentin Wilson of Hazard Press and poet and academic Vincent O’Sullivan (preceded by a song by Mary Campbell) in turn. Vincent made the point in his launch speech that this was not just a new book of poems but someone’s life collected for us to admire and appreciate.

Alistair then read a strong selection of poems from his new book, including a number of love poems for his wife Meg Campbell, also a poet. He finished with a new poem, which used cricket as its metaphor. This poem was written for Stuart Campbell, Alistair’s brother, killed by ‘friendly-fire’ during the Second World War:

... As an admiring
younger brother, I celebrate
this image of what you promised
and never lived to fulfill.
'Nature', wrote William Blake,
'has no Outline, but Imagination has.'
I see you turn and run up
to the crease. I see your
arm swing over. I see the
ball in flight – and that is all.

Report by Mark Pirie, first published in Southern Ocean Review

A to Zazen

The haiku anthology *A to Zazen* was launched in March at the Haiku Festival Aotearoa. *A to Zazen* includes haiku by the six original members of the Zazen group; Bertus de Jonge, Ernest Berry, Tim Bravenboer, Catherine Mair, Vanessa Proctor, and Jeanette Stace. *A to Zazen* is edited by Vanessa Proctor and published by the Kiwiana Group, Tauranga. Available from Jeanette Stace, 58 Cecil Road, Wellington, for \$16 (including p&p).

Report by Jeanette Stace

New from AUP

***Dirt: Filth and Decay in a New World Arcadia:* Pamela Wood**

Coming to New World paradise New Zealand, 19th-century colonial settlers did not expect to find the Old World evils of dirt and decay. However, this original and fascinating book shows this was the case and over time opinions have changed about just what it was, what should be done about it and who had the responsibility of dealing with it. (Auckland University, \$44.99).

***Three Regrets and a Hymn to Beauty* Ian Wedde**

A marvellous example of a mature and confident talent responding with imagination and delight to the local and the familiar: this is a world of friends, streets, paintings, advertisements, songs, memories. A poet like this enables us to see our own world freshly and alerts us to the wonders delivered to us by our senses.

Report from AUP

***Flying Against the Arrow* Jan FitzGerald**

Flying Against the Arrow, Jan FitzGerald's 50-page collection of poems is out! If you enjoyed the smaller,

sampler collection, *Love Poems*, now is the time to make an order.

You can order *Flying Against the Arrow*, (\$24.95 inc p&p) directly from Jan, or from Books A Plenty, Grey Street, Tauranga. Copies of *Love Poems* are still available from Jan at \$10.95 inc p&p (retail price is \$12.50). Both books are excellent gifts and fit A4 and A5 envelopes.

Please send your postal address and cheque to: Jan FitzGerald, 35B Emmett Street, Greerton, Tauranga 3001 or email Jan: hanti@orcon.net.nz for enquiries.

Glottis 10 just out

Glottis 10, edited by Richard Reeve, has just been released. It features new poems by David Eggleton, Kay Cooke, Katherine Dolan, Peter Olds, Mary Cresswell, Robert McClean and Anna Livesy. Fiction by Nick Ascroft, Carl Mair and Kate Duignan and reviews by Richard Reeve, Katherine Dolan, Lawrence Jones, John Dolan and more

☞ Quotation of the Month ☞

What word should we carry in our time?

Ruth Dallas

☞ Submissions ☞

Journal of Young People's Writing 2006

Attention, young poets and year 1–6 teachers! Learning Media is publishing a collection of writing by year 1–6 students to be distributed by the Ministry of Education to New Zealand schools in 2006. Teachers, please send in your students' best writing by the end of term four 2005 (20 December). For details view: www.learningmedia.co.nz/

Authors and artists

Contributions from freelance authors, illustrators, photographers and performers are a highly valued source of material for Learning Media Te Pou Taki Kōrero. Many New Zealand authors have had their first work for children published in our resources and we are keen to encourage new authors and artists.

For submission guidelines view: <http://www.learningmedia.co.nz/nz/online/authorsartists/>

Writers Cafe UK

Writers Café UK is seeking submissions from New Zealanders of any ethnic origin to feature on a web page specifically for Kiwi writers. Stories of no more

than 500 words (though links to longer pieces will be considered), poems and other frippery can be sent to: kiwiwriterscafe@yahoo.co.nz

Goody Two Shoes: Text/images Wanted for New Zine

Poetry, photography, reviews, rants, comics, stencils, essays, recipes, crafty things ... shove it all in a dodgy photocopier, stitch em together and the result shall be a zine called *Goody Two Shoes*. For more information view: <http://tbi.co.nz/tbi/opportunity/1708>

The Bright Light Café

Submit short stories, poetry and articles for possible publication and performance on the website, and inclusion in future commercial product releases. Submitted material must be ultimately positive and heart-warming.

Submission guidelines at www.brightlightmultimedia.com/BLCafe.

An International Book-map

Incommunicado is a one-off publication that aims to collect writing from around the Commonwealth in a foldable book/world map format – read it, then stick it on your wall.

Focussing on the theme of miscommunication, *Incommunicado* will bring together political and personal stories. It will be published in English, but written in distinctive local voices, with a glossary explaining uncommon words and phrases.

Incommunicado will be published in March 2006, in Australia, as part of 'Empire Games' – the theme of the Youth Program of the Cultural Festival of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, presented by Next Wave.

The publishers are inviting 250 or 500 word stories, poems and anecdotes about people trying – and failing – to communicate from Commonwealth citizens aged 30 years or under.

The submission deadline is 30 November, and a payment of \$A50 is offered. For more information about submitting to *Incommunicado*, go to www.expressmedia.org.au

Attention women writers!

Do you have short stories or poetry looking for a place to be published? Do you have something to say or to share in a personal essay but can't find a place to share it? *Penwomanship*, a magazine for the creative woman writer, was launched in April this year.

Penny White, publisher of the new monthly periodical, says the magazine will feature women's writing, artwork and photography. In addition to short stories, poetry and personal essays, the magazine is also seeking short-short humour pieces and advice columns for women in the

areas of women's health issues, finances for women and writing tips for women. Submissions should be made to: submissions@penwomanship.com in the body of the email only.

For more details, please read the submissions guidelines at www.penwomanship.com. Pay is currently five contributors' copies until the magazine is able to pay contributing writers. For more information contact Penny White: penny@penwomanship.com.

∞ Congratulations ∞

Yellow Moon Seed Pearls (August, 2005) Results

New Zealand haikin again were well represented among the finalists in all categories. Leading the way was Karen Peterson Butterworth for her haiku sequence *the cataract operation* (first). The Haibun results included Catherine Mair (highly commended), Patricia Prime and Barbara Strang (both commended).

Seven writers gained places in the Haiku Section, with a total of 12 haiku: Veronica Haughey, André SurrIDGE, Ernest J Berry and Karen Butterworth (highly commended); Nola Borrell (commended), Patricia Prime and Jeanette Stace (finalists).

The Tanka Section included Catherine Mair, Nola Borrell and Shirley May (finalists). Work by these poets will be published in *Yellow Moon 18* in December 2005.

∞ Reviews ∞

Poems 1946 – 2005, W.H. Oliver

Bill Oliver's enduring approaches to writing poetry and his favourite subjects are found in the very earliest of these poems. You can't read his lines without knowing at once that they are poetry, yet they are seldom 'poetic', though he has a fondness – especially in his younger work – for the High Romantic turn of phrase: *harsh swart vine, Sable-cloaked youths*. He frequently uses abstract words: *grace, Providence, plight, tendency*, though he can also employ crisp imagery: *These tense and springy trees/ bend and recover*. Oliver, especially in his earlier work, made use of Classical mythology – its satyrs, fauns and famous names, as Mason did before him. He often aims for eye-catching metaphor which can surprise with lyricism: *Sleep will come singly and the night will blind/ With unnumbered fountains*; while in other instances it can confuse: *Dividing the year like an annihilating hawk*; or be a tad cliché: *the dream flower faded*. The poetic quality of the lines comes essentially from a cadence that is markedly rhythmic (but not metrical), the often short lines and stanzas heightening the effect. He is inclined to continue poems longer than

is needed, seeking a neat ending, and can in consequence offer more information than the reader requires, with the odd line beginning to totter rather than flow.

Bill Oliver was, like Keith Sinclair, a professional historian. His interest in history can be gleaned from some of his topics and titles – though he seldom offers fresh historical insight – and in the strength of his work on individuals who catch his imagination, including literary fictions like Rumpelstiltskin. On occasion Oliver expects that we readers know as much about his subjects as he does, something which in a poem on a man like J. H. Newman leaves us stranded. But his profounder interest is in the effects of the passage of time on people, places and memories, and the final poems look with placidity towards death. Oliver takes a sober and at times somber look at life. That isn't to say he can't deal in trifles nor let lines ripple. But here is some of New Zealand's more sustainedly serious poetry.

The first collection of Oliver's poetry came out in 1957, and half a dozen other early poems have been added, presumably for the sake of a complete collection. Many of them are only too obviously youthful works in contrast to his well-crafted and thoughtful mature work.

There are major contributions to New Zealand poetry in this volume, not merely single poems but sequences of poems in which imagination and intelligence combine with language that both states, alludes and resonates.

'Portraits' depicts various writers. Here Baxter is strikingly introduced:

*The prodigious poet in his drinking days
swept Wellington like a shower of broken glass
blown from the stricken south.*

'Poor Richard' rekindles interest in Dick Seddon:

*great arse straining tight striped trousers;
clown's face bewildered at the world's
iniquities.*

'Bodily Presence' came out first as a leaflet to go with an exhibition of painting of women:

*The room is full of conversations.
It is not clear who is looking
and who is being looked at,
nor, unambiguously, that
there is anyone here at all ...*

Of the small, tightly written poems, my favourite is 'A Game of Cards': *The prophet played a good hand at cards .../ Spades were for everyday use./ Hearts were fine but you couldn't trust them ... Clubs were trumps in the hand and he lost.*

The collection is well produced, it comes with an introduction by the author and an index of first lines, and at

a price many of us can afford. (Victoria University Press, 2005, \$29.95).

Bernard Gadd is an Auckland poet and regular newsletter contributor

As it was in the beginning

Stu Bagby

I'm not a natural reader of poetry. Perhaps this is because in the past I've found that reading poems requires effort and I can occasionally be prone to laziness. Discovering Stu Bagby's *As it was in the beginning* was a bit like my first Pilates class, a wee revelation. Sure it looks simple to the untrained eye or in the case of Pilates, bottom, but at the heart of it is consistent strength. What I get from Bagby's latest offering is a quiet strength that runs through each poem.

Bagby describes *As it was in the beginning* as a collection containing "childhood recollections, musings on life as a gravedigger and a world in between". For this reason I think then, that the collection reminds me of an old family photo album. There is such a feeling of intimacy in reading *As it was in the beginning*, it's almost as though I'm having a yarn with the poet going through a box of old photos and being graciously allowed to jump into his memories.

Immediate favourites were 'First Dance' and 'Walking Red Beach'. The cringing adolescent awkwardness of 'First Dance' is so beautifully captured; I instantly zoomed into the memory of my own. As Bagby writes "We dance to music we will never forget" and indeed, I hear Snap, MC Hammer and Redhead Kingpin, for Bagby, Perry Como and Elvis. In 'Walking Red Beach' Bagby exposes a deep sense of understanding of human relationships and again, through his telling, you get just enough to feel you might know something of the poet, but more so, of yourself.

Aside from giving me different frames to hang my own memories in, I was fascinated by the worlds painted in 'The Tangowahine Gang' series. The land of Lone Rangers, Jungle Jims, shanghais, Gary Coopers and Grace Kellys. A feeling of small town life that was so alien to a strictly concrete jungle girl like myself. More contemporary set pieces like 'Benediction' and 'The peripheral mourner', I particularly enjoyed for the little secrets they hold on the art of grave digging and the like. My smutty sense of humour was pleased to find 'Unenlightened Novice Finds Disgraceful Poem in Master's Tai Chi Movements', having recently engaged in a little Tai Chi myself.

And then we end with 'As it was in the beginning' which just gets me wondering, something that all loved poems do. They get me wondering and thinking and pondering and contemplating etc, etc and most of all feeling that I want to know more about life and love. And 'As it was in the beginning' both poem and collection does this immaculately. (Steele Roberts Ltd., 2005, \$19.95).

Leilani Unasa resides in Wellington with her partner and children. Aside from poetry, Leilani is currently having a crack at writing for the stage and screen.

**Lifted Bill Manhire &
Red Leaves Diana Bridge**

The title of Bill Manhire's latest book of poems, *Lifted*, reflects his relish of appropriations – genres, phrases, sometimes even single words. This is more than a game, or if so, a serious one, just as Urdu poets strove to compress meaning into poems of no more than two lines, seeking to embody elusive qualities such as inevitability and self-reflexiveness. If you like this mental suppleness, you will enjoy *Lifted*, with its prose poems of deliberate inconsequence such as 'The God's Journey' and 'The Writer', or Manhire's almost schizophrenic focus on detail, as in the little designs on the socks of travellers in 'Entering America'. Add in his erasures, his repetitions ('The sheep seem like starlight'), and his unexpected rhymes ('patio' and 'Carpaccio'), and you know these poems are never going to allow you a comfortable literary wallow.

At times this dexterity can be alienating to the extent that a straight-out terrific poem may get overlooked. The elegy for Michael King, 'Opoutere', is such a poem, splendid in its matter-of-factness as it recalls a shared time beside the ocean, "... history and music talking together, / the vast entertainment of learning . . ." concluding:

*Here in the place of posts
I think I can just make him out
a man in a boat
rowing across the last half-mile of twilight*

Whatever dislocations and indirections the poems offer, an underlying lyricism is what makes many of them work: the monks "kneeling in Eden", the old man "... riding home above the cloudy valley", and the musing about creation in 'Without Form'. This also holds together a collection whose topics range from the Erebus crash to the number of servants required to run the Villa Ephrussi at Cap-Ferrat.

Diana Bridge is similarly particular about language. *Red Leaves* is, however, more fastidious, as though its words are produced by a series of fine distillations. I can't think of any poet who is better at capturing the nuance of relationships, those wispy figurings that can be experienced only in images. They might, in her sequence of Indian poems, be someone cadging a cigarette ('Palace: Khetri Mahal'), or the Keatsian frozen ecstasy of 'Carved Couple':

*Their eyes, four strokes of the same
chisel. And she is saying –*

*in the recessed flanking places
where you find them –*

*my stone mouth is halfway,
love, to yours*

Bridge is a scholar of classical Chinese poetry. Her poem, 'The place', reflects on how one responds to other places and cultures, the deliberate shaping of one's experience, so that one asks "what is required to frame an idyll; / how much dirt, disease and poverty / it takes to set an epic city off." This curiosity about the limitations of any perceptions marks many of the poems, whether it is the frustration of any attempts to render them into words ('The mountain rises' or 'The weekend begins'), or whether one is being truthful in one's understanding of one's own emotions ('Front and back'). Along the way, she manages to find images that clarify these entanglements, or surprise with a sudden flush of florid splendour, as in 'Plains and painted towns':

*I am lazy with other mystery. My head
still rears and twists as if to track
the flights of parrots. Behind lie places
where the blood-red skirts of god
and gopi are teamed with turquoise ...*

Bridge is still a relative newcomer, with her first collection, *Porcelain*, appearing in 1996. Her latest book supports the case that she is one of the very best among New Zealand poets. (*Lifted*, Bill Manhire, Victoria University Press, 2005). (*Red Leaves*, Diana Bridge, Auckland University Press, 2005).

John Horrocks is a Wellington poet and lecturer in psychology.

☞ Out & About ☞

Picton

The October Picton Poets were a small group, but we went way over time, as usual. Anne found a couple of pages missing in her September Newsletter, so got it out of her system with a poem – which was acknowledged likewise by the editor.

With 'Your broad smile on the TV . . .', Julie meditated poetically on Tim Shadbolt's inimitable, but characteristic, carryings-on in Dancing with the Stars – dwelling on how even he, former heart-throb in his concreting days, had crumbled a little.

I did my programmed thing by talking about a conviction that poetry, and especially spoken poetry, is the highest form of language – in terms of its ability to give voice to our human condition. Richard Dawkins' memes were invoked, and his theory about the evolution of our cultures. I concluded with some favourite poems, top place going to this anonymous piece that won a competition run by a London daily in 1924:

My Religion

*Whatever call to wander in strangely haunted spheres of
ether;
or fields of asphodel, in new moods of being, amid new
duties and
new pleasures; whatever call to prolong and fulfil its
existence
my spirit may obey when it has earned its release from the
flesh,
it is to this earth that it turns and returns and passionately
clings
to-day; this earth that is the mother of all I know and feel,
this
earth where I have lived and sinned and suffered and loved
and
fought and stumbled and tramped and despaired and
laughed and
wept and eaten my fill and drunk deep draughts of pleasure
and
success and bitter cups of misery and defeat and shame;
this
earth whose dawns and sunsets and variegated pageantries
are
nicely suited to my eyes and her harmonies and discords
exactly
tuned to my ears; this earth whose biting winds and angry
hailstorms have buffeted me, but whose sunny skies and
blue
halcyon days have restored me – this very earth, the only
place
where my foot finds firm standing, and where my spirit feels
at
home.*

Report by Sandy Arcus

Tauranga

A useful resource for writers is The Write Place archive. This column is published weekly on Saturday on the books page of *The Bay of Plenty Times*, and is now fully archived online. Go to www.taurangawriters.org.nz and click on The Write Place archive, which is updated monthly. For members of Tauranga Writers, who are the main contributors to this column, there is even a writers' guide on 'how to do it'.

If there's a subject you'd like to see covered, simply make your suggestion to secretary@taurangawriters.org.nz. We're interested in national events such as sci-fi conferences or literary festivals, too. And if you've got Bay connections, we could even build a column around a new publication or literary event that you're involved in.

All Write Place columns also include that week's contribution to Poet's Corner – writings mainly from Poet's Parlour poets, but also from anyone living or working in the circulation area of *The Bay of Plenty Times*. You can submit a poem for consideration at any time. Please consider its suitability for publication in a family newspaper, and don't

exceed the maximum line length of 24. We look forward to hearing from you! Do please sign the guestbook if you haven't visited us before.

Report by Jenny Argante

☞ Competitions ☞

7th Annual Paper Wasp Jack Stamm Haiku Award

First prize \$A100 with an anthology of the best haiku published, with one copy provided free to authors selected. Entries are in sheets comprising three haiku. Each sheet must be clearly marked on the back with the entrant's full name, address and post code (and email address, if available). Results will be published in *paper wasp* in April 2006, and the anthology in May.

Closes: 31 January 2006. Entry: \$A12 (if paid in Australian banknotes or cheques drawn on an Australian bank in Australia) or \$US10 in cash (international entries) for each sheet of three haiku. Send entries to *paper wasp*, 14 Fig Tree Pocket Rd, Chapel Hill, Qld, 4069, Australia. Email entries will not be accepted.

James W Hackett Award. Deadline: 30 November. Refer to September newsletter for details.

The Betty Drevniok Award. Deadline 30 November. Refer to October newsletter for details.

Zen Garden Haiku Contest. Deadline 31 December. Refer to September newsletter for details.

Griffin Poetry Prize

The deadline for the C\$100,000 Griffin Poetry Prize is approaching. Submissions must be postmarked no later than 31 December 2005. Books published between 1 January and 31 December 2005 are eligible. Please remember to complete all necessary customs/duties paperwork when shipping your entries to ensure delays are avoided.

If you have any questions regarding the rules, or would like to download an entry form, please visit our web site, at www.griffinpoetryprize.com.

Entries to: Ruth Smith, Manager, The Griffin Trust For Excellence In Poetry, 6610 Edwards Boulevard, Mississauga, Ontario L5T 2V6, Canada.

Ashiya International Haiku Festival

The Japan Traditional Haiku Society is holding its fourth Ashiya International Haiku Festival on 11 February 2006. Professor Hoshino Tsunehiko will be the judge of Haiku from overseas together with Ms Inahata Teiko, President of the society. View www.kyoshi.or.jp/e-index for entry form and details.

The Betty Drevniok Award

First prize \$C100; second \$C50; third \$C25 with the top ten haiku distributed with the *Haiku Canada Anthology*. Each haiku must be printed or typed on three separate 3in x 5in cards. The entrant's name, address and phone number are to be written in the upper corner of *one card only* in each set of three. Submissions must be postmarked no later than 30 November 2005. Winners will be announced in May 2006. The entry fee is \$US5 (for those outside Canada) for up to three haiku, payable to Haiku Canada. Entries to The Betty Drevniok Award, c/- Ann Goldring, 5 Cooks Dr., Leaskdale, Ontario L0C 1C0, Canada.

British Haiku Society Haibun Anthology Award

Haibun, including haiku, should be between 100 and 2000 words long. Three copies of each haibun must be submitted with one copy only showing the entrant's name, address, phone number and email address. That copy should also carry a signed declaration of originality.

Entries must be received by 31 December 2005. The entry fee is £5 or \$US10 for the first haibun entry, £2 or \$US4 for every additional haibun to a maximum total of six entries per person. Sterling cheques and money orders (payable to British Haiku Society) with entries to Stanley Pelter, Maple House, 5 School Lane, Claypole, Newark, Lincs NG23 5BQ, UK.

Swift Poetry Competition

The Kilkenny International Swift Society invites submissions of an unpublished satirical poem, in the spirit and style of Swift, on a topic of current and relevant social/political interest.

The competition is both a celebration of Swift as one of Ireland's greatest satirists and a move to promote political and social commentary through satire. Entries accepted from 1 October 2005. The first prize is 1000 Euros. The closing date is 28 February 2006. Further details are available at: www.swiftsociety.com

✎ Residencies ✎

Randell Cottage Residency 2006

The Randell Cottage Writers Trust is, once again, calling for applications from New Zealand writers for the 2006 Creative New Zealand Randell Cottage Writers Residency.

The tenure will be from early April 2006 to mid September 2006. The successful applicant will receive a monthly stipend for the six months of the residency, and reside in the historic Randell Cottage located in Wellington's central city suburb of Thorndon.

For further information, application forms and

guidelines visit: www.randellcottage.co.nz or contact: randell@writerstrust.co.nz or: The Secretary, PO Box 11-032, Wellington. Applications close on Saturday 19 November 2005.

Lillian Ida Smith Award

This award was started when Lillian Ida Smith, a music teacher from Wanganui, who had a keen interest in the arts, left part of her legacy to the NZSA (PEN NZ Inc) to "assist people aged 35 years or over to embark upon or further a literary career". The first award was made in 1986, and until 1990 awards of \$1000 each were made for poetry, fiction and non-fiction. From 1992 it was decided to make a biennial award of \$3000 to assist a writer aged 35 or over with a writing project in either, non-fiction, fiction, poetry or drama; for children or adults.

The funds for the award are obtained by accumulating interest on the capital of the bequest. Therefore the award is only given when there are sufficient funds available. The last award was made in 2003 and the next award will be made in December 2005.

The award is only open to financial members of the NZSA (PEN NZ Inc) who are aged 35 years or over. Applicants are required to submit: a CV containing their writing history, an outline of their project and a brief extract from the work in progress or a sample of previous work. Please contact the NZSA (PEN NZ Inc) office: nzsa@clear.net.nz for more information and an application form. Deadline for applications is 30 November 2005.

Report from NZSA

Global Arts Village Residencies

Global Arts Village is an emerging international residential art centre in New Delhi, India, whose purpose is to encourage diversity and multicultural exchange among creative people of all kinds. They practice community living, sharing meals and evening activities and enable artists to experience a natural, eco-friendly environment for creative work.

The Global Arts Village is a three-acre property that includes gardens, a multi-purpose studio, sculpture workshop, a meditation and performance hall, a common building, a dance studio, performance spaces and accommodation. The buildings are in accordance with the ancient wisdom of Vastu, which harmonizes man-made structures with their natural environments. The Village offers residency programs to emerging, mid-career and established artists in all major creative disciplines

Fellowships / Artist-in-Residence

The Global Arts Village offers full and partial fellowships, several specific fellowship opportunities and an Artist-in-Residence program. All programs include accommodation

(standard or duplex), laundry service, three meals per day, studio or workspace (shared or private), an initial welcoming celebration (presentation of past work and project plan to local artists and other fellowship recipients) and concluding exhibition opportunity.

Recipients are asked to donate fellowship-specific hours of community work per week (cooking, researching, organizing, leading workshops, assisting or teaching a class, promotion, event planning). Partners of artists are invited to stay for \$US15 per day (this includes accommodation, meals and laundry).

Forty-five day residencies begin on 17 February, 3 April, 19 May, 3 July, 18 August, 2 October, 17 November and 1 January each year. Ninety day residencies begin on 17 February, 19 May, 18 August and 17 November each year.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis – there is no deadline. For more details visit www.globalartsvillage.org

Applications to info@globalartsvillage.org or Global Arts Village, Mehrauli–Gurgaon Road, Utsav Mandir, Gitorni, New Delhi 110030, India

Ledig House International Writers Residency

The residency is located approximately two and a half hours north of New York City in the town of Omi, in the scenic Hudson River Valley. Writers and translators from all fields are encouraged to apply for a residence lasting anywhere from one week to two months. Up to 20 writers per session – 10 at a given time – live and write on Ledig House’s stunning 300 acre grounds and sculpture park overlooking the Catskill Mountains.

All meals are provided. Days are reserved as quiet hours, while evenings afford a more communal environment. During each session, several guests from the New York publishing community are invited for dinner and discussion. Bicycles, a swimming pool and nearby tennis court are available for use. Unless otherwise arranged, writers must provide their own transportation to and from Ledig House. A colony car will be sent to pick writers up at the train station in nearby Hudson, New York. All writers should be proficient in English.

Created in 1992, Ledig House International Writer Residency is named after the German publisher Heinrich Maria Ledig-Rowohlt. Ledig had a reputation as a man with an unerring sense of literary quality. His publishing list included prominent writers from around the world – Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Yukio Mishima, Jean Paul Sartre, Vladimir Nabokov, John Updike, Toni Morrison, Albert Camus, and Thomas Pynchon to name only a few.

In its short history, Ledig House has hosted hundreds of writers and translators from roughly 50 countries around the world. The colony’s strong international emphasis

reflects the spirit of cultural exchange that is part of Ledig’s enduring legacy.

The Spring session runs from 1 April – 24 June, and the Autumn session runs from 24 August – 31 October. The annual deadline for applications is November 30. For application details visit: <http://www.artomi.org/ao/ledig.htm#Application>

Report from NZSA

Residency in Sydney

A Writer/Artist in residence opportunity in Sydney is open for applicants. Regents Court is a small boutique hybrid hotel situated in a quiet leafy cul-de-sac in the heart of Sydney. Regents Court offers a ground floor studio apartment for periods of three to 12 weeks to writers or artists wishing to have dedicated working time in Sydney. In return for accommodating a ‘writer/artist in residence’, the owners expect the writer/artist to help take care of the rooftop garden and be on the premises five nights a week from 7pm to 7am to welcome late arriving guests. This offer is single occupancy only.

The owners will take applications from interested writers/artists who can provide excellent references from either an arts funding body or publisher and have received funding to complete a work. Please send applications and preferred dates to Paula MacMahon via bookings@regentscourt.com.au or visit the website: www.regentscourt.com.au

Report from AUP

KiwiHaiku

*me
pulling
the weed
pulling
me*

**(published *Kokako* 2, 2004)
Cyril Childs, Port Chambers**

Please submit KiwiHaiku, preferably with a New Zealand theme, to bhstrang@yahoo.com or to Barbara Strang, 6 Soleares Ave, Christchurch 8008, including a S.S.A.E.

🌀 Websites 🌀

The Academy of American Poetry: www.poets.org

Funny poetry for children: www.gigglepoetry.com

Poetry 180: www.loc.gov/poetry/180

Best New Zealand Poems: www.vuw.ac.nz/modernletters/bnzp/

New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre: www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz

☞ Talk Poem ☞

Reading Akhmatova in Midwinter

*The revelations of ice, exactly:
each leaf carries itself in glass,
each stem is a fuse in a transparent flex,*

*each blade, for once, truly metallic.
Trees on the hill explode like fireworks
for the minute the sun hits.*

*Fields hover: bleached sheets in the afternoon,
ghosts as the light goes.
The landscape shivers but holds.*

*Ice floes cruise the Delaware,
force it under in unnatural silence;
clarification I watch as I watch*

*the road – nothing but the grind of the plough
as it banks snow, drops salt and grit.
By dark these are just settled hills,*

*grains embedded in the new fall.
We, too, make little impression
walking back from town at midnight*

*On birds' feet – ducks' feet on the ramp
where we inch and scabble our way to the door;
too numb to mind the slapstick.*

*How did you cross
those unlit, reinvented streets
with your fear of traffic and your broken shoe?*

*There are mornings when it drips and cracks.
We pull glass bars from railings,
chip at the car's shadow.*

Lavinia Greenlaw

This poem is from the young English poet, Lavinia Greenlaw's second collection, *A World Where News Travelled Slowly* (Faber & Faber 1997). The focus of this book is, according to her promotional blurb, 'the unpredictable act of communication'.

Okay, so firstly who is Akhmatova? Anna Akhmatova was a Russian poet (1889–1966) seen by many as the greatest woman poet in Russian literature. She wrote confessional, personal poetry. Soviet officials proclaimed her 'bourgeois and aristocratic'. Her husband was executed in 1921 for charges of participation in an anti-Soviet conspiracy. In 1946 Akhmatova was expelled from the Soviet Union. When her son was arrested and exiled to Siberia she attempted to win his freedom with poems eulogizing Stalin and Soviet communism. Her work began to be recognized again in the 'Cultural Thaw' that followed Stalin's death.

What knowledge does ice reveal? A fairly obvious

reading of this poem is to see the ice and snow as representing Siberia – a prison of ice or even just ignorance. The first stanza: *The revelations of ice, exactly:/ each leaf carries itself in glass,/ each stem is a fuse in a transparent flex*, expresses the leaf-like fragility of a prisoner but also, perhaps surprisingly, in the prisoner's core or stem, is a fuse. The prisoner becomes a potential bomb and the ice a flex – not something that can bend but rather a conduit for the prisoner's explosive potential. Ice traps and silences in the poem but, in the final stanza: *There are mornings when it drips and cracks./ We pull glass bars from railings,/ chip at the car's shadow*. – it melts and the prison bars can be pulled from railings in the thaw. The 'sun hits' and trees 'explode like fireworks'; illumination or knowledge thaws and blows apart the prison of ice.

Why do poets write about other poets? Greenlaw is not only writing about a poet she is reading (and who she obviously admires) but also about what knowledge, communication and poets can do to free people physically and mentally. She ponders how Akhmatova crossed the icy streets that she herself leaves little impression on as she clumsily makes her way across. Greenlaw appears to be asking herself: How do we make an impression on the world? How do we use our work to enlighten people? I was left feeling compelled to learn more – about Akhmatova and the poem.

I'll give Lavinia herself the final word; she discussed writing the poem in an interview with Tim Kendall:

Some of the ideas I start with need to make connections before they become possible or even interesting as poems... Once, I wanted to write about an ice storm but bored myself with description. As I sat reading in this snowbound house on the Delaware River, the landscape linked itself to the book in my hands – the poems of Anna Akhmatova, who had her own ice age (and her own ice poem, written for Mandelstam, 'Voronezh'). She, not the weather, became the subject, described through the detail, clarity and reflectiveness of the ice.

Helen Heath is a Kapiti Coast poet and founder of Juicy Press.

February DEADLINE is 17 January 2006