



a fine line

November 2009

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NOVEMBER MEETINGS:

Saturday 7 November, 2.30pm

Anthology Launch: *moments in the whirlwind*

Our City O-Tautahi

Cnr Oxford Tce & Worcester Blvde, Christchurch

Light refreshments supplied; free entry

Monday 16 November, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Charlotte Simmonds

The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington

Meeting begins with an open mic

\$2 entry

Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities / Wellington City Council

Contents

2. Feature Article: **Stream Poetry into Pantoum** *Kristina Jensen*
4. From the National Coordinator *Laurice Gilbert*
About our Contributors
A Warm Welcome to...
5. Congratulations
Surfing the Web
Publications: New arrivals awaiting review since the last issue
Noticeboard
6. Workshops
Competitions & Submissions
7. Regional reports: Windrift, Wellington, October 2009 *Bevan Greenslade*
8. Windrift, Wellington, August 2009 *Neil Whitehead*
Live Poets in Nelson *Mary Bell Thornton*
9. Picton Poets *Ruby Roberts*
Reviews: *The Summer King* by Joanna Preston *Anne Harré*
10. *The Propaganda Poster Girl* by Amy Brown *Joanna Preston*
11. *The Lustre Jug* by Bernadette Hall *Keith Nunes*
13. *Calypso* by Bob Orr *Majella Cullinane*

15. *Oh Light* ed by Anna Gilkison *Peter Rawnsley*
16. *Ribbonwood Calendar 2010* created by Trish Harris *Karen Peterson Butterworth*
17. Mini Competition
 - Haiku NewZ
 - Kiwi Haiku
18. Tanka Reflections
 - Ten Minutes with... Joanna Preston *Anne Harré*
20. Members' Poems: Ruth Arnison, Laurice Gilbert, Maranda Haynes, John C. Ross, Julie Ryan

Feature Article

Stream Poetry into Pantoum

Kristina Jensen

I have come across something that works really well for me as a poet and I am sure that others use it as a method to a means and will have comments to add. Often the words, ideas, images and connections are coming out of my mind and heart so fast that I cannot stop to sort any of them out into sentences or stanzas or structures, so I write them down in what I call The Stream (I have read of it referred to as 'stream of consciousness' or 'no punctuation' writing).

I write with little or no attention to grammar unless it finds its way in there and make no breaks in the flow. I just go on until I'm finished or until what I call the 'flab' is all there. Then I study it for a while and begin separating the words into lines in a fairly natural way, each metaphor or simile, each idea or image, without trying to be too witty or smart in a forced literary sort of way.

I begin to weed and sort and add and subtract. I chop away at the flab until the bare bones of the poem emerge and then the real creating takes place. I begin to see the essence of my original idea or image sharpening itself on the whetstone of simplicity.

Sometimes the Stream looks good as a stream. I leave those ones. Perhaps that is just what they were meant to be, flowing on through the database of my computer like a river of universal thought, or maybe some other day they will change form and become shorter, more precise and real poems (ha).

I would love to hear of practices like these from other poets. I have been using some of the exercises in the back of Bill Manhire's collection, *Mutes and Earthquakes*, which outlines many of the exercises he uses with his students at Victoria University. It's fun to play around with a poem I thought was finished, apply one of his ideas such as the structure of a pantoum (see below), and come up with something very surprising and satisfyingly new (for me). I realized that I could become a little smug and attached to My Own Style as a poet/ writer and as I'm only beginning (aren't we all on some level of humility and/or humanity), I feel that it's important for me to have a go at reorganizing my thoughts and ideas in ways that take me out of my comfort zone and gather new skills in the process.

Here is an example of a poem that I took apart and played around with to create a pantoum, originally a Malay form, Europeanised by 19th century French writers. A pantoum is "like a snake with its tail in its mouth" as Manhire puts it. The lines are repeated in a systematic way: the second and fourth lines of one stanza become the first and third lines of the following stanza and so on until, in the last stanza, the first and third lines of the first stanza appear again in reverse order as the second and fourth lines, thus ending with the same opening line. An example given in the book is 'Otari' by Louise Wrightson which appeared in *Metro* [and *Big Weather: Poems of Wellington* selected by Greg O'Brien & Louise White – Ed.]

This is how I changed my poem, 'Waterfall', to create a pantoum. Initially I did this for fun, just to see what it would be like, and ended up really liking the way it created more of a continuous flow in the words, like a stream babbling its way to the sea, almost returning in a way to something like the initial Stream of ideas.

The Stream

Listen we are being called by the water an old woman welcomes us onto her green moss marae we go slowly hearing her song calling us to join its not always the same this sound I have been here when its rushing torrents and now a quiet reflective flow green glow of the trees and moss and falling listening to falling songs

Waterfall #1

We are being called by water
Fluid kuia, flowing form of karanga
Let your ears delicately
Weigh the sound of water
All ways run to the joining
No matter what the obstacles
Her liquid voice on green moss
Calls us

Waterfall #2

We are being called by water
It is a flowing form of karanga
Let your ears delicately seek
Weighing the sound of falling

It is a flowing form of karanga
Each drop sings into our minds
Weighing the sound of falling
All ways running to the joining

Each drop sings into our minds
No matter what the obstacles
All ways running to the joining
The joy and urgency for union

No matter what the obstacles
Fluid kuia, long hair flowing
The joy and urgency for union
Her liquid voice on green moss

Fluid kuia, long hair flowing
Let your ears delicately seek
Her liquid voice on green moss
We are being called by water

I would love to hear from other poets who wish to share their 'adventures' into Letter Land, as my 6 year old calls it. Contact: umeus@xtra.co.nz

It is impossible to discourage the real writers – they don't give a damn what you say, they're going to write.

Sinclair Lewis

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

This issue has been a little harder to put together than usual. As a member of the sandwich generation, I have been called on to play my part in the family job of nursing my beloved father, who passed away at his home on 18th October. Work has been fitted in around night shifts and funeral organisation, and I'm grateful to the committee and to other friends for helping me out where possible. My advice: pay attention to the 'slip slap slop' message – melanoma is an unkind illness.

In other news, the Christchurch Writers' Festival's '5 Poets Reading' in Christchurch at the beginning of October was the occasion for the presentation of our biannual recognition of a significant contribution to poetry in New Zealand. The Lauris Edmond Memorial Award is administered and presented by the NZPS, with additional sponsorship from the Friends of the Lauris Edmond Award and the Christchurch Writers' Festival. A healthy audience of around 70 people gathered at Our City O-Tautahi to hear Tusiata Avia, Frankie McMillan, James Norcliffe, Joanna Preston and Brian Turner read for 10 minutes each. The poets covered a wide range of styles and voices, and the event was most enjoyable. At the conclusion of the readings I, as President of the NZPS, was privileged to present the Award, consisting of a framed citation and a cheque for \$1000, to Brian Turner. Brian was suitably surprised and delighted, and gave a most gracious off-the-cuff acceptance speech. It was a particular pleasure to add Brian to the roll call of recipients, as he had previously accepted the Award on behalf of the late Bill Sewell, who was the inaugural winner in 2003.

I am looking forward to returning to Christchurch for our annual anthology launch on Saturday 7th November, and I hope to see many of you there. This is always a joyous occasion, as many of the contributors to our anthologies are young people just getting started in poetry. Lining them up with some of New Zealand's best emerging (and established) poets is most rewarding and (I hope) encouraging. With so many of our winners and place-getters being from Canterbury this year we should have a great line-up of readers.

About our Contributors

Karen Peterson Butterworth won the 2001 BNZ Katherine Mansfield Essay Prize, and has published poetry, including haiku, in seven countries.

Majella Cullinane is originally from Ireland and is now a NZ Resident, living in Wellington. Her poetry has been published in Ireland and the UK.

Anne Harré is a Wellington writer and musician, with editing and publishing experience.

Kristina Jensen lives on a boat with her painter husband and 6 year old son. They love playing with Blue-Tack and Lego, do lots of wrestling and make up crazy words like squachela.

Keith Nunes is a former newspaper journalist who has had poems published in *Landfall* and *Takahe*, among others. He writes to stay sane.

Joanna Preston is a Christchurch poet and winner of the 2008 Kathleen Grattan Award.

Peter Rawnsley is a poet living at Karehana Bay, Plimmerton.

A Warm Welcome to:

Liz Breslin Wanaka

Wendy Clarke Queenstown

Neroli Cottam Palmerston

Reid Edmond Christchurch

Phillip Donnell Tauranga

Rangi Faith Rangiora

Maranda Haynes & Partner Papakura

Celia Hope Hamilton

S Lakshman Auckland
Patricia Land Christchurch
Adam Neale Auckland
Ken Milesi Wanaka
Jo Wynne Christchurch

Congratulations

Heartiest congratulations to our Patron **Dame Fiona Kidman** who was awarded France's prestigious Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Chevalier rank. She joins an impressive list of those honoured for their having "significantly contributed to the enrichment of the French cultural inheritance." For more about this award, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordre_des_Arts_et_des_Lettres

The 6th *Bravado* International Poetry Competition, judged by Sue Wootton, has once more been generous to NZPS members: the competition was won by Sarah Broom of Auckland; 2nd place went to **Laurice Gilbert**, Wellington, and 3rd place to **David Gregory**, Christchurch. **Carol Cromie** and **Nick Williamson** achieved Highly Commended, and Carol also won the prize for unpublished poet.

Jenny Argante (*Bravado's* co-ordinating editor) won the Timaru Festival of Roses 2008 Poetry Competition with 'Domestic Jungle'. You can read Jenny's poem online at: <http://www.bravado.co.nz>

Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle is the featured poet for the current issue of *Poetry NZ* (number 39). In addition, her poem 'between you and me' was chosen as the Wednesday poem in *The Dominion Post* on 9th September.

Surfing the Web

Jenny Argante's sister has a blog with writing exercises to follow, based on *The Fiction Class*, by Susan Breen. Each chapter of the book ends with a specific assignment for the fictional class - and for the reader. If you are curious about joining the virtual class, visit Sheila's blog at <http://greatbrit-sheen.blogspot.com>.

Publications

New arrivals awaiting review since the last issue:

Walking to Africa Jessica Le Bas (AUP, 2009) The poet's poignant journey through the mental illness of a beloved daughter.

wit of the staircase **Saradha Koirala** (Steele Roberts, 2009) The first collection of an emerging poet with an enviable way with wordplay.

Dressing for the Cannibals, **Frankie McMillan** (Sudden Valley Press, 2009). Inspiring first collection by this year's winner of the NZPS Poetry Competition.

Kokako 11 eds **Patricia Prime** and **Joanna Preston** the usual fabulous collection of haiku, tanka, haibun and reviews.

Good Business, Ian Wedde (AUP, 2009). Came in at the last moment – haven't had a chance to look at it.

Noticeboard

For a complete rundown of regional events, and to find the poetry meeting in your town, please go to our website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz

POETS WANTED FOR CHRISTCHURCH READINGS Poets holidaying in Christchurch mid-March to end of April 2010, and who would like to read at the Canterbury Poets' Collective Autumn Series of Readings, please send an email to: joyces@clear.net.nz

POETS' CORNER – UPPER HUTT CITY LIBRARY

The Library is holding bimonthly readings, with the final one for the year being on 10 December, at 10.30am. The theme is Christmas Poems.

Workshops

SOUL FOOD, Wellington

Thursday 12 November, 7.30-9.30pm, at The Cenacle, 59 Tarawera Rd, Johnsonville. An enjoyable evening of celebrating our own poetry, and including guided opportunities for writing, led by Wellington poets, Anne Powell & Trish Harris. Cost: \$10 (wine and juice provided) Bookings: Ph. 04 478 8575 or email office@cenacle.org.nz

Competitions & Submissions

Barnet Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closes 16 November For poems of up to 35 lines. Adult category and juniors (7-11 & 12-16). Entry Fee: £4 for adults, £1 for juniors. Contact: BBAC (Poetry Competition), c/o All Saints' Arts Centre, 122 Oakleigh Road North, London N20 9EZ Website: www.barnetarts.org.uk

Bedford Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closes 21 November First prize £300. For poems of not more than 50 lines. Entry Fee: £3 per poem. Contact: Bedford Open Poetry Competition, 38 Verne Drive, Ampthill, Bedford MK45 2PS. Website: http://www.interpretershouse.org.uk/?page_id=29

Understanding Poetry Competition (UK) Closes 28 November £250 for the best poem. Entry Fee: £1.50 per poem. Contact: *Understanding*, 127 Milton Road West, 7, Duddingston House Courtyard, Edinburgh EH15 1JG.

Café Writers Open Poetry Competition (UK) Closes 30 November First prize £1000; the Nancy Jervis Poetry Prize of £150 for the best poem on the theme of reconciliation. For poems of up to 40 lines. Entry Fee: £4 for the first poem, decreasing thereafter. Contact: Café Writers Poetry Competition, 17 Wingfield Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 3HF Website: www.cafewriters.org.uk

Iota Poetry Competition (UK) Closes 30 November. Online entries accepted. Prizes: First - £2,000; 2nd - £1,000, 3rd - £500; ten extra prizes of £50 each; winners published in *Iota* and on website. Entry Fee: £4 for one poem; £7 for 2; £9 for 3; £10 for 4. Don't post cash; send Sterling bank draft or pay online. Maximum 80 lines per poem. Adults only, 18 and older; notify if accepted elsewhere; poems must not have been a winner or finalist in any previous *Iota* contest. Format: Typed, single-spaced, or neatly handwritten, on one side of white letter-size paper. No name of author on poems; include separate cover letter with name, address, phone, email, number of poems submitted and poem titles. If you would like results emailed, include the following line in uppercase, bold letters at the bottom of your contact sheet: "PLEASE EMAIL RESULTS." To submit online, email your entry as MS Word or .pdf file attachment, along with contact information to competition@iotamagazine.co.uk, then pay online using the appropriate link on the contest rules page. <http://www.iotapoetry.co.uk/Competition.html>

Arch Literary Journal (USA) Postmark Deadline: 1 December *Arch* seeks submissions of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, especially essays and book reviews. "We are very interested in nonfiction and essays broaching any topic, polite or not, and we will consider reviews of books on any subject, in any genre, published within the last three years." Send 3-5 poems, one story or essay of 10,000 words maximum, or a review of 2,000 words maximum, plus a short bio, to archword@artsci.wustl.edu. Submission guidelines on the website: <http://archjournal.wustl.edu/submissions/>

Best New Zealand Poems 2009. Deadline: 21 December. Publishers and poets who wish poems they have published in 2009 to be considered for Best New Zealand Poems are reminded that these need to be sent to the IIML for forwarding to this year's editor, Robyn Marsack. Publishers are invited to send copies of books and magazines to BNZP 2009, International Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140. Poems published in international journals are also eligible, and poets who think their work may not be submitted by a publisher may send published poems (not manuscripts) to the same address. For more information email modernletters@vuw.ac.nz

Regional Reports

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

WINDRIFT, Wellington 15 October 2009

Bevan Greenslade

7 persons, including new member Harumi Hasegawa, originally from Nagoya, attended, with contributions from 2 corresponding members. The usual topic format was followed: free, then for this meeting "equinox" and "conveyance".

Record of Contributions:

Author	Free	Equinox	Conveyance
Harumi Hasegawa	there is a silence on the hill waiting for lambs	eggplants in the vege market playing a starring role	the path along the swamp the more the water becomes clear, the more my step stretches
	kowhai leaves frozen against spring sky	venus in the sky there is the sound of freezing grasses	
Kerry Popplewell	athwart the track, a small bird - leaf floating across before me	equinox large branches launched into space	heavy shower under the truck's canopy just a few
Irene Ruth	alarm rings golden from the sea comes the sun	equinox gales batter Earth spring funeral	we scramble on board cable car ascends below spreads Wellington
Bevan Greenslade	first person lower case so humble [or: humility]	hungry south wind hounds my house a-roil i recall sharp words	skating comp small wheels gold
Penny Pruden	up the steps to home following the paw prints on the new concrete path	[retained]	a dream I had – no beak or claws but my strong wings pushing me through the darkening air
Nola Borrell	sleeping snakes a juvenile squints at the tourists	[retained]	train tunnel we both avoid eye contact
Jenny Pyatt	in the snow are blossom trees spring time	breaking seasons in a tumbling world - equinox	grandson visits - eternal noise as engines roar
Annette de Jonge	[retained]	cranky kids storm and winds spring equinox	[retained]
Karen Peterson Butterworth	[retained]	equinox song of a warbler and a cuckoo	whizzing past me boy racers on bicycles

This was the last meeting for 2009. The next meeting is planned for the 3rd Thursday in February – but ring Convenor Nola Borrell in the beginning of that month for confirmation of time and advice of venue.

Season's Greetings, poets all. Don't forget to slip a poem in every Xmas stocking.

Contact: Nola Borrell. Ph: 586 7287. Email: nolaborrell@extra.co.nz

WINDRIFT, WELLINGTON August 2009

Neil Whitehead

For the Meeting on the 20th August, 5 were present with contributions from 4 other haiku writers, and the three themes for haiku were isolation/ quarantine, the night sky, and sundries. The first theme resulted from swine flu occupying people's minds at the previous meeting! This report includes three samples.

"Concrete haiku" emerged for this meeting, in which the visual form of the words is an important integral part of the effect. One, based on the first theme looked like this:

		Pedophile		

N.E.Whitehead

In more traditional mode:

waiting alone
for the sneeze
the vomit

Jenny Pyatt

was generally agreed to be an image with strong impression providing the context is known!.

quarantine -
i open my tax demand
wearing gloves and mask

Karen Peterson Butterworth

LIVE POETRY IN NELSON

Mary Bell Thornton

Nelson's poets are a migratory lot; in the last three years we've moved three times and since its founding in 1993 by Mark Raffills, the Nelson Live Poets' Society has reputedly frequented most cafés and bars in Nelson. Last month we were invited to try a delightful new venue.

The Free House started life as a church. It's set back off the road at 95 Collingwood Street and the authentic vestibule as you enter asks you to check if you're in the right place.

The beer and wine soon answer that question. We regularly get between 20 and 30 poets on the fourth Monday of the month. Our poetry is as diverse as our age and experience. We enjoy Cliff Fell's creative writing students strutting their stuff, many for the first time, and Cliff often performs and brings his guitar for a change in pace. Nationally acclaimed poets Jessica Le Bas, Panni Palasti, Mark Raffills and Rachel Bush attend, regularly interspersed by well known and long time local poets Carol Don Ercolano, Betty Don, Joan Lees, Margaret Fearn and many more too numerous to mention.

Visitors are welcome to sign up for our open mic at 6 for 6.30pm start. For further information contact marybell@ts.co.nz or mic@thefreehouse.co.nz or www.thefreehouse.co.nz

PICTON POETS

Ruby Roberts

The last meeting was great, as usual. The poems we all wrote about eras in our past were all a great success. Susan read Anne's, which started us all off on a nostalgia trip. We were almost crying with laughter and memories, and Ernest took great delight in photo copying our efforts. Elizabeth's was particularly poignant as she regretted the loss of simplicity in our lives.

The topic for the next meeting took a long time to arrive at, with much discussion, but we eventually decided on "A house". Could be a mansion or a cottage, an old haunted house or a brand new townhouse, rich or poor, take your pick.

There was a memorial garden ceremony for Eileen Duggan at Tuamarina on 7th October.

Reviews

The Summer King Joanna Preston (Otago University Press, 2009) rrp \$29.95 ISBN 1877372692

Anne Harré

One of the first things you notice about Joanna Preston's collection *The Summer King* is the very fine detail given to the production of the book. From the reader's perspective it is a real joy to hold a book that has been given such loving attention; it's not often these days that a book of any genre is published in hardback. It adds weight, a kind of literary gravitas.

As for the contents, Preston has surpassed the notion that poetry is dull, dry and without wit. With this completely approachable first collection Preston has shown herself to be a fearless explorer of the human condition. Families, relationships, fear, love and loneliness are all covered. Her work is a startling mix of beautiful images, at times subtly erotic with extraordinary simplicity as in 'The Valley Farmers',

And then night: the last light doused,
pale bodies unclothed, and a low bed
where we too can unmake ourselves.

and others tinged with unspoken pain. In 'The Willow' Preston writes

Each evening he'd go to the willow,
lean back against a trunk
that seemed to curve toward his body.
He took his grief there when his mother died.

When he died, I took the axe myself,
exulted in the heft and swing, the bite
of blade into limb,
the shriek of timber falling.

There is light now, sunlight.

In 'Skeleton' she evokes the blood curdling terror and joy of tobogganing,

To hurl your own bones
skull first
down a twisting
chine of ice,

on a dinner tray
balanced
on two steel blades

This debut collection is gratifying and satisfying. It is earthy, technically assured, and utterly accessible.

The Propaganda Poster Girl Amy Brown (VUP, 2008), 80 pp, rrp \$25.

Joanna Preston

At its best, this collection is fabulous. In both the literal and the metaphorical senses – poems like ‘The Only Child’ and the superb ‘Chichevache’ step back from the world we think we inhabit, and pull us through to a much less certain place. And that sense of uncertainty, of dis-location, is the collection’s driving force.

The most obvious embodiment of this unease is found in the book’s middle section: a series of poems about the poet’s time teaching English in Vietnam. It perfectly illustrates Brown’s ability to use external details to convey inner states, and endow the seemingly anecdotal with a more universal resonance – essential for a poet who works in the personal-lyric mode. The sequence begins with first exposure to the new culture:

It is in bad taste
to kiss in public ... and the Vietnamese men stared at my face as if it were wet
with blood not tears

and the disquiet that comes with dis-location:

watched
the people as if they were an animal
that would ignore us if we kept still

through the experience of the new becoming strangely familiar:

The night I hear the screams
I take care ... it seems to be what most men do
in Hanoi

and ends with the wonderfully ambiguous ‘Perfect Traveller’, with its web of unanswered questions – *who* is the traveller? The poet? The girl in the poster? Someone else she didn’t notice until it was too late? And did she/they/it get away safely? Great stuff.

For me, there were two problems with this book. The first is Brown’s use of form. There are three villanelles, four sestinas and a pantoum – heavy, repetitive forms that need to be used carefully. They work well for poems about obsession or oppression, and indeed her first sestina (‘Address Sestina’) uses the repetition perfectly to illustrate its subject (repeated domestic violence, and being an unwilling witness). The first villanelle and second sestina occur shortly after, as parts 3 and 4 of ‘The Propaganda Poster Girl’. Again, they feel appropriate for their subject (although it might have been more interesting to keep the fixed forms for the two parts in the voice of the poster, rather than one for her and one about the man who buys her). But to have another villanelle come in two poems later is too much, especially when the repetitions don’t advance the poem. By sestina 3 it’s beginning to feel like notches on a bedpost, a suspicion reinforced by villanelle 3, sestina 4 (although it *almost* works as a sestina) and the pantoum.

The other frustration is sequencing. Too often poems that want to be beside each other, aren’t. The collection begins with the interestingly creepy ‘The Sublime’ – a poem about a young woman walking home alone at night, suddenly becoming aware of someone walking behind her. It lays the book’s main themes out (being vulnerable, uncertain, female), and she deftly ends the poem before we can find out if this threat is genuine. Perfect! Except she follows it with a mildly surreal, self-consciously clever poem, and squanders the tension. It’s a pattern of deflation that you learn to expect. The worst example is saved for last, with the collection’s standout poem, ‘Chichevache’ (a mythological creature which feeds only on “good and obedient wives”) being followed by the ‘so what?’ of ‘Onepu Road’. “Even when the walls are rotting / the electricity’s still on” is a flaccid ending to a poem, let alone a collection.

Those things are annoyances because this *is* a good collection, worth reading for ‘Chichevache’ and the ‘Propaganda Poster Girl’ sequence alone. Missteps are comparatively few, and Brown is a poet

who is very good at finding just the right phrase to tip a seemingly ordinary situation into the possibility of something much deeper and darker. Propaganda is the art of making people see what you want them to see. After reading Amy Brown's debut, shadows, footsteps and ordinary young women will never seem quite the same.

The Lustre Jug Bernadette Hall (Victoria University Press 2009) RRP \$25.00 ISBN 978-0-86473-608-6
Keith Nunes

A New Zealand poet with a deft touch and a subtle sense of humour, Bernadette Hall has produced another fully rounded work with *The Lustre Jug*. Her stint on the Irish based Rathcoola Fellowship fired her up cracking out half a book of excellent pieces about our northern literary friends. The other half of the book deals with other travels and ruminating on some fascinating subjects.

Hall's six-month writing fellowship based near Blarney follows Kiwi poet Fiona Farrell's identical trip which prompted her to write *The Pop-Up Book of Invasions* – another lovely collection.

Hall's trip thankfully hasn't prompted a tourist guide to Ireland but rather the series of poems take a clear-headed and profound look at the country – north and south – and the people who deal with the difficulties and joys that come with a country full of history.

The Cantabrian opens the collection with a stunning poem, 'Rathcoola Rain', that lends the disembodied a face and a personality:

The rain is like mice scabbling in the ceiling
the first licking of flames in a handful of shavings
the complicit turning of pages in hundreds of Mass books

In 'The Holy Ground' she paints a picture of where she stood and what she saw on her visit to the Emerald Isle where her father was born:

The walls of the garden are old stone
softened with moss and bracken and dandelion
Monks in black hoods walk the quadrants
Of our minds

I hate to get to it early, but the poem that stands out for me grabs a throat hold on me and never lets go:

The Scar

My pouched cheek
has been sliced open
like a windfall apple

The scar is like a length
Of purple cotton
With knots along it

And should anyone
Have the hide to ask,
I'll tell them straight
That I'm the great-great-
Great-great-granddaughter
Of an Irish pirate queen

And the scar
And a cart and a little donkey
Are all that she left me

But it's not all down hill from here. In the 'The Naad Bog' she lifts the spirit and raises the senses

with lines that explode on you:

The white
Skinned fish people walk
On the surface between the black
Water and the wet trees.

Look up through the eye
Of heaven, see how the circle
Completes itself inside the earth

The ticks I make in the book that acknowledge my favourites keep coming and on page 27 it's 'St Brigid's Cross', with its vivid images and angst-ridden lines:

To burn reeds was to honour
the dead, a broken reed was the sign
of a family betrayal

In 'The Mapmaker' we have life on the roll of a head:

For all his artistry and his good company,
they broke his head open with an axe

You barely catch your breath and starting on page 30 we have three pages of powerful and vivid images of life in difficult times, in the 'The Famine Notebook'. It touches you and caresses you and slaps you in the face, as Hall does with aplomb.

'Three Sisters Dancing' is inventive with its whacky way of curling a word around the corner while 'The Fox' and 'The War is Over' are striking poems, with the latter finishing with a plea: "This is heaven, this has to be heaven".

'Mrs O'Malley in Paris' is humorous, while 'Luxury' provides us with lines like:

the Irish bridesmaid's shaky x
on the 19th century wedding certificate
...
to be washed down with a mouthful/
or three of Jameson's whiskey

In Book Two, Hall weaves her magic away from the Irish pool of writers and mist and casts her net across the Pacific. This portion of the collection is as mesmerising as the first half and touches on things New Zealand and Australian with a strain of Americana. In 'A Girl on a Divan' she reads:

In the blue room
on the green divan
she's taking time out
from the world of men

In 'The Strenuous Life' she has had enough and she signs off with a flourish, and I think I would like to leave it there with Bernadette Hall telling it like it is in her ninth collection of poetry:

Well, fuck him, that's all I have to say.

It is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top.

Virginia Woolf

Calypso Bob Orr (AUP, 2008) RRP \$24.99 ISBN 186940405X

Majella Cullinane

After reading Orr's fourth collection *Calypso* (referring to the sea nymph who detained Odysseus on the island of Ogygia for seven years), it came as little surprise to me to discover that Orr works as a boatman on the Waitemata Harbour. This collection, divided into four sections, abounds with the aquatic and marine, and also comprises poems on travel, family and myth.

The first poem, 'Captain Odysseus', explores myth in a playful, conversational tone:

My skipper an old schemer
by the name of Captain Odysseus
whose ginger beard reminds me
of a map of Greece.
He still harps
on about that hellish voyage
he once made home from Troy.

'Bali', "where fishermen/ at dawn/ on boats that fly like birds/ smiled back in from/ the reef/
through the surf" with its clipped, vibrant lines, suggests movement and a kind of pulling away, reflected in the closing lines:

My flight the silver glint
of Garuda ...
and my heart
in a
thousand pieces

Travel in a new place echoes back to earlier places in the poem 'San Francisco':

Golden Gate Bridge
a dream of Japan
rock garden and water and red autumn leaf
seen through mist
where the Pacific Ocean
brims like a blue tear.

My favourite poem was the title poem of the first section, *Purple Octopus*, with its modern references to Euros and weapons of mass destruction, interspersed with Greek myth; a poem which is part dramatic monologue, part narrative and centres around Odysseus and Homer:

I didn't sail away because of Helen
she meant nothing to me in particular -
I had always found her vain
self-centred and shallow.
Certainly she was beautiful
but no more than any other Greek celebrity.
No I didn't sail away because of Helen
as it happened she was just my great escape ...

The 2nd section, *Seven Songs and an Anchor*, continues with the travel theme, but also contains 'My bookshelves', an amusing poem about different writers from the point of view of the poet's bookshelves:

Karl Stead looks askance at Keri Hulme
Janet Frame likes to keep her own company
Homer catches a sign of surf in Conrad's ear
Jack Kerouac is freaking out beside Emily Dickson

'Samoa' is full of the tastes, colours and sensations of travel:

I wandered aimless about Apia's ramshackle markets
tasted a watermelon sliced open with a warm machete
drank the nectar of a green coconut beneath a pineapple sun.

and also of our natural inclination to compare new experiences with the familiar:

In the suddenness of evening
the Pacific's Ocean's cool machete split the sun in two
and at the same time just as sharply
divided what I know from what
I thought I knew.

One of the most striking poems in the third section, *Red Nebulae*, is 'Ancestors'; with its compound adjectives, intense imagery and rhythm, it evokes a vivid sense of memory; a poem which lingers long after reading it:

Moon valved
sun silvered
clean shadowed
rock jutted
starfish scuttled sea
we pick our way
through your detritus
the length of Piha Beach

and concludes with an echo to ancestors:

Seven hundred years after Kupe
our ancestors came this way
set a course
...
Can you imagine them
blue eyed
with reddish complexion
gazing into the surf's oblivion?

There are also moving poems about family, about a grandmother called Garn who:

once on a frosty night
not far above a macrocarpa
pointed out the Southern Cross.
The cattle lay around us
asleep like ancient boulders.

and a quiet elegy for the poet's mother which ends:

through the chill
of a Waikato evening
watch how
those trees creep closer together
as we move further apart.
So
long
Mum.

The last section, *Cicada Summer* contains shorter, lyrical poems which I particularly enjoyed,

demonstrating the poet's keen observation resulting in memorable, lucid imagery.

Invocation

Turning these pine-cone
pages
we might find
ourselves
among those
who have harvested sea honey.

And 'Calypso' which is not only poignant but has a lovely, quiet rhythm to it:

On such a night as this
when the moon is a long boat
dancing between the pohutukawa branches
shall we go sailing in it?
Outside our window the tide must now be rising.
It's ours for the asking.
Some stars we'll take for sugar
some we'll take for salt
that way everything should be to our taste.
We could be gone by this morning
to some calypso coast -
an island offshore
where even the waves are dancing
and where the fish most surely will be leaping.
Just say the word
and I'll tell you I'm not dreaming.

Oh Light ed Anna Gilkison (Disability, Spirituality & Faith Network, 2008) rrp \$22.50 plus postage, from publisher www.dsfnetwork.org ISBN 978-1-877192-37-1

Peter Rawnsley

Oh Light is a collection of quotations, poems, short reflections and stories, often accompanied by images. The material is organised into six thematic sections. The production of this compact book (about 16 cm square and 129 pp) is superb and would grace any coffee table.

But the book is far more than polished, instantly inspiring text and pictures; its special feature is to draw the reader through the great wisdom tradition, from writers remote in space and time (for example Job), to Aotearoa, New Zealand and to the experience of specific New Zealand writers/ artists living with disability.

I carry it with me
like a handbag
...
A handbag
I never lose
and never replace.

The poetry is often sparse (short-lined). Often good use is made of parallelism or repetitive patterns building through successive lines to a cumulative effect:

I begin to stand up tall and no longer stooped.
I begin to look outward rather than inwards.
I begin to notice and to care for, and about others.

Interestingly, the editor has included what I call "antipoetry." This is a straight prose statement

with no poetic device and yet paradoxically, solely because of its context, it is arguably poetry!

Recently the adult 'normals', chiefly male, who make such decisions for the United Nations have decreed that each three hundred and sixty-five days we live be dedicated to one or another of the sub-groups in society ... We have had in succession, therefore, the Year of the Woman, the year of the Child and finally, the Year of the Disabled.

My personal 'test' for poetry is how effectively does something of it, e.g. an image, a sudden turn or insight, stay with me and surface perhaps weeks or months later. On that criterion the book has stood up well. Although I did not find it particularly striking on first read, 'Hoiho' (yellow-eyed penguin) kept coming back to me over weeks:

sat by him humming
running
your hand
over his white chest
as we

would all love to do

This is also a poem where the artwork and text amplify each other.

There are many exact, powerful and pointed words or phrases in this collection; for example, "cute pins" in:

Where are the angels you promised you would give
charge over us?
Instead of cute pins on our shoulders
we want angels of mercy.

Indeed, there is a very wide range of style and material in the text and artwork. Somehow the organisation and editing has pulled it together.

I recommend this book, but with a caveat. It is slow text, slow images, slow poetry. That is like slow food and it needs to be digested slowly. Taken as wisdom literature it does not offer answers so much as pose questions. If taken seriously those questions can be difficult. The words and images are an invitation to enter the writers' and artists' space and simultaneously the space of one's own life. It is an invitation to enter that space and sit with the questions – not to get an answer or make a judgement, but to experience a transformation.

Ribbonwood Calendar 2010 Images and poems © Trish Harris (Ribbonwood Designs 2009)

\$15.50 inc. p&p

Karen Peterson Butterworth

There are three kinds of art in this small but tall desk calendar: abstract art, a pleasing coloured typeface, and poetry, and they are connected in a unified whole.

The calendar's dimensions are ideal for a crowded computer work station, and would look equally good on a dressing table. A blue-and-white stream with dashes of purple widens diagonally across the purple front page. I did and didn't want to turn the page. I could happily live with the cover image, set under its spare, white lettering: 'Ribbonwood CALENDAR 2010'.

Inside, beneath each month's dates, is a coloured image with a short caption conveying the artist's intention; e.g. 'beginnings' under January's image, and 'where is your source?' beneath the cover stream, repeated under June. I would be equally happy with wordless images, but I'm aware that many viewers of abstract art prefer guidance towards interpretation. Here it is sparsely given, and there remains broad scope for the viewer's imagination.

The lightly drawn images feature patterns of swirls, curls and petal-shapes. There is an impression of circularity – a centrifugal pulling-together from which there are unfoldings and spin-offs.

Four poems inter-leaved between the months develop these themes, employing more specific images. 'In and Out' has stanzas alternately headed, 'On the out breath,' and 'On the in breath.' There are birds, branches, houses and curtains among its images. It concludes: "dreams/ rise/ soaked in darkness/ and a dalliance of stars."

An untitled poem is a riddle that relates to the captions on preceding and following pages. 'Flow' is a shape poem which connects human existence with the river and other images. The final poem, also a shape poem, progresses from the universe to an eyelid blink.

This object of art would make a suitable gift for anyone except someone with severe visual problems. It has light colours and fine (though not small) print. This is the price paid for its overall delicacy – perhaps the single flaw designed to placate jealous gods. For those with merely elderly vision, its artistic and spiritual depth make it worthwhile finding a strong enough light under which to view it. Further information and orders from website: www.ribbonwooddesigns.co.nz

Mini Competition

We haven't had one of these for a while (and it takes up space), so here goes.

Write a parody of a well-known poem, classical or modern. My model here is Wendy Cope, who has managed to summarise 'The Waste Land' in five limericks. And here's her take on a familiar verse from 'The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám':

Here with a Bag of Crisps beneath the Bough
A Can of Beer, a Radio - and Thou
Beside me half-asleep in Brockwell Park
And Brockwell Park is Paradise enow.

from: *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*

The deadline is 21st November, and the prize is a rather gorgeous book called *Poetic Meter & Poetic Form*, by Paul Fussell (McGraw-Hill, 1979), which was generously donated by Rob McKibbin (I think – if my memory has deceived me, please forgive me, Rob and whoever actually donated it.)

Brick walls are there for a reason. They give us a chance to show how badly we want something.
Randy Pausch (The Last Lecture)

Haiku NewZ

CONGRATULATIONS

- Ernest J Berry won Third Prize in the Paper Wasp Jack Stamm Award 2009 with:

first love
windmills turning
into dusk

KiwiHaiku

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

patterning of lace
on the macrocarpa trunk
beneath, the chopped limb
Jenny Argante

smell dawn's sweetness
feel sun's beat
hear night's stillness
Debbie Williams

Tanka Reflections

- short songs of the human spirit –
Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka. Please send submissions to: pprime@ihug.co.nz, or post to: 42
Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610

the old lady
very tired
trying to gather
the posy of freesias
I gave her
Catherine Mair

school reunion
together for the weekend
we tread with care
tiptoe around past hurts
split every payment in two
Elaine Riddell

Ten minutes with Joanna Preston:

Joanna Preston is an Australian poet and writer who lives in Christchurch. Her work has been widely published, both here and overseas, and she has edited three anthologies for the NZPS and co-edited an anthology for the Airing Cupboard Women Poets. In 2008 she won the Inaugural Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry. She has an MPhil in Creative Writing from the University of Glamorgan (Wales), and is currently a part-time tutor in Creative Writing at Christchurch Polytechnic. She is also a co-editor of *Kokako* magazine

Firstly, congratulations on being the inaugural winner of the Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry. What has winning the award meant for you as a writer?

Joy, delight, relief ... especially relief. A lovely big, fat red tick beside the book as a collection, not just as a group of poems. Having spent the last few years ducking the usual question ("Oh, so you've published a book then?") I can finally stand up tall and say "Yes. Yes I have." I usually manage to keep the accompanying wild shouts of jubilation and glee inside my head.

In a previous interview with Tim Jones you say that "for me it comes down to music...that poetry is, above all else, patterned language", could you elaborate on the idea of "patterned language."

It goes back to the roots of poetry – a poem had to be something that was able to be carried around intact in a person's head. Things like rhythm and rhyme help to keep the poem memorable (as do surprising and appropriate images, but they aren't limited to poetry). When we make a poem, we look for the pulse in the language, the skeleton that gives the shape solidity. Isn't that the fundamental difference between poetry and prose – this *structure* running through it? An awareness of how tiny things, like shifting the position of a syllable or a line break can change the emphasis on a word, and either boost or reduce its importance to the meaning of the poem.

Poets are lucky. Prose writers really only get to use the meanings of words to create effects. (Maybe a bit of onomatopoeia, but it tends to be a garnish rather than a main flavouring.) Poets get to use

the meanings, but also the sounds (high pitch? low pitch? rhyme, assonance, consonance?) and then the structure of a piece to add meaning. (Short lines for speed, a regular pattern to echo the idea of control, or using a certain form to add its historical context to your own work – a sonnet for an argument, pantoum for obsession, ballad for a story, etc. etc.).

From 2003 to 2006, you lived in the United Kingdom and completed the MPhil. in Creative Writing at the University of Glamorgan. Why did you choose this particular school, and how has the experience affected you and your writing?

Serendipity. I didn't want to go back to school full time, so I was looking at distance learning courses. I was originally just going to do a couple of courses through the Open University, and one of the tutors I hoping to work with (Stephen Knight) had recently joined the staff of the Glamorgan MPhil. I did a bit of reading around, and the course was very well thought of, so I sent an email asking for more information. I heard nothing for ages, and then got an email from the head of the course saying that they had just had someone pull out, so if I wanted to apply I needed to get a sample of work to them by the end of the week. I did; they liked it; and four weeks later I was in Cardiff, beginning the MPhil.

As an ex-pat Australian what does the concept of home mean to you, and how does it inform (if at all) what you write?

I sometimes feel like quoting Florence Vassey, and referring to myself as a "Citizen of the World!", but I'm not that glamorous.

These days, home is Christchurch. My husband wooed me with the view from the Port Hills. Pretty effective!

As for how 'home' informs my work ... a lot of poems aren't grounded in any one place. I think that's the legacy of all the moving we did when I was growing up. Plus I'm greedy: I don't want to limit myself to any one place. Or time. (Or reality, for that matter.) And that's half the fun – creating a place that the reader thinks they recognise.

Many of the poems in your collection The Summer King are full of images of the land, of landscape and particularly of animals. Is this a conscious theme for your writing or something that comes from a deeper place?

It's not really a conscious thing – some people, walking down the street, notice cars. Some people notice shoes, or clothes. Or faces. I tend to notice the animals, or plants. And I'm a country girl really – these things matter to me. We forget that humans are part of the natural world.

...and I understand from your website <http://jopre.wordpress.com> that you're an "urban chicken keeper", any plans for other livestock in the future?

The plan is to buy some land at some point in the near(ish) future. I can feel generations of farming ancestors prodding me. They'll no doubt be oscillating in horror when it turns out to be a lifestyle block rather than a high-country run ... (maybe I can rig them up to some sort of turbine? Generate our own electricity?)

In terms of writing and editing you've stayed with poetry, do other literary genre interest you, and if so....which ones?

I've dabbled in other genres, with a stunning absence of success. (Although I did once write and professionally record a promotional song for a sporting event.) I do have a fantasy novel vaguely in the works, but it's not getting enough attention to be anything more than an idea-in-progress.

Your work seems to be based largely on the idea of personal narrative and experience, how easy (and/or necessary) is it for you to remain separate from what you're writing?

More "narrative" than personal – I've never been a murderous light-house keeper, or had a sexual relationship with a lion, or actually seen someone turn into a ballet dancer in a supermarket

carpark. They tend to be told from the first person, but that's a matter of looking for impact. There are very few poems in the collection where Joanna Preston is the voice speaking. And even those ones are a very abstract version of her. (Which is one more reasons why I don't think of myself as a lyric poet!)

If you mean how easy is it for me to get editing distance from the work ... harder. I rely on a couple of really good first readers to slap the poems when they need it, and help me see where I need to step away. But I think that's a normal thing for any writer – if you don't get at least a *little* emotionally invested, is it going to be a good poem?

As always the culinary question, pikelets or scones?

Scones, every time.

MEMBERS' POEMS

Incandescent

The lady's protested far too much,
past 'Land Rights for Gay Whales,'
or protection for every plant,
totara to wandering jew,
demands liberation from the moose
under the dining-room table
and chainsaws in the Rumpus!
My rugby video tea chests and I
are off to a garden shed
where a poor man orange once,
eclipsed by three new bedrooms,
fruited itself to death.

Julie Ryan

Orange

Orange has become his best friend
The delicate background of his journey
With black, dripping and sharpening
Stark contrast on a timeless canvas

Orange has become his palette
A fire of red and yellow
That blends a thousand sunsets
And lights a shadowed corridor

Orange is his honest timbre
Between a spectrum of wild wicker
His hand dapples the honesty
Across a vibrant plain

Maranda Haynes

Belonging Somewhere

My town's lacking in logic or long habit,
a scatter of shingle clustered on a plain -
its war memorial pins it from washing away.

My city's bones and veins, mapped in mine,
more than this town's I live in now, lead home,
these auto-pilot legs a milkman's horse

Belonging reaches back to a house now sold,
waiting at windy tram-stops, friendships drifted away,
yet riding down into Wellington still rings right.

That mean-ribbed wooden house, my father's once,
a brace of bitter widows, his dad a drunkard,
his mother breaking down, his bunk in a shed;

my mother's family's house, more generous-girthed,
called "Tirotai" - sort-of "O look, the sea',
and at Island Bay's rock-pools, fishing-boats;

I never lived in either, growing up
in that homely house, on a hill-side, that's now sold,
not ready yet to go knock on the door.

A past then less of places than tupuna?
These faces gazing back from greying photos?
Some of them named, others only guessed.

Clearing my parents' house, that tough old bite
found face-down in a drawer in the tool-shed
should be Jean Wilson, my father's mother-in-law.

Belonging in the now - through love to wife, daughters,
grand-daughters - and within this aging skin,
somewhere within this restless, forgetful brain.

Still, the car I drive can feel less real than trams,
clanking and grinding up an awkward rise,
losing the wire at times, but not the rails.

John C. Ross

Weekly Phonecall

Colin Russell Gilbert, 1923-2009

My father's getting old and boring
I have to tell you this before he dies
De mortuis nil nisi bonum and all that

After he's dead I'll remember his influence
advice
and guidance
pointing out the Southern Cross he'd tell me to lead not follow
Alpha Centauri the model
and almost in the same breath urge the habit of
listening
to attract a man

After his death I'll nostalgise over conversations late at night
in his taxi as he drove me home
safe from parties and young men
with dishonourable intentions
as well as those who wished
to make an honest woman of me
After he's dead I expect I'll also remember he showed me how
to iron a shirt
plant a bulb
pace an exam
so I'd answer all the questions in time

After he's dead I'll think about the playhouse he
built
with scrap from the tip
the caravan he paid one shilling a week
to keep at camp for weekend trips
and the endless summer rocks and sand
at the picnic beach where he dived for crayfish

After his death I might recall secret gifts of money for me
when babies were the only treasure
on the desert island
I called marriage

After his death I suppose I'll miss the weekly phone calls
of gossip and gripes
advice for my children
& racist/homophobic jokes
the interruption to my evening cut short
when something he wants to watch comes on TV

One day/ many days after he dies I'll think on these
things
But for now I think you ought to know
my dad is getting old and boring

Laurice Gilbert
Runner-up, The Great Kiwi Poetry Competition, 1998

Quartered apples

And I'd be in the kitchen cutting an

a

p

p

le

into quarters

You'd come up behind and fold me in your
arms. I'd tuck into your enveloping body
sealed with happiness.

As I turn to the compost bin I nudge
my dream aside

and listen to my reality
farting and scratching on the sofa
watching rugby on the box

Ruth Arnison (Published in right hand pointing, Issue 18)

JANUARY DEADLINE is 15th November
for everything except book reviews and the Mini Competition, which should reach me by 21st November