



The New Zealand Poetry Society

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

With the Assistance of Creative NZ
Arts Council of New Zealand *Toi Aotearoa*

New Zealand Poetry Society
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WELLINGTON

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This Month's Meeting

Millionaire's Shortbread Poets

Thursday September 18
8.00 p.m. Turnbull House

Preceded by an open reading

In a poetry landscape of solo collections and anthologies, *Millionaire's Shortbread* (UOP, 2003) is one of the more innovative and unusual ventures. The four Wellington poets, Mary Jane Duffy, Mary Creswell, Mary Macpherson and Kerry Hines, brought together three years of writing and commissioned artist Brendan O'Brien to produce collages in response to the poems.

The poets met at a writing course in 1999 and continued to workshop their poetry around a café table. As they grew to appreciate their different voices and approaches, the idea of publishing jointly appealed. "In a sense the book is like a collage, juxtaposing different elements to create an intricate and textured whole," they say.

Describing the work of the writers, poet and commentator Greg O'Brien says: "With their strong opinions and vivacious surfaces, Mary-Jane Duffy's poems might be thought of as a Neo-Expressionism of the Everyday ... her poems celebrate a world – *this* world – in which nothing will 'function normally'. Mary Creswell is a similarly inclined spanner-wielding technician of the real ... Mary Macpherson's poems are more spacious and reflect an ongoing fascination with the 'leftover spaces' in

which poetry and the visual arts often operate. Macpherson's spaciousness becomes Kerry Hines' expansiveness in a series of pristine (but not overly reverent) meditations on nature and history."

From the Committee

We are delighted to announce that our new website is live! Visit www.poetrysociety.org.nz and see our new logo too. There is a new Members' Page where NZPS members will be able to view past and current newsletters. We can add services to this area – let us know what you would like to have. We would also like to hear feedback about the site at our new email address: info@poetrysociety.org.nz.

To access the members' section you will need a password that will change every month. **It is vital that you do not give out the password to anyone else – treat it as you would your bank PIN number.** If you give out the password to others, it devalues everyone's membership because it allows non-members to access the same services that members have, but without paying the membership subscription.

To receive the new password each month, you will need to send a request email to our Editor, who will add you to a distribution list. While the list is being set up, you can use the current password: **blake7**.

We hope you agree that the new website is a vast improvement over the old one and we are eager to hear other changes you would like to see happen. This is your Society, so your opinion counts.

Happy writing!

Margaret Vos, President, NZPS.

NZPS Meeting, August 21

Ron Riddell welcomed a sizeable gathering to the August meeting who, despite a Wellington southerly, came to hear the new writing from poets on this year's Whitireia Polytech Poetry Course.

The open reading, which preceded our guest poets, began with Dilys Rees. “Let Jesus be honoured on the altar of my suffering” she read from one of her distinctive religious poems. David Beach had a sonnet – one from a collection of ten. He also announced a new Wellington initiative – a monthly discussion group on recently published books of poetry. The first, at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday September 10, at the Zephyr Café in Wakefield Street, will discuss Jenny Bornholdt’s latest collection *Summer*.

Other readers were Robin Fry with a persona poem ‘Being a twentieth century man in the twenty-first century’ and Nola Borrell, who entertained us with a play on the word ‘Slip’. Kate, who likes to be known only by her first name, addressed her gall-bladder regretfully in two poems written before it was removed surgically. Mike Webber, dressed in colourful striped tights, had fun with a poem written last month on the topical theme of flatulence tax. (“To be really fair/we’ll be taxing Rotorua’s air.”) This was preceded by a more recent poem written on what looked like a label. Waste not, want not! The open reading concluded with Kerry Popplewell’s two short poems ‘Coober Pedy’ and ‘Sunflower’.

For several years now writers from the Whitireia Polytech Poetry Course have been invited to read at one of our winter meetings. As usual we were treated to a stylish presentation, complete with props, devised by choreographer Jamie Bull. From a babble of sound, the ten poets emerged individually, speaking of *words*. “Words crawling off a sheet of paper”, “words are fresh scabs” words “tug taut the corners of my mind”. It reminded us of the power, the beauty and the terror of words, of the pivotal role of language in our evolving humanity.

What followed was a braided stream of language made sinuous by the use of rhyme and rhythm which was very notable in the Whitireia poetry this year. Several brackets of short sharp poems were little shoals and reefs punctuating the flow of words.

Jessica Bromley and Magenta Papara had some strong relationship poems. Magenta’s ‘Seasons’ used the metaphors of ocean, surf and tide to convey the engulfing power of a male partner. Jessica leapt athletically onto a beam balanced on two sawhorses for ‘Pink Champagne’, a taste of low life on the town with strong rhymes and rhythms. Charlotte Hurley had exact observations of nature in ‘Karehana Bay’ and ‘The Strange Metamorphosis of Animals’. Michelle Grace was pinioned by a rose in a series of three short rhyming poems, Karina Little’s gentle poem ‘Ode to a Kereru’ continued the nature theme while Dennis Duerr’s ‘The Rock’ recounted the differing drinking experiences with friends and family (“Ah Dionysus/god of wine and merriment”).

Rosie Gordon contributed a series of three short poems including ‘Artiste’ with its striking simile “the roof of the world rippled like corrugated iron”. Kyla-Jane Harris’ series of three included an enigmatic poem called ‘How Far Can The Eye See’.

Widely spaced in the programme were two powerful rhyming, intricately structured poems by Dene Carey. Almost case histories, the first, ‘Don’t’, traces the discouraging first words the baby hears and continues to hear, year after year, until she grows up to repeat the pattern herself with her own child. A very skilful poem. Her second ‘Mrs Lowry’s Daughter’, was equally telling. This woman, says her daughter, “shouldn’t have had kids at all, but she did. She had three”. “The men came and went” and eventually this inadequate woman takes to the bottle, yet, says the daughter “sometimes I really love her/after all, she is my mother”.

Steve Booth mounted a ladder for his humorous ‘Welcome to Telecom’ (“that bloody does it/is not a valid pin number”). It was his final piece, ‘Nothing Chant’, however that made the greatest impression.

Nothing Chant

nothing comes to nothing comes to nothing comes to
nothing comes to nothing comes to singing comes to
sailing north on singing seas past islands comes to
green comes to green comes to green comes to silence
comes to silence breathing in and out on waves
crashing onto reefs comes to ships with gaping holes
lost far down in sea canyons comes to nothing comes
to nothing comes to nothing comes to nothing comes
to wind blowing across wave tops albatross skimming
floating flying sleeping comes to dreaming comes to
dreaming comes to dreaming comes to dreaming
comes home by a fire with a book of poems about the
sea staring for a moment into the middle distance as
the fire crackles comes to paper rustling in leaves in
bush in forest in jungle comes to walking comes to
walking comes to walking comes to stream running
down down down to river to river to Amazon to ocean
to sky comes to sky comes to sky comes to sky comes
to sky comes to blueness from horizon to horizon with
albatross skimming and sharks flying beneath the
waves comes to waves comes to waves comes to
waving goodbye to all that you know and leaving
alone to discover a new beach ocean sky land comes
to lonely comes to lonely comes to lonely comes to
lonely comes to lovely comes to lovely eyes delving
deep into your soul as you sit in a tropical heat like a
sauna like a hot shower pounding on you from all
sides and you feel the sweat dripping comes to
dripping comes to dripping comes to dripping comes
to weeping for everything you have ever had ever lost
ever loved comes to nothing comes to nothing comes
to nothing comes nothing comes to nothing comes to
nothing comes to nothing comes to nothing

Steve had memorised this mesmeric stream-of-consciousness poem and chanted it as he walked in a circle (“comes to nothing, comes to nothing, comes to nothing ... comes to dreaming ... comes home to the fire with a book of poems about the sea...”)

Finally, in ‘When there are no words’ Magenta Papara concludes “it’s best to be that writer that dominates the poet into submission”.

If any of these ten had ever suffered from writer’s block though, it certainly wasn’t evident in this presentation. Year after year new poets come on-stream and the great river of words and language flows on with new tributaries.

(Robin Fry)

Coming Events

Christchurch

Canterbury Poets Collective Spring Readings (at The WEA, 59 Gloucester St) are held weekly on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m. Guest poets & BYO. \$4 & \$3. The guest poets are: September 4, Cyril Childs and Nick Ascroft; September 11, Jeffrey Paparao Holman and Rob Jackaman; September 18, Kay McKenzie Cooke and Claire Beynon; September 25, Stu Bagby and Fiona Farrell; October 2, Margaret Mahey and Jan Hutchison; October 9, Mark Pirie and Cliff Rumph; October 16, The Poetry Chooks.

Dunedin

Joanna Margaret Paul: Poet and Painter. In 1983, Joanna Paul was a Frances Hodgkin’s Fellow at the University of Otago. From then until her death earlier this year, she generously gifted paintings, drawings and prints to the Hocken Library Pictures Collection. This exhibition has a selection of her artworks along with several of her poems from the publications collection. Held from August 16 to October 4 in the Hocken Library, corner of Anzac Avenue & Parry Street, Dunedin. Contact: Pennie Hunt, phone (03) 479 5648.

Porirua

C.K. Stead will be the next guest poet at Poetry Café on September 8 at Selby’s Sports Café, 1 Serlby Place, Porirua. Free entry.

Wellington

The Wellington International Poetry Festival will run over a four day period on October 16,17,18 & 19 2003. It will start with an official opening on Thursday 16 followed by a reading. Friday will see

lunchtime readings, poets from Latin America and Spain and an evening event with poetry and jazz. Saturday will have lunchtime poets, Songs from the East – poetry performance and music, Poetry from Europe and an evening event. Sunday will feature Pacific Poetry and Song, Poetry of Africa and the Middle East and there will be a closing ceremony in the late afternoon. Contacts for more information are Ron Riddell or Saray Torres – email: poetfest@paradise.net.nz.

Around the Country

Christchurch

John O’Connor gave the following talk, about the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award For Poetry, on National Radio’s *Bookmarks*. The Award was presented on July 27 at the Five New Zealand Poets reading at Applaud. The Award is worth \$1,000 (jointly sponsored at this point by the CPC and NZPS) and is for excellence in and substantial contribution to NZ Poetry.

“The Lauris Edmond Memorial Award For Poetry is an initiative of the Canterbury Poets Collective and the New Zealand Poetry Society and will be presented biennially at the Christchurch Arts Festival. The inaugural recipient is Wellington poet and editor, the late Bill Sewell.

“It’s a cliché, perhaps, to think of poets as undervalued in their own time and later coming to prominence. Yet to an extent it’s applicable to Bill Sewell, for while he was certainly respected – as evidenced by his Burns Fellowships – it remains true that his work was not represented in any major anthology of New Zealand poetry until quite recently.

“During a period when poets often came to national attention on the back of political correctness, youth culture or writing-course publicity, Bill Sewell kept on writing his poems and developing his craft in relative obscurity – he had only his excellence to recommend him.

“Now that he’s gone we’re beginning to acknowledge what we previously felt: that Bill Sewell is one of our finest poets, that his last two books in particular – *Erebus: a poem* and *The Ballad of Fifty-one* – stand with the best work of such major figures as Alistair Campbell, Kendrick Smithyman and Lauris Edmond. Like some of them also he is at his best on a broader canvas, his individual pieces gaining significance within the interactions of their presentation. In another sense too his poems are contextual – they are part of our national story.

“The presentation of the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award For Poetry to the late Bill Sewell is in recognition of that achievement.”

Nelson

On August 13 Yaza café rocked again to the words of Nelson Poets. Davey opened with his guitar and an original song. Fifteen poets took the stage and strutted their stuff in front of a packed house. The poetry was as varied as the audience, from the respectable to the questionable. Ali read her poems for the first time. Jean gave us memories of an Edwardian childhood and ‘Sharleen’ – well she gave us a laugh. In leopard skin tights, tiny little skirt, leather jacket and blond wig and a delivery which spoke words itself.

If variety be the spice of life, then come along to Yaza for the feast of mind and the stomach. New poets, come and get motivated, come and have fun!

Beyond Bugged

I had to bike out
To Richmond today
I had to wrestle
A head-wind
She fought me
All the way.
She grasped my coat
She clutched my hair
She sucked my strength.
She stood in front of me
And blew me with her breath.
But going home,
I turned my back
Ignored the bitch,
And sailed back.

(Report and poem by Leslie Haddon)

Porirua

‘Ah bitter chill it was’ (apologies to Keats) and the downpour rampaged over our poet yet Poetry Café had another most successful evening in July, marked especially by a pleasing number of newcomers. The ability of Poetry Café to present new, exciting talent and interesting combinations of poets must be part of its attraction! Certainly featuring newly published biographer, Ingrid Horrocks, and her father, John, drew in recognised poets, regulars and first timers alike.

Alternating time slots, John and Ingrid presented poetry of quite different styles and themes. The elegance and clarity of Japan,

As I arrange slim
stemmed flowers
at the ikebana class

one petal falls

and floats blue
upon the water. (Look)

the sumptuousness and sensuousness of fruit harvest in Italy or the desolation of the vast and the snow-bound in America – all were crystallised in carefully observed detail by the much travelled Ingrid.

The universal feelings of the returned traveller’s strangeness and isolation, her experiences alien to those met again, are succinctly captured in ‘Arriving Home’.

To her I never kissed
a Japanese photographer
in a crowded street in Tokyo.

But we shared some of the traveller’s pleasures through the vignettes in ‘Wonderful Things’.

– A temple without a sign. The last red leaves float on the pond. There is an old man sweeping but he does not utter a word.

But the intrigue of a family reading comes from a poem such as ‘Reading Your Letter’

I think of you

and
the yellow
poetry book
in the shearing-shed
oiled with
sheep grease
from your fingers

and of how you hide
its crumbling pages
when the shearers come.

as we have just listened to John’s poems of the shearing sheds but also have Ingrid’s commentary on its culture.

And who hasn’t seen names scratched, charcoaled and scrawled on shed walls? John reflects

But other names mean nothing –
shearers who sharpened their blades on stone
and worked in a slow silence
scribbling a protest against mortality.

He contrasts the Wairarapa farmers’ wives, “imperious galleons” in their uniform “cream shirts” and requisite jewellery with his own, “a privateer,/swift and daring”.

This gained piquancy with Virginia sitting in the audience!

The Wairarapa shearing shed or Petone foreshore; John’s poetry has an earthiness, the glow of “a real

fire". It is bracing rural New Zealand but with hints of "the world and all its destinations". (Dogs)
And in the Open Mike session, Hinemoana Baker held off strong competition to take out the Selby's Bar prize while such was the standard of 'promise and passion' that two poets were awarded Learning Connexion prizes.
(Nancy Cooney)

Rotorua

The Rotorua Mad Poets apologise for the length of time taken to judge their Mad Poets Society Humorous Verse competition due to the illness of one of the judges. The winning poem was 'Perish the Thought' by Debbie Williams of Dunedin.

Perish the Thought

Our Butcher is a vegan, the Baker's pinched the dough,
The Publican's tea-total, my Mechanic needs a tow.
My Dentist, he wears dentures, our Doctor's sick again,
The Chemist, he's on Prozac, and our Plumber's
blocked the drain.
The Milkman rides a skateboard, our Priest has gone to jail,
My Postie, he's on crutches, and our Lawyer's out on bail.
Our Tailor sows his wild oats, My Hairdresser is bald,
The pilfering Accountant, won't tell you what he's called.
Our Painter's sniffing paint fumes, the Builder bites his nails,
Our bulemic Dietitian says, her diet never fails.
The Gardener's dug his toes in, the Teacher's strapped for words,
They've tied her to the oak tree, our kids are little nerds.
My Hubbie's on Viagra, my friends have run away,
Could it be they're jealous, or feel threatened in some way?
Oh well, these are the people, we meet in daily life,
But put them all together, and boy, are we in strife.

(Members' results in 'Congratulations' column on the last page.)

Wellington

Throughout the month of July, a weekly series of readings were held at Bizy Bee's Books, Manners Street, Wellington, in memory of local bookshop proprietor, Neil Rowe. Over the month 14 poets were involved in some of the liveliest poetry readings seen for a while.

Reading One, introduced by poet, publisher and critic Niel Wright, featured L E Scott, Vivienne Plumb and Michael O'Leary. L E Scott, reading first, impressed with his rhythmical, improvised jazz poetry.

Throughout his set the repeated refrain "What should be is remembered" linked together a series of fractured and often disturbing images of human life and human love: "the sexual moans of each woman are different". Mixing his distinctive sound and the rhythms of the Black Church, Scott proved once again why he is one of the best performers in New Zealand. Vivienne Plumb followed with a humorous set of prose poems and reminisced of her earlier years in Australia, e.g. 'Lychees':

The light at the intersection of Pinaroo
and Tarragindi explodes over us like
incandescent fallout. At midday
we purchase all the strange foreign
foods of Australia. Cherry Ripes
in their crackling lurid wrappers, sticky
Fanta, Iced Vo-Vos and fresh lychees.
A pungent smell but they taste sweeter
than you think, translucent like jelly
but firmer, and peeling the dusky carmine
skin of a lychee is a most satisfactory
business...

The final poet was Michael O'Leary, who read from his new collection *Toku Tinihanga* (HeadworX). His verse was honest, thought provoking and sincere. His 'Ballad of Ryan O'Corky' (about the tragic life of a friend) mixed rhyme and wit with traditional narrative form to good effect.

Reading Two featured Harvey McQueen, Tim Jones and me [Mark Pirie] and was MC'd by L E Scott. Harvey McQueen read first and his poems moved over a range of subjects from bureaucratic life to domestic life to rural settings such as the fine poem about his grandfather.

Next, Tim Jones ran through a set of poems from his recent collection *Boat People* (HeadworX). As usual his wit and intelligence shone through. Tim also read what must be one of the first poems on Lemmy, of Motorhead fame. Tim's last poem, 'Stand-by 15 Seconds', a highly amusing poem, was very well received by an appreciative audience.

My set was different to my usual readings. I improvised by pulling off my trousers to reveal a skirt. In my new attire I called Tim Jones back on stage for a duet, and read the poem 'Love', a dialogue between a man and a woman from my new book *Dumber* (ESAW). I then read a range of work from the personal to the humorous, including 'Urgency':

URGENCY

In lieu of recent circumstances, I move, That urgency
be accorded—

the introduction and first reading of the Poets' Bill,

the introduction and passing of the Poets' Poetry Bill (No 2),
the first reading of the Open-form Reform of Poetry Bill, and

the passing through their remaining stages of–

the Fair Trading Plagiarism Bill (No 3) for Deconstructionist Purposes;
the Poet Protection (Definitions of Rhymes and Metrics) Bill;
the Poetic Re-cycling Imports and Exports (Restrictions) Amendment Bill;
the Poets' Hazardous Substances and Cheaper Liquor Amendment Bill;
and of any bills into which those bills may be divided;

the second lyrical reading of the Retirement of Poets Bill; and

the passing through their remaining stages of–
the Biographical Security Poet Amendment Bill;
the Poetic License for Rhythmical Crimes Amendment Bill (No 6);
the Academic Practitioners Assurance for Poets Bill;
and
the Literary Industry (Small Press) Restructuring Bill;
and of any bills into which those bills may be divided;

I move that urgency be accorded.

Reading Three, chaired by me, was perhaps the most lively of the four readings. Helen Rickerby, Scott Kendrick and Mike Eager added a real boost of energy to the event. Helen ran through a set of poems from her first collection *Abstract Internal Furniture*, before ending with a long sequence on Edith Sitwell. Her reading reflected her strong reading interests in feminist subjects and ideas.

The unabashed Scott Kendrick with his customary urban class zing read next and thrashed through a set of dialogues and rhyming verses, dealing with everything from the political situation in Iraq to Student Loans and Courtenay Place nightlife. His 'Song of the Student Loan' won him the Fringe Poetry Slam: "Knowledge is great, but it's never grown/More than interest on my student loan."

Mike Eager, closing the reading, was even more impressive in his reading of the now deceased Simon Williamson's poems. Mike began with a mihi for Simon and read from his unpublished book *25 Cars*. The power of Simon's work was reflected in the strong audience reaction to the poems, particularly 'Before the World Rushed In':

Before the world rushed in
I was innocent of the blood and body of Christ
(No one asked him to die for me)

...

Lord of cartoons come to me now, hold me, whisper
it's all right
Love me like when I was a boy
playing in a garden of green
life was a wondrous thing
Before the world rushed in

Reading Four, the grand finale, was another lively occasion. It featured Jenny Powell-Chalmers, who flew specially from Dunedin to read, and Anna Jackson and Harry Ricketts. Anna Jackson read first. She read from her AUP collection *The Pastoral Kitchen* and also from her new collaborative project with Jenny Powell-Chalmers. Jenny, who was second, gave a very good performance that included the unveiling of a specially carved tokotoko, featuring my poem, 'Wand', engraved on an ancestor's tongue. The poem had been written for Jenny and her son Wyeth. Jenny took the poem to a carver in Dunedin who conceived the tokotoko, and after had it presented to Wyeth and blessed by a Maori Minister in a special ceremony. Jenny's poetry was stimulating. Her rendition of 'Southern Woman' (as opposed to the Southern Man) received wide applause from the enthusiastic crowd, some still recovering from an all night party the night before.

Harry Ricketts was the final reader and read from his Pemmican collection *Plunge*. He read such well-known poems as 'The Necessity of Failure' and 'Your Secret Life'. At the end Harry called all the poets back for an encore. Each poet read one more poem and Harry read his satire 'The Literary Life', which hit a pungent chord with most:

THE LITERARY LIFE

If I were young and cute and just their sort,
I'd haunt the offices of A/VUP
and rain my poems on Landfall and Sport.
You'd see me at the latest Unity
launch, marking my rivals down for the kill,
dazzling faint praise in the Dominion Post
– seeya Annie, seeya Ian, seeya Will.
(How easy to make a literary ghost.)
And when I'm published and famous as hell,
I'll bring out my memoirs and kiss and tell.

Overall, the series was a successful experiment. Copies of the Neil Rowe memorial anthology, *Bookmarks*, which features all the poets who were involved in the readings and which was sold at the event are still available and can be purchased from me at 97/43 Mulgrave Street, Wellington. Please send a cheque for \$12.00.

(Mark Pirie)

In July Paekakariki poet Michael O'Leary had the honour of his words being painted across a public

mural by artist Alana Forde. The mural was displayed at a Brooklyn bus stop and was officially opened at the Brooklyn Library by Wellington Mayor, Kerry Prendergast. Michael has plans for a series of murals to be displayed on Wellington bus routes using words from his long poem 'It's Not the Leaving of Wellington' (published in his new HeadworX book *Toku Tinihanga*). As Michael says, "The concept of the poet is to be out there, not sitting on a couch."

At the opening Michael read from his long poem. The images are succinct, immediately recognisable and witty:

The trolley-bus ascends the curved hill
Past Aro Street, the once bohemian centre
Reaching Brooklyn, whose Big Apple image
Rotates like the latter day windmill
Solitary sitting, a sign atop a bleak hill

The trolley tootles off to Funky Kingston
Telling of the Magic Bus to Happy Valley
Passing rubbish dumps and gorse bushes
Where such a 'trip' will end no-one can say
But a psychedelic finger points to Owhiro Bay

(Mark Pirie)

Whangarei

World Poetry Day was celebrated in Whangarei with three events. Classics Bookshop offered a literary quiz; the library had poetry competitions for several age-groups and readings to children arranged by Rosalie Carey – featuring poems read by children; at 2.30, under the aegis of the Society of Authors Northland Branch, a well attended open forum at the Piggery Bookshop. An unexpected visitor provided much interest. We discovered afterwards that it was well-known writer, Alan Riach.

June and July meetings of Poetry Prose Tea and Talk were enlivened by the presence of Dr. Roy Batt who travelled from England in a container ship. A specialist in haiku, he has had several books of haiku published.

(Rosalie Carey)

Publications

JAAM 19, the ballerina issue, edited by Mark Pirie

JAAM 19 (Just Another Art Movement) begins with an obituary for Bill Sewell, a poet who in recent years has made a significant contribution to New Zealand literature, written by John O'Connor. Overall, Pirie claims as his rationale for this edition a desire to share with the readers "a dance of words". He also reiterates *JAAM's* declared policy of

welcoming to its pages new contributors such as Dean Ballinger, Ahila Sambamoorthy, David Beach, Natasha Leitch, Isabel Haarhaus, Alex Kalderimis and Zoe Prebble (whose names remind us of the diverse cultures contributing to contemporary writing).

This eclectic mix also offers us new translations of poems from Ahkmatova and Pushkin, and contemporary writing from such familiar names as Jan Kemp, Tony Chad, Catherine Mair, Trevor Reeves and James Norcliffe, as well as intelligent reviews and fiction. (I especially enjoyed *The Writers' Group*, by Anne-Marie Clarke), essays by I.E. Scott & Gareth Shute, and an interview with Wellington musician Charlotte Yates.

The poems vary in length from the terse economy of Jennifer Compton's 'Remembrance Day in Coles on George' (commemorating September 11) to Basim Furat's 3-page epic. *JAAM* is well-produced (though I would have preferred real dancers on the cover instead of the Barbie ballerinas). That is a minor quibble, however. *JAAM* is, as ever, packed with good things and when read cover-to-cover will ground you thoroughly in what's new and what's lasting in the world of words.

(Jenny Argente)

Sing-song by Anne Kennedy, Auckland University Press, p/b, 1 86940 295 2; NZ \$21.99.

Anne Kennedy is perhaps better known for her novels and short stories, but this is definitely an excellent addition to any writer's C.V. The sequence of poems deals mainly with the domestic life of a bi-cultural family – Maori-Pakeha – and with the daughter's suffering from chronic eczema. Obviously, not a chosen theme so much as poetry growing out of the conditions of real life. So although there is much here that is individual, the quality of the writing ensures that it resonates for any reader, especially the parents among us:

They're all squashed in there
baby scratching and crying
mother smoothing and cooing
father sleeping, holy family.

One night the mother cries too
and the tears fall on the two-year-old
who looks up and says, Don't cry
Mummy, so the mother quickly dries her tears
which were cried for the girl, of course
but the girl doesn't need them
they sting

from I am (2)

The search for healing, the persistence of hope, is recounted in simple, everyday language, and the extraordinary circumstances of *this* family do not

exclude other poems about more ordinary joys. The sheer courage of going on and never going under. Yes, there's fun here, too, and wry social comment. Kennedy's list poem of what you need to be a feminist ('I was a feminist in the 80s') is both comic and earnest.

Altogether a remarkable achievement that must also have worked as narrative therapy for this particular mother. Once again, you're reminded how poetry blends intellectual *and* emotional intelligence and gives meaning to all we do:

Every Friday there is her notebook
filled with the ideas that come to her
all the times of the day and the formal
arrangements of the days of the week."

from The eczema-mother takes a part time job

Can writing keep you sane? Yes, probably. Can reading help you understand? Why, certainly. Add *Sing-Song* to your list of books that demonstrate why writers write and readers read.

(*Jenny Argente*)

The smell of oranges, Jill Chan, Earl of Seacliffe Art Workshop, \$19.95. 64pp.

One can almost smell the oranges on the attractive cover of Jill Chan's first book of poems.

Born in Manila in 1973, Chan studied chemistry, migrated to New Zealand at age 21 and began writing poetry a year later. She has been published in many of our literary magazines and edits the online zine Poetry Sz: demystifying mental illness. (www.poetrySz.net).

The book's three sections match her mother's actions in the title poem in which she peels an orange into sections for her daughter, releasing the fragrance: 1. 'Peeling The Husk'; 2. 'Breaking At The Pressure'; 3. 'The Smell of Oranges'.

'Calligraphy', one of the book's early poems, gives the flavour of Chan's verse:

The hand sways
to the eye's music.

Each stroke
a frail trail,
a road, a river.

The mark doesn't stop
where the brush leaves off,

graceful tail
of a forgotten quiver.

Like the calligrapher's brush, many of the poems leave an impression on the mind after you have finished reading them. They don't give too much

away. Some of them are quite enigmatic but full of delicate and beautiful touches ("The way a leaf sways /inside her, she imagines"). In 'First Day' a father awaits a birth "Soon he is cradling tomorrow". 'Weight', a poem in four parts, would like to bring the sky down to earth "in all its wideness".

Wind is moon-
weight thoughts.
Birds become a flight
of stairs.

The sudden appearance
of myth in the real
surprises me...

Chan finds words for the unutterable in 'A Death'. "You cannot feel the blood/in the language./You cannot feel your body" and as she meditates on the events of September 11, 2001 in 'The Acts':

A cut so deep it knows no one.
I am unprepared for a knife
that has no edge. No sound but
a shredding of sky can fill.

In 'You Left' she anatomises emotion with a reality that is physical. "My mind is a flock/of sparrows/scattering/at the sound/of a gunshot...Feet/afraid of/walking."

In some of the relationship poems Chan gives us minute actions and reactions, loaded silences, momentous exchanges where little is said: "He doesn't say/anything for a while,/lifting the moment/to impenetrable wholeness,/the lay of his face/like sheet music".

One must read between the lines to capture thoughts and events that lie almost at the quantum level where waves and particles alternate.

Jill Chan's first book, *The Smell of Oranges*, is a pleasure to hold and to read. These poems leave a lingering fragrance.

(*Robin Fry*)

Someone else's life, Kapka Kassabova, Auckland University Press, \$24.99, 88pp.

Born in Bulgaria in 1973, Kapka Kassabova is prodigiously gifted. She appeared, like an exotic comet, in our literary firmament in 1997 with her first book of poems *All roads lead to the sea*. Kassabova has stayed and achieved a considerable body of work since as poet, novelist, travel writer and linguist.

Some of the poems from her first and second books are included in this latest one. I re-read, with pleasure her description of her immigrant parents lying in bed "listening to the sound/of growing children" and of her father who "will rearrange the stars/in a pattern/less dissonant to my eyes".

As the poet has moved further into adulthood the tone of these later poems has darkened: the voice has become lonelier. A final parting is implicit even in the embraces of lovers:

All-embracing loves
close in on nothing,
like dancing with yourself.

Somehow the poet has stepped out of the frame and become the watcher. "We were the constant witnesses of ourselves":

I'm looking down into a valley of vapours
where yet another city lies, concealed
and dense with lives I've seen
that have not seen me
for I am citizen of the unknown

All my life, I have wanted this:
to be inside the story..."

'Angel's lament' and other poems in this collection speak of loneliness. Like an exiled angel, the disinherited human spirit has no expectation of arriving or belonging. Travel is no panacea either – as in 'Balinese':

I am the blurry stranger in the photograph,
with her mouth open almost in laughter
saying: This is not my ocean
This is not my pain.

In 'Berlin-Mitte', 'Looking for Lieselotte Stein' and in the poem which gives the book its title, the poet is looking for the vanished people, the casualties of history. 'Railway dream', which I take to be set in rural Bulgaria, has haunted, dream-like images of a despoiled country. 'In transit' is set in a barren no-man's-land. The world is no cosier when seen from an airplane "gazing down where the oceans of the world/are hard and open like graves".

Part two, entitled 'Gate to all your farewells' continues the dream-like surrealism in poems which are metaphors for alienation, distance and a wounded cast of mind or soul. In a persona poem, a Miles Davis blues reminds the speaker of "Anybody's childhood in an East European city/of shadows and fog".

Don't expect happiness. Instead expect "The silver rustle of a single noun/yet to be coined, to mean complete sadness". Even the titles of her poems proclaim a bleak vision – 'Preparation for the big emptiness', 'How to survive in the desert', 'Sick of the ocean' and 'The whore of memory' who wakes up "in yet another town, in yet another/native tongue".

Kassabova's disturbing images of "rotting light", empty landscapes and "the door without a house"

could be read as metaphors for the human condition in this century or they could be seen as a projection of an unconsolated sadness, a loneliness even nature cannot assuage. Her work is deeply serious and will find resonance especially with émigrés who have experienced the dislocation of exile and those who do not feel at home in a world where human misery outweighs human happiness.

Kapka Kassabova has and deserves a large readership which will welcome this new collection. Her mastery of modern verse forms in English is supple and beautiful. "May you never recover/from the lightness of my touch."

(Robin Fry)

The Philosophy of Lepers, Selected Works of Poetry by Teri & Mel Kelly

Self-published poetry is generally not accepted for review by the NZPS (hint: don't send it), but this work looked unusual enough on the surface for us to make an exception.

The writers are a "male to female transexual and a lesbian, together...a legally married female couple. They describe the collection as "an insight into what it is like to face the blatant discrimination (sic) we face every single day of our lives", and accompany it with photos.

While in favour of the use of poetry to express personal feelings, I confess to not having acquired the intended insight. The opening poem, 'Biting', plunges the reader straight into the writers' sex life with raw exuberance. Later, 'By Dawn's First Light' is a love poem that hints at the closeness that has emerged from fighting the daily battles together.

I liked 'My First High Heels', a celebration of the discovery (presumably by the transexual member of the couple) of the joy to be felt from wearing Mummy's shoes. This is the only poem in the collection that is not titled by the final word or line of the text, and it benefits accordingly.

The accompanying photos are a mixed bag. The cover image is an ideal choice for illustrating the book's contents. It does, however, look more professional than the rest, and is not credited.

The photos which illustrate 'Teacher's Pet', 'Nouveau Poor', and 'Adelaide' are appropriate and carry some artistic merit, with good balance of subject and attention to background detail. The remainder are poorly served by the reproductive qualities of photocopying.

Overall, this is a personal and introspective collection, which suffers from the common tendency of emerging poets to tell rather than show. At the risk of adding to the writers' pool of perceived discrimination, I suggest the poems themselves need more work. I would like to have learned more about the discrimination, and less about the victims'

opinions of its perpetrators. That said, I think the concept has potential and I hope the writers will continue to expand their style.

The collection is part of a larger body of work available from:

Teri & Mel Kelly, 16 The Parade, Paekakariki.
(Laurice Gilbert)

Submissions Sought

Bravado – bold, intelligent, contemporary: a literary arts magazine from the Bay of Plenty to be launched on Sunday November 2 at 12.30 p.m. at the Rotorua Writers' WORDshop, and will be published thereafter in May and November.

Poetry: Please submit to Owen Bullock, Poetry Editor c/- Bravado or by email to bullocktrail@value.net.nz. Waihi poet and songwriter Owen Bullock will be featured in Poetry NZ #27 and has been widely published in New Zealand and beyond.

Stories: Please submit to Sue Emms, Fiction Editor c/- Bravado or by email to sue.emms@xtra.co.nz. Our preferred word length is 2500 max. Sue Emms is an award-winning writer of stories and articles. Hazard Press published her debut novel *Parrot Parfait* this year.

We'd also welcome articles that are brash and opinionated. Please submit to coordinating editor Jenny Argante c/- Bravado or by email to jenny.argante@xtra.co.nz. Send us gossip, anecdotes, news, views & reviews for inclusion in Commentary, or tell us about upcoming book launches and other literary events, especially in the Bay of Plenty.

Regular Gatherings

Auckland

Poetry Live meet at Pog Mahones Tavern, 108 Ponsonby Road on Tuesday nights. Contact: Judith McNeil, (09) 360 2510.

The Glad Poets of Henderson meet at the Waitakere Community Resource Centre – Ratanui St. Henderson – on the last Sunday of each month, 2.30-4.30 p.m. Contact: Maxine Green, (09) 836 7280.

The Pub Poets meet in the Royal Room at The Cock and Bull, Botany Town Centre, at 7.30 p.m. on the first and third Monday of the month. For more information contact Alan (09) 272 4104.

Passionate Tongues is a monthly reading at Temple, 486 Queen Street from 8 p.m. There's also an open Poetry Slam (prizes). \$5 or \$3 entry. Contact Michael Rudd: (09) 4417034; 021 2998643; email oralink@hotmail.com. Michael is also running the occasional **Vocal Point** at The Depot, 28 Clarence Street, Devonport.

Balclutha

Meets every first Wednesday of the month from 7.00 at 'The Lumber Jack Café', Owaka (15 minutes down Southern Scenic Route). Information: Gwyneth Williamson Ph: (03) 4158983.

Christchurch

The Airing Cupboard Women Poets meet at 10.00 a.m. every 2 weeks (starting from February 1) at 'The Quiet Room' in the YMCA on Hereford Street. Ring Judith Walsh (03) 3597433 or Barbara Strang (03) 3764486.

Another group is **The Live Poets' Society** which meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7.00 p.m. at the Linwood Community Arts centre (corner of Worcester Street/Stammore Road). Contact Alan McLean (03) 389 0908.

A haiku group, **The Small White Teapot**, meets upstairs at the Mainstreet Café, Colombo Street, at 7.30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. Contact Barbara Strang (03) 376 4486 for more information.

Lost Friday Salon. 7.30 p.m., last Friday of the month, upstairs Mainstreet Café, Colombo Street. 'Open text surgery and the laying on of words in the company of the muse.' Contact Jeffery Harpeng or Eric Mould: eric.mould@xtra.co.nz.

Cromwell

Cromwell writers meet on the last Tuesday of the month in the homes of members on a shared basis. Contact Tom Llandreth on (03) 4451352 or email tomal@xtraco.nz.

Dunedin

Fortnightly readings are held at 8.30 p.m. at the Arc Café, 135 High Street. Check with the Café itself for dates and times.

Golden Bay

Joe Bell from Milnthorpe is the Convenor of **The Golden Bay Live Poets Society**. This Society has a monthly Performance Night at the famous Mussel Inn Bush Café at Onekaka. Visiting poets are most welcome. For news of meetings contact Joe on (03) 524 8146; fax (03) 524 8047; e-mail: gbaybell@xtra.co.nz.

Hamilton

The Hamilton poets' group meets on the last Thursday of each month at the Satellite Campas on Ruakura Road, Hamilton at 7.30 p.m. Contact Penny at: pen101nz@yahoo.co.nz or phone: (07) 8540378.

Hawke's Bay

The Hawke's Bay Live Poets' Society meets at 8.00 p.m. on the second Monday of each month (except January) at the Cat and Fiddle Ale House in Hastings. Contact Keith Thorsen (06) 870 9447 or email: kthorsen@xtra.co.nz

Lower Hutt

The Poets' Pub and Café (Murphy's Bar, Angus Inn) meets on the first Monday in each month at 7.00 p.m.

Guest reader and open mike session. Contact Steven Douglas on 5699904.

Nelson

The Yaza Poets meet the second Wednesday of each month at 8.00 p.m. at Yaza Cafe, Montgomery Square Nelson. New Poets welcome. Contact: Martina 03 5482989 or Gaelyne 03 5468434.

Picton

The **Picton Poets** meet at The Cottage, 75a Waikawa Road, Picton at 10.30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. Contact Ernest Berry (03) 573 7774; Fax (03) 573 6882. E-mail: bluberry@xtra.co.nz

Porirua

Poetry Café meets in the function room upstairs at Selby's Sports Café, 1 Serlby Place, Porirua on the second Monday in each month. Free entry.

Rotorua

The **Rotorua Mad Poets** meet every Monday night at the Lakes Hotel, Lake Road, 7.30-9.30 p.m. Phone Colleen (07) 3479847 or Kay (07) 3490219.

Tauranga

Tauranga Writers Group meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Staffroom, Otumoetai Primary School. For more information please contact Kellee Maree Attwood on (07) 572 2669, email Sue Emms on sue.emms@xtra.co.nz, or fax Jenny on 07 570 2446.

Timaru

If you are interested in the Timaru **Poetry in Motion** Performance Poetry group contact Karalyn Joyce (03) 6147050; or email: karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz.

Wanaka

Poetry Live at the Wanaka Arts Centre, first Thursday of the month 7.30. Contact Pip Sheehan (03) 443 4602.

Wellington

The **New Zealand Poetry Society** meets on the third Thursday of each month (except for December and January) at 8.00 p.m. at Turnbull House, Bowen St.

Bluenote, 191 – 195 Cuba Street, has performance poetry most Sunday evenings at 8.00 p.m. Ring Blaise Orsman 025 6160453 or Blue Note (04) 801 5007 after 4.00 p.m. to confirm.

Cafe Poetry to Go at The Rock Café, 4 Glover Street, off Ngauranga Gorge (up from LV Martin). If poetry is new to you this is the place for you to learn to read aloud, talk about your poetry and find friends and get some tips from each other and books. Last Thursday of the month, supper provided, gold coin donation appreciated. Contact Stephen and Rosa Douglas. Email: DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz or phone 04 5699904.

The **Cenacle** in Johnsonville is hosting workshops on a regular basis. There's a series of evenings 'Poetry in Season'. Spring: Thursday September 25, 7:30 to 9:30.

Phone 4788575 or email cenaclewellington@clear.net.nz if you are coming.

Poesis: Poetry and Religion Forum

A forum to discuss religious poetry (international and New Zealand) will be held every five weeks in the WIT Library, Anglican Centre, 18 Eccleston Hill, Thorndon. All enquiries to: antonin@wn.ang.org.nz.

West Coast: Hokitika

Contact Don Neale at (03) 755 7092 or email: startledworm@paradise.net.nz for news of the winter meetings of the **Hokitika Wild Poets' Society**.

Whakatane

East Bay Live Poets meet at 7.30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month in the Settlers Bar of the Chambers Restaurant.

Whangarei

Poetry, prose, tea and talk. Last Sunday of the month, 2.30 p.m. at 18a Vale Road, Whangarei. Phone Rosalie on 4388913 or email: chtoomer@xtra.co.nz.

Do you belong to a group not listed here? Do changes to this information need to be made? If so, please let me know.

Competitions

The Yellow Moon 'Nutshell' competition has 5 categories (Cinquain, Idyll, Limerick, Humorous—up to 24 lines, and Tetractys) and costs Aus \$3 per entry. Entry form (with guidelines) essential. Competition closes October 19 2003.

The Yellow Moon 'Search for a Sonnet 3' competition costs Aus \$5 per entry or \$10 for 3. Theme open but structure traditional. Three equal first prizes of \$100 each. Entry form (with guidelines) essential. Closes October 30 2003.

2003 San Francisco International Competition Haiku, Senryu, Tanka and Rengay. Sponsor: Haiku Poets of Northern California. Deadline: October 31, 2003. Details in the May newsletter or visit www.creativeideasforyou.com/hpnc2003.html for more information.

Aoraki Festival Of The Arts Awards

J Ballantyne & Co/Timaru District Council/Aoraki Poetry Award. First Prize \$1000 plus Elworthy Family Memorial award of \$500 and greenstone bookends. Judge David Eggleton. Closing date September 30. \$5 per entry. Entry forms and conditions: Mary Meehan: maryc_meehan@xtra.co.nz.

If there are any new members wanting competition information, please send an SSAE to the Secretary, PO Box 5283, Lambton Quay, Wellington.

Other News

A warm welcome to Derek Gordon (not Peter, as mentioned last month); Linda Bartlett of Auckland and Jan Anaru of Kakanui.

If you would like to become a member, the annual subscription for overseas members is \$30. For those living in NZ, the sub is \$15. From October 1, please pay HALF the appropriate subscription rate. Send a cheque to The Treasurer, PO Box 5283, Lambton Quay, Wellington.

Wellington Poetry Discussion Group. Take a break from writing it and read some instead. If you're interested in meeting to mull over, extol, or excoriate recently published books of New Zealand poetry, contact David Beach at 385 0526.

Copies of the new issue of *Kokako* poetry magazine (formerly *winterSPIN*) can be obtained from Bernard Gadd, 43 Landscape Rd, Papatoetoe for \$10. This magazine is NZ's major haiku and related genre magazine and has gained international recognition. The new issue focuses on tanka with an excellent article on the topic by Tony Beyer. Also included are other kinds of poetry by poets such as Rangi Faith, John O'Connor, Jill Chan, and reviews of NZ and overseas publications. The editors are Patricia Prime and Bernard Gadd. NZPS members are welcome to purchase from the same address these favourably reviewed poetry books by B Gadd at the reduced prices offered to *Kokako* readers: *Our Bay of Ensigns* (NZ history with humour and satire) \$10, *Debating Stones* \$12, *Stepping Off from Northland* \$6.

WORDshop, hosted by the Rotorua Writers Group on November 1 and 2 at Wohlmann House (corner of Hinemoa and Hinemaru Streets Rotorua). Well-known authors, Daphne de Jong, Tony Williams, and Sue Emms will run modules over the two days. Publishing, layout, and graphics workshops will also be available. The launch of *Bravado*, the new literary arts magazine from the Bay of Plenty, will take place on Sunday November 2 at 12.30 p.m.

A Literary Dinner will be held at Te Runanga in the Government Gardens on Saturday night, and Tony Williams will be the after dinner speaker. Registration fee \$45 for the two days, Literary Dinner \$35 each. Registration forms and information available from: Pauleen Wilkinson (07) 348 6244 or Frances Meroiti (07) 345 4609. Email: f.meroiti@clear.net.nz The closing date for registrations is Friday October 17.

Arts, Fire & Boodle. This is a new magazine out of Auckland, edited by Raewyn Alexander. Subscriptions \$20. It will be launched in November with work by Vivienne Plumb, Janet Charman, Jill Chan, Catherine Mair, Owen Bullock, Jack Ross, Lee Dowrick, Jaqueline Ottoway, Thomas Mitchell and more. For more information and to subscribe, email: raewynalexander@hotmail.com or phone Auckland (09) 846 1757.

The Tasmanian Writers' Centre is offering international writers residencies in Tasmania in 2004. Applications close Monday January 19 2004. More information at: www.tasmanianwriters.org/island-of-residencies2004.htm or at www.tasmanianwriters.org and follow the links. An application form can be downloaded at www.tasmanianwriters.org/ior-app-2004.doc.

Congratulations

In the Rotorua Mad Poets Society Humorous Verse Competition, Kay Wall and Margaret Vos were Very Highly Commended. (Proof that being Newsletter Editor and President can drive you insane but not completely mad.) Highly Commended were Quinny Tarapipi, Rosalie Carey and Alan Waters.

Ernest Berry got a Merit Award in the Itoen Tea Company "Oh-I-Ocha" New Haiku contest with:

paper boat
a float of cherry blossoms
in its wake

KIWIHAIKU

hands in pockets
my get-fit walk
slow in sun quick past hedge

Bernard Gadd
(Papatoetoe)

KIWIHAIKU features one haiku, senryu or tanka each month. Poems with a New Zealand slant are preferred. Fresh submissions (including details of any previous publication) with SSAE to Cyril Childs, 41 Harrington St, Port Chalmers, Dunedin.

**October deadline:
September 24 2003**