



Newsletter
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New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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Front Page Essay

The More Poetry You Read,
the Better You Write

Bernard Gadd

Do New Zealanders read or buy much poetry? Not according to librarians and booksellers. Sales probably average between 50 to 150 copies for a book, an assessment published about 30 years ago in the literary magazine *Outrigger* and which is probably still true.

The occasional poetry book, of course, sells more than that. Local libraries these days hold few poetry books on the shelves, and those aren't much read, if the libraries I go into and the librarians I talk with are representative. Even in university and central holding stores of library systems you'll find book after book that's been issued once or twice since purchase and only too often, never.

All of which suggests that not all the New Zealanders who eagerly write poems and read them to poetry groups are interested in the work of other poets.

This means that in a society that lets 'the market' dominate, poetry has little market value. The trend for fewer commercial presses to publish poetry and for more small presses to undertake the task will continue. That's fine: except it's not so easy or affordable for the small presses to publicise their books or their authors.

Ask any seasoned editor, and you'll find another reason why keen writers of poetry should also be keen readers of poetry. Reading improves your writing, and can suggest fresh approaches. Most contemporary poems are 'post-Modernist' or some form of Modernism: poetry that often tries to be closer to colloquial language; doesn't make much use of formal elements such as stanza and rhyme or of traditional forms such as the sonnet and elegy; and employs rhythm or cadence, but is seldom metrical. Such poetry is often sparing with metaphors and symbols.

Most of today's poets feel that the chief work of poetry is to communicate thoughts or feelings. Yet other kinds of poetry exist with different aims and methods.

The world's most popular genre of poetry is the haiku or senryu (which have the same form but are about people). Every poet, I believe, should do a course in writing haiku and senryu. These miniature poems go to the heart of the craft of poetry: they focus attention on real things and on the subject matter rather than the writer. They demand rigorous selection of what to include. They aim to recreate in the reader impressions of the original observation or remembered experience. They are concise and accurate in employing words and images to recapture what the senses reported:

end of summer
someone across the lake
slams a screen door

Yvonne Hardenbrook
- winner, 1994 NZPS Haiku Competition

Here is skilful use of alliteration, assonance and cadence to make the lines flow and to form a satisfying whole, as well as to suggest the sound of the slam. It's an excellently crafted little poem that vividly and objectively conveys a tiny but memorable and evocative event. And though this has three lines, English-language haiku need neither three lines, 17 syllables, nor other features traditional in ancient Japanese language haiku.

Imagist poems, as the name suggests, focus on an image and, like haiku, require the careful use of precise words. We all know the Eliot poem about the fog creeping in like a cat and Pound's faces like leaves on a branch. In Wallace Stevens' series, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Blackbird*, we find this example:

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing.
It was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

Nearly as terse as a haiku, this poem creates a vivid image of the dark bird on bare branches in snowfall, so much so that the poem almost makes you shiver. Where in haiku you focus on a moment of time, Imagism attends to clarity of image. At their best such poems also divert attention from the writer to what is described, providing sufficient imagery for the reader to reconstitute in his or her own mind what was seen or experienced.

Concrete poetry shapes words, as in:

o
o
ball n

or the entire poem in order to allow design to suggest meaning or experience.

A few New Zealand examples are included in my anthology, *Real Fire*. Some writers have taken concrete poetry further and made designs out of individual letters or lines from texts, so that sometimes the design is the point rather than whatever the lines say. Some of the best concrete poems give a sense of movement, or of being poised in space, and this kind of poetry, too, can make strong statements without authorial comment.



Post-Modernism is a term that embraces a bewildering diversity of approaches to poetry writing. But whatever forms it takes, post-Modernism frees the poet to use in the same poem many voices, vocabularies, topics *or* styles. This can make the experience of reading the poem more important than any meaning. Even a short poem can move with a sense of freedom across a kaleidoscope of topics:

Oh compass
 needle spinning
 in the dark
 phosphorescent nite
 is it neon
 or dolphin
 break the keel
 of love
 ... The bow's distant thud
 against the waves
 deeper than
 drunken sleep.

Bob Orr
 (from *On Out 1*)

The advertising world's spelling of 'nite' suddenly appears among language suitable for a lyric, possibly giving an ironic nudge to the whole. In spite of the dominant shipboard imagery, we may wonder whether those images are intended as representing conventional notions or illusions of love, or dreams of an alcoholic sleep. Post-Modernism can leave the reader unsure whether to take what they read at apparent face value, but nevertheless more attuned to the subtlety and layering of a poem. Poetry becomes more like life, not so clear-cut, but full of ambiguity, irony *and* the unexpected.

Other poets have no interest in making a poem mean anything, but make the words they use and the experience of reading them the entire point of the poem.

the happy hunters are coming back
 eager to be captured, to have someone unravel the knot
 but nobody can understand the writing
 in the book they found in the lion's lair

Tom Raworth
 (from *Lion Lion*)

This leaves the reader with a host of questions. Is it supposed to be a narrative? Are any of the details intended to be symbolic? Is it ironic? Is it poetry? Is ordinary poetry in fact somewhat like this – except that the phrases and lines have connections that make sense only because our previous reading experience predicts that there will be a connection? Whatever Raworth's intentions were, the little poem is fun to read as we tease out the elements: the hunters who want to be hunted and find someone to solve their problem, the knot, the book, the lair, the lion and whoever 'nobody' is.

Susan Howe effectively expresses the confusion of a clergyman in the 1600s who lives with American Indians then returns to a European settlement and tries to reclaim words, ideas, connections to make sense of what must seem almost senseless in the minds of his new companions:

Rash catastrophe deaf evening
 Bonds loosd cacht sedge environ
 Extinct ordr set tableaux
 Hay and insolent army
 Shape of so many comfortless
 And deep so deep as my narrative
 (from *Hope Atherton's Wanderings*)

We think we can catch something of what he talks about, but these lines too fail to form a clear narrative or central topic. And yet the lines are full of what seem to be interesting and sometimes novel images or phrases as our minds begin to make connections between words wherever they can. The lines have the flow, the cadences and the imaginative involvement of poetry.

Some poems use satire, irony, parody or presentation of images contrary to the expected or to what's conventional in order to challenge readers' ideas, feelings and so on. This is an especially useful sort of poetry in an era dominated by lying communications of commerce and politics, and by 'experts' claiming to have answers to everything. I offer a stanza of my own satire on PC versions of our history in the voice of a Minnesota resident claiming an ancestor as the first discoverer of New Zealand:

I understand your forbears signed
 a document with Maori chiefs
 insurgent against
 our Haraldson
 line. Any treaty surely shall
 readily be renegotiated
 to enshrine Viking heritage (plus nation- wide
 franchising
 of our family's
 Whale Fluke Soups)
 (from *Dear British Queen*)

Reading widely will, at the very least, remind you how many different kinds of poetry there are. Don't let your reading be dictated by media publicity – which is in the interests of sales – nor by awards or contests. Neither is necessarily awarded on the grounds of poetic quality. Even if you've never heard of a poet whose book you come across there may be something waiting within the covers to speak powerfully to you.

But reading widely has not merely the aim of enlarging ideas of poetic style and approach, but also of helping to refine that most difficult demand upon a poet: the ability to critically assess your own poetry. It's not too much to claim that wide reading makes the poet fully as much as does the practice of the craft.

Our Front Page Essay is a forum for the presentation of a writer's individual take on poetry and its meanings. The views expressed are always the writer's own, and not necessarily those of the New Zealand Poetry Society. If you'd like to contribute a Front Page Essay, please contact the Newsletter Editor.

Information, please

Ray Stone is researching early New Zealand 'pastoral' poetry - the sort of thing that was often written on the walls of musterer' s huts. He says he's reasonably familiar with Ross McMillan' s work (writing as Blue Jeans) and has found some random works in my own exploring of the high country. He would greatly appreciate any further leads, especially publications that might have recorded such work, or previous research that you know of.

Please contact Ray directly. Phone/fax 09 536 6222, mob 027 536 5504, e-mail backroads@xtra.co.nz.

☞ From the President ☞

Hello, I'm Gillian Cameron. I have recently taken over from Margaret Vos as President. I've been involved in public administration for the past 30 years – mostly in policy and planning. The skills learnt in this area are what I think of as my particular contribution to the NZ Poetry Society. That, and a passion for poetry.

I am committed to poetry being accessible and relevant and especially to its bringing a new perspective/way of looking at the world. In this respect our pilot Poets in Workplaces scheme is something I would like to see taken up elsewhere. This scheme matches a poet with an organisation: the poet has an opportunity to develop new work related to the organisation on a fee for service basis and in return the organisation has another perspective on itself and a limited licence to print the new work.

I feel I am fortunate to be part of a great team of people on the committee - Vivienne Plumb as Vice President, Laurice Gilbert, Dr Moshe Liba, James Norcliffe, Cheri Pinner, Robert Stratford and Margaret Vos – all helped enormously by our multi-talented administrator Helen Heath. We are currently looking at what we (the NZPS) are doing and where we could be going, and I am happy to say we see a great future ahead!

In my spare time (not so spare now) I write poetry – I'm part of a poetry workshop group. I'm on the Randell Cottage Writers Trust, read heaps and, oh, I almost forgot, I manage a household ...

☞ A Letter to the Editor ☞

Dear Editor,

The recently announced Montana Book awards for poetry attracted 33 entries. This might sound a lot, but in fact no year's list of entries has yet included all collections worth being submitted as 'a significant contribution to New Zealand literature'. And there lies one of the fundamental problems of the Montana awards in its present form.

It costs to enter the contest. Whilst the \$100 fee for non-members of Booksellers NZ might not seem much, it is sometimes more than a small publisher or a poet contributing to the printing costs might wish to add to the cost of each copy of the book. Five copies of the book must be sent with the entry form and 10 more of winning titles for promotion purposes.

In addition it's the publisher's job to pay for winners' travel to and accommodation during the award ceremonies (and to see that the winner gets there) and to ensure that bookshops have plenty of copies and that copies of winning books all have the appropriate stickers on them.

This is a great deal to ask of the small press publishers who publish most of our poetry and hope that if they're lucky sales and/or grants will cover costs.

But there are other issues with the Montanas. Who selects the judges? The judges are allowed a specialist poetry adviser and can call on more help if they need it ... but do they, and if so who do they consult?

Even to judge 33 poetry entries, some of them quite long, would be a daunting task. And given the wide-ranging variety of New Zealand's English language poetry, a group of judges would give more confidence in the final choices of winners.

I've noticed that some kinds of poetry seldom if ever make it into longer short lists of entries, such as experimental poetry, and haiku and related genre. Given the diversity of our poetry, is it credible to claim a single, over-all winner?

The Montana people need to be much more open with us poets and small publishers, and to show more willingness to consult with us.

Sincerely,

Bernard Gadd

Quotation of the Month

"It has always been true that in dealing with the dilemmas of ordinary life - the inescapable moral, personal, spiritual, even practical decisions that are constantly to be made - people turn to poetry, spoken or sung, or read. They look for refreshment, for illumination, insight, pleasure, relief."

Lauris Edmond

☞ Upcoming Events ☞

AUCKLAND

Auckland University Continuing Education Courses

Writing from the Heart: Inspired Poems from Inspired Places with Siobhan Harvey

25th & 26th September 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Travel Writing with Jill Malcolm

25th & 26th September 9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

Four Steps to Writing your First Novel with Sandi Hall

2nd & 3rd October 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Turn up the Volume with Emma Farry

5th - 26th October 9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

The Drama of Screenwriting with Sean Damer

16th & 17th October 9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

The Nuts & Bolts of Writing with Joan Rosier-Jones

19th & 26th November 9.30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

To enrol or for further information please contact Continuing Education (ph 09 373 7599 Ext. 87831 or 87832, or e-mail je.davies@auckland.ac.nz)

LOWER HUTT

At Murphy's Bar...

... in Lower Hutt there's poetry reading, listening and socialising monthly, first Monday. Ron Riddell will be there on September 6th to share his passion for poetry and his poems with an international flavour. Doors open from 6.45 p.m., readings 7.15 p.m. at Murphy's Bar, Angus Inn, Waterloo Road, Lower Hutt. Free entry, free coffee and tea. Bar open with food to order.

Poets' Pub is funded by Hutt Valley Community Arts Inc. and Creative NZ through the Hutt City Councils Small Grants Scheme. For more information, please contact convenor Stephen Douglas (ph 04 569 9904) or visit HVCA's website <http://www.hvca.org.nz>.

TITIRANGI

Word Up Poetry Slam ...

... from 7.30 p.m. on Saturday 4th September at Titirangi Memorial Hall. This is an event that consists of a succession of poets reading and performing their own original poem in less than 3 minutes. From erotic to neurotic, reflective or riotous, hilarious to how it is, this is the slam. Word Up is not combative; it is poetry at its best - relevant, entertaining, energetic, contemporary, and accessible.

With \$300 for 1st Prize, \$150 for 2nd & \$75 for 3rd + spot prizes. Open to all - register on the night from 7 p.m. (limited numbers) Entry \$5. Information, rules, etc., from Michael Rudd on 021 Poetry (763 879). Or go to:

www.waitakere.govt.nz/ArtCul/ae/goingwest/poetryslam.asp

WELLINGTON

Maori Writers National Hui

Kia ora koutou. Please pass on to your networks, friends and fellow artists this information on a new biennial event for all Maori writers and individuals passionate about contemporary Maori literature. Presented by Te Ha and Te Hunga Taunaki Kaituhi Maori, the Maori Writers National Hui - He Tapu Te Kupu will take place 24th – 26th September at the Wellington Town Hall.

The Maori Writers National Hui provides an opportunity for mentorship and learning to take place, and for Maori writers to network together as a significant group within Aotearoa's literary landscape and to give voice to the progress, potential and issues current today.

Maori writers including Briar Grace-Smith, Merata Mita, James George, Hone Kouka, and Renee will feature in a programme of keynote addresses, panel discussions and writers' workshops. Practical workshops will cover writing for different media, including writing for TV, radio, film, creative writing and publication, and there'll be an evening programme of public events.

This event is presented in partnership with Te Waka Taki Korero - The Maori Literature Trust and Wellington City Council, and with the financial support of Te Waka Toi, the Maori Arts Board of Creative New Zealand.

To register your attendance and for further information, please contact Toi Maori Aotearoa through our website: www.maoriart.org.nz, or phone 04 801 7914.



"It's not whether we write in Maori or in English but that we write well and inspire our readers and listeners."

Dr. Hirini Moko Mead

NZPS Wellington Meeting

Poets in the Workplace with Dinah Hawken & Rachel Bush

Thursday September 16th 7.30 for 7.45 p.m.
Turnbull House 11 Bowen Street

& Open Reading

NZPS with Gillian Cameron leading the way recently initiated a New Zealand version of 'Poets in the Workplace'. The first appointees for this three-month position are Dinah Hawken at the Wellington Botanic Gardens and Rachel Bush at the Wellington Public Hospital. We are fortunate to have both Dinah and Rachel along with Gillian at the September meeting.

Dinah Hawken of Wellington is well-known to local poets (and beyond). Her strong interests in social issues - particularly those that affect women, spirituality, and the natural world are reflected in her poetry collections; e.g. *It Has No Sound and Is Blue* (Victoria UP 1987), *Water, Leaves, Stones* (Victoria UP 1995) and *Oh There You Are Tui!* (Victoria UP, 2001). Lydia Wevers (*The Listener*) wrote that Dinah Hawken is 'also a deep thinker about language, intensely aware of her medium and the way that poetry readers have to be appeased, sedated, forced to recognise that words do and do not give you the world'. Dinah is Co-ordinator for 'Writing the Landscape', an undergraduate creative writing course at Victoria University Wellington.

Rachel Bush's first collection *The Hungry Woman* (Victoria UP, 1997) is the result of her work on Victoria University's MA in Creative Writing course. Elizabeth Crayford (*Dominion*) said, 'There is a mysterious quality to Bush's writing that throws the everyday into high focus and makes it resonate. Witty, quirky, domestic, childlike, this is writing of quality that both bemuses and delights.' Rachel Bush's second collection is *The Unfortunate Singer* (2002). She lives in Nelson and is a teacher.

In addition, do note, all you frustrated poets, there's also an Open Reading at this September meeting. So be there! (Please note the earlier starting time.)

Report by Nola Borrell

2nd Annual

Wellington International Poetry Festival 7th – 11th October 2004

The Mysteries of the Poetic Universe Revealed

International poets from far and wide gather in Wellington to celebrate poetry, people and human rights. Come and hear something different - poets in their native tongues, with English interpreters. This is a once only opportunity to hear such a diverse and interesting group of poets. Come and hear their stories, told in poetry that's beautiful, moving and thought provoking. Also featuring a major new launch event at Pataka in Porirua on Thursday 7th October at 6:30 p.m., music, audiovisual displays and much, much more. Check out the website at: www.poetryfestival.org.nz or e-mail: poetfest@paradise.net.nz.

Wellington Windrift

Windrift meets again on Thursday September 16th at Jeanette Stace's home, 58 Cecil Street, Wadestown at 1 p.m. All welcome. Please let Nola Borrell know if you would like to receive the invitation and 'homework'. Contacts: Jeanette Stace (ph 04 473 6227, njstace@actrix.gen.nz) or Nola Borrell (ph 04 586 7287, nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz).

Haiku Festival Aotearoa

The national haiku workshop (renamed and extended) organised by Windrift will take place from Friday March 4th to Sunday March 6th 2005 at Stella Maris, Seatoun, Wellington. Accommodation at a reasonable cost is available at Stella Maris, a very attractive venue with a fine view of Wellington heads. A brochure with details of programme and costs will be distributed in October. Several people have already registered their decision to come. You may have to book early! Contacts: Nola Borrell (nolaborrell@xtra.co.nz (ph 04 586 7287) or by snail mail to 177A Miromiro Road, Normandale, Lower Hutt; and Karen Peterson Butterworth (ph 06 364 5810, karenpetbut@xtra.co.nz).

☞ A warm welcome to ... ☛

... Patrick Glasson from Christchurch
... Chris Saumaiwai from Wellington
... Victoria Stace from Wellington
... Linda Stone from Wellington

old parasol ~
unfurling the dust
of other summers

Ernest J Berry
Pictou



*This haiku won an Honourable Mention
in the 2004 International Haiku Competition*

Cliff Fell – coming up smiling!

At this year's Montana New Zealand Book Awards poet Cliff Fell carried off the NZSA Jessie Mackay Best First Book Award for *The Adulterer's Bible*. Congratulations are also due to Cliff's fellow Victoria UP authors Annamarie Jagose (Deutz Fiction Medal) and Rachel Barrowman (Biography).

In the year since *The Adulterer's Bible* was published Cliff has been working on a number of projects. His radio-poem *Motueka Song*, a soundscape of music and stories and conversations with people of the Motueka catchment, was broadcast on National Radio's RPM in May and included Cliff performing and singing two versions of his self-penned song, *Golden Downs*.

The programme, and excerpts from the book-length poem on which it was based are an integral part of the Travelling River exhibition at the Suter Gallery, Nelson, prior to going on tour. This is a Smash Palace project funded jointly by Creative New Zealand and the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, and also features the conceptual work of Nelson artists Kathleen Peacock and Maggie Atkinson and scientists Andrew Fenemor, Margaret Kilvington, Chrys Horn and Chris Phillips. The catalogue includes Cliff's essay *On looking into a river*.

Cliff and Nelson poet Barbara Raeburn are editing a Creative Communities-funded anthology that showcases recent Nelson writing, working title *The Cut*. Then in late September he's planning to visit Mexico and the US South-West, researching for a new book. He intends to stop over in Las Vegas and visit the Las Vegas IIML. Let's hope the inevitable trip to The Strip's roulette wheels doesn't make too big a dent in his Creative NZ grant.

Report from the IIML

Off to Antarctica

Poet, painter, jeweller and furniture maker ... This year's Arts Fellows will travel to Antarctica early in December 2004 through Antarctica New Zealand's Arts, Education & Media programme (a joint initiative with Creative New Zealand).

Bernadette Hall and Kathryn Madill, award-winning poet and artist, plan to produce an illustrated book and a series of exhibitions based on their Antarctic experiences. Hall's prose and Madill's delicate imagery were linked together previously in *Settler Dreaming*, a collaborative work short-listed for the Tasmania Pacific Poetry Award.

Kirsten Haydon, the first fine metal artist to visit Antarctica through any artist's programme, will create a collection of commemorative jewellery and objects relating to landscape, flora and fauna. Contemporary furniture designer/maker, David Trubridge was meant to go last year but broke his leg, so his visit is now rescheduled. David plans to develop a series of works based around the theme 'Structures for Survival'.

Information, please

Is there anyone out there with photos of early NZPS meetings & members, or memories that could be used for a history in the making? If so, please send to Cheri Pinner c/- NZPS PO Box 5283 Lambton Quay Wellington or by e-mail to info@poetrysociety.org.nz with 'NZPS History' in the subject line. Thank you.

A place of words and music...

David Howard has edited *Capital of the Minimal: the Dunedin Sound* in response to a commission from Michele Leggott, Director NZEPC, University of Auckland.

Check out the website www.nzeps.auckland.ac.nz that showcases poets and songwriters from Otago and features much previously unreleased material. There's a slide show of landscape photographs by Kim Pieters that inform some of the site-specific poems; two visual 'scores' by Cilla McQueen, and the full score of Anthony Ritchie's setting of her poem *Timepiece*.

The trustees of the estates of Reiko Kunimatsu, Iain Lonie and Bill Sewell released photographs and texts for the feature. Photographers from London to Seattle released copyright pictures at no charge, and prominent critic Piero Scaruffi (Harvard/Stanford) allowed quotation from and linkage to his reviews of New Zealand music.

Instructions for Poetry Reading

by Dr. Ernest M. Bluespire

The cover shows a sparse and dispirited audience – is that Philip Larkin in the front row? – not the sort of listeners you want when you bare your soul and read your latest opus. Inside is good advice on how to pack 'em in the aisles from the witty and perceptive pen of James Brown, alias Dr. Bluespire. A prose poem in two parts – *The Poet*, and *The Audience* – sorts out the right kind of reading – and the right kind of poems to read – from the wrong kind, the kind that will alienate your audience and put them off buying your poems for ever. To order, send \$5 + S&A to: James Brown 10 Liffey Crescent Island Bay Wellington.

Yellow Moon

In *Yellow Moon 15*, Winter 2004 Patricia Prime (NZ) writes about the Katikati Haiku Pathway in the Bay of Plenty, a concept that's excited widespread interest and admiration. Patricia tells how the Pathway came to be, gives examples of inscribed rocks and explains ideas for expansion. In 2004 there were 1500 entries in the annual Have-a-Go Haiku competition.

Submissions

Tongue in Your Ear Volume 8

Now is the time to gather up poems for *Tongue in Your Ear Volume 8*. If you are not familiar with the volumes done so far go to <http://groups.msn.com/four-by-twopublishing> and check out the documents for *Tongue 6* and *Tongue 7*. Peruse, ponder and post off poems for *Tongue 8*, preferably within the text of the e-mail, to coordinator Judith McNeil at four-by-two@xtra.co.nz

The Surface

The August issue of *The Surface* is now online at <http://www.surfaceonline.org>. The theme is 'Nature & Nurture' with visual arts, fiction, prose and poetry, plus a range of exclusive limited edition prints at affordable prices from the Surface Gallery.

Submissions are invited on the theme of 'Sound'. The deadline for copy and artwork is on or before 1st October 2004. Please follow submission guidelines. Also, contributing editors (unpaid) wanted for fully independent positions responsible only to the Editor. Contact: Thomas Cochrane at editor@surfaceonline.org.



Heron's Nest

This is a monthly haiku journal published in the United States both in paper form and online. Submissions are welcome and should be sent by 12th of each month to one of the three editors listed on the website – please go to www.heronstnest.com.

The journal is posted online on the first of every month (second in NZ). An annual subscription costs \$US23. Send to: The Heron's Nest, 816 Taft Street Port Townsend WA 98368, USA.



Like all regional collections, it's varied in standard and poetic approach – that's part of the interest of such anthologies. Works that stood out for me were Jenny Powell-Chalmers' childhood recollections *Talking about Tomahawk*. (In the useful, short notes she explains that the title comes from a cemetery):

Once, I had to try
and keep still in the middle
of a somersault
Stead's "Dunedin, remembering James K. Baxter, 1966":
submariner for God
telling the squid and the skate
"Open your gills, my brothers,
Enjoy the life of the deep."

Modern Poetry in Translation

When Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort founded MPT in 1966 they had two principal ambitions: to publish poetry that dealt truthfully with the real contemporary world, and to benefit writers and the reading public in Britain and America by confronting them with good work from abroad. The new editors of MPT continue in that tradition. The real circumstances of the world have changed, but are as pressing as when the magazine began. As the English language marches towards an apparent hegemony, the need for readers and writers to be confronted by what is foreign is as great.

MPT is on the lookout for good translations of good poetry from anywhere in the world. More particularly, for the next few issues, it wants translations, original poems and short essays that will address such characteristic signs of our times as exile, the movement of peoples, the search for asylum, the speaking of languages outside their native home, but with a living connection with the past also.

Please send contributions, with accompanying disk and return postage, to David and Helen Constantine, The Editors, Modern Poetry in Translation, Queen's College, Oxford. OXI 4AW. Information on how to subscribe to the magazine is available online at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/humanities/cch/mpt/subfor.html>.

Reviews

Under Flagstaff: an anthology of Dunedin poetry

ed. by Robin Law & Heather Murray

I've just sent off to the printer another regional collection, *Manukau in Poetry*, so I was interested to read this. It's very different: more staid (even, at times, the lighter hearted works) and a little old-fashioned - and, as part of that, packed with personifications. But Dunedin has a long history and therefore a long literary history, which the editors sensibly demonstrate. Twelve of the 65 poets are dead, and many of the poems by living writers came out years ago. On the other hand, some are recent or first published here.

Most of the writers are either very well known – like Hone Tuwhare, Brian Turner, Cilla McQueen, James Baxter, Ruth Dallas, Janet Frame, C. K. Stead, Bill Manhire – or poets anyone interested in poetry will be familiar with like John O'Connor Mark Pirie, Kapka Kassabova, Tony Beyer and James Northcliffe.

The collection focuses perhaps over much on the physicality of the place, though there are poems about people, student life, the lifestyles of the 70s - and much reference to the statue of Robbie Burns and to contrasts between him and the Presbyterian founders of the city, and Maori prisoners from Parihaka.

The book begins with a hand-drawn map that includes brief quotes from poems, and the plan of the collection, as the back cover tells us, spirals outwards from the Octagon and takes in "pubs, student flats, the university, beaches, hill-tops, the harbour and beyond".

Noted also are Joanne Preston's *Visit to Nicky's House*, Brian Turner's *In the Northern Cemetery*, Peter Old's *Revisiting V8 Nostalgia*, Rob Allan's *Dunedin Sonnet 6* and Fiona Farrell's *Anne Brown's Song*:

I first spread my legs
on a London street
and the shillings came easy
put shoes on my feet.
(I've lain on clay
and I've lain on sheet...)

Readers with connections to Dunedin will find this an appealing and nostalgic collection. Others will discover, as I have, some sure to evoke a response, and others pleasantly familiar to revisit. The publishers and printers have produced a sturdy book that should withstand years of use.

(2004) LAW, R. & MURRAY, H. eds. **Under Flagstaff: an anthology of Dunedin poetry**. University of Otago Press. RRP \$34.95

Review by Bernard Gadd

They Drank Kava

by Moshe Liba

They Drank Kava by Wellington-based Israeli poet Moshe Liba is published by the Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop. Liba's sub-heading is 'An imaginary journey through a failed coup': to my mind he plots the progress of the recent Fiji coup led by George Speight pretty accurately. Not that Fiji or George Speight are ever mentioned by name. The country is just an 'archipelago in the Pacific Basin' while he appears only as 'the bold Leader'. Throughout is the constant lament that the indigenous people have 'had enough of newcomers ... getting equal rights', and, in the best ballad tradition, the refrain 'they drank kava' – appears at the end of every page.

Poetry can often appear obscure or esoteric but this work engages one's attention immediately. The writing is lucid yet colourful; the gripes of the 'people of the land' against democracy, parliaments and other western cultural ideas, imposed on their own way of life, clearly stated. (Though it seems paradoxical that Christianity, a typically western religion, quite recently imposed on Pacific cultures, is accepted as part of their tradition). But despite the unease of the indigenous people, the injustice meted out to Indo-Fijians lingers constantly in the background – as Banquo's ghost does in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Yet while drama – and even tragedy – unfolds, Moshe Liba imbues his story with a touch of humour. The islanders' solution to every problem seems to have been 'they drank kava'. In those words he encapsulates the Scarlett O'Hara mindset, 'I'll think about it tomorrow', so prevalent among the inhabitants of tropical climates.



DUNEDIN

**Upfront:
Spotlighting Women Poets**

Again, a good crowd at Cobb and Co for the monthly Upfront readings. During open mike some new voices gathered courage and read at Upfront for the first time. In such a supportive atmosphere it wasn't too daunting and we look forward to building on our ever-increasing net of new Dunedin poets.

Guest readers were Lorraine Ritchie, Katherine Liddy and Lois Mead-McEwan and the MC identified some shared themes. One that also appeared strongly in the open mike session was the influence of the mother - daughter relationship.

Both Lorraine and Lois based work on experiences that had evoked memorable responses. For Lorraine, some came from her move to a new city and the unexpected yearning she felt for Dunedin. Place and person is evident, too, in this excerpt from one of Lois' poems:

Do you remember preserving peaches
the pursuit of perfect seals
our pleasure in concave domes
as jars cooled?

I remember the day at the river
your private thighs emerged from
nowhere, clothed in woollen togs
you paddled like a lone dog.

Do you remember playing scrabble
while the clock ticked and tocked?
we built word bridges and crossed over
from generation to generation...

And Katherine Liddy, recently returned from Moscow, was drawing her current inspiration from the talent and energy of Dunedin's poetic community. The next 'Upfront Spotlighting Women's Poetry' night is Tuesday 31st August at 7.30 p.m.

Report by Jenny Powell-Chalmers

HAMILTON

Alive Poets Society reborn

Following a 3-day workshop with Jenny Argante from Tauranga Poet's Parlour we are galvanised towards rescuing our previous Hamilton Poets group from oblivion.

The weekend started Friday night with a basic introduction, with many sidesteps to illustrate the depth of Jenny's experience. Saturday gave us challenges of actually writing work to exercises of a more concrete nature. My words from which to create a metaphor were parsnip and sympathy, which I translated to 'Parsnip is like sympathy from a jealous friend.' Don't ask me where that came from.

Poets of ages up to veterans were part of the days of exploring and brainteasing to work with new concepts. Critiques were given for those who wished to have Jenny's input to shed literary light onto our efforts from the past.

Clare Mills defined poetry for us as follows:

- Pictures and Offerings
- Expressing Thoughts
- Read aloud or alone
- Years on.

And despite the gravity of the situation, the repeated refrain tends to remind one of musical equivalents, e.g. Berlioz's use of the *idée fixe*, in *Symphonie Fantastique* or 'The partridge in a pear tree' from *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

It is perhaps ironic that an Israeli poet should present us with the dilemma of choosing between the indigenous and the new immigrants when his homeland has 'the Palestinian problem' - just as our own has the tangata whenua flexing muscle against the dominant pakeha population. Is he saying that these enigmas are only soluble by forgoing confrontation and sitting down quietly to talk and 'drink kava' or whatever?

(2004) LIBA, M. ***They Drank Kava***. Paekakariki, Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop. ISBN 1-86942-041-1.

Always a Little Further

by Barry Smith

Always a Little Further is by Hamilton-based Barry Smith, proudly proclaimed as 'self published without financial assistance' and due to be officially launched on September 20th. This collection is subtitled 'poems of mountains and valleys' - some previously published, some new or revised. Barry Smith has allotted much of his spare time to climbing, tramping and other outdoor pursuits, and now celebrates his devotion to the backcountry with this interesting book that includes many of his own photographs.

Apart from once climbing to the top of Ruapehu when the torrid summer had left it denuded of its snow-cover, I can't myself lay claim to any mountaineering exploits. Yet I thrill immediately to the spectacle of the Southern Alps in winter, or the sight of Mount Egmont/Taranaki like a giant ice-cream cone, and I readily identify with Barry Smith's pictures of roughing it. In his first poem *Canterbury Brew* we have the image of the typical campfire using 'finger bones of trees' to 'feed hot flames'. Then, there is the appearance of that item so essential to such a situation, the 'black-skinned billy' - a utensil referred to several times in later poems.

Ah, for the days of youth, when the discomfort of rolling up in a sleeping bag on a rough bunk was looked on as adventure; when you took for granted making do with whatever food you could carry and forgoing the luxury of baths, showers or your own toilet. Now I'm old and sere, neither the bitter taste of billy-tea nor other deprivations have the allure of former years, though I must still admit to a liking for fires. Perhaps we are all closet pyromaniacs.

The sound image 'a patter of rain' on 'corrugated iron' appears several times. Again, this is something with which almost every New Zealander will readily identify. No matter what your financial circumstances there has to be some occasion where this has alerted you to possible danger or lulled you to sleep.

To the many New Zealanders who delight in the great outdoors, these poems must have appeal. A reading could perhaps tempt even those torpid couch potatoes now proliferating in our society to abandon their lethargy in favour of a more active lifestyle.

2004 SMITH, B. ***Always a Little Further***. Hamilton, p.p. ISBN 0476-00695-3.

Reviews by Bernard Holibar



We ended the course with readings of our works in preparation for open mike in Hamilton. That posed another challenge for some and was fun for all to hear. Many thanks to Jenny, and we look forward to having closer connections with other groups in the midland region.

From this weekend we plan to have our first meeting at the Waikato University Continuing Education Campus, Ruakura Road, Hamilton on 3rd September at 7 p.m. Bring work in progress and enjoy coffee and eats.

Contact: Penny Wilson, pen101nz@yahoo.co.nz

NELSON

Nelson Live Poets

Bad taste was the theme of our August gathering. M.C. 'Sharlene' and her sidekick 'Sassy' epitomised all that is lovely in dress and language. Fortunately for us all, we were graced with the gift of two of our more highly esteemed local poets, Cliff Fell and Gordon Challis, to read for us. The night flowed swiftly from the profane to the profound, enhanced further by poems from the too-long-absent Colin Gunn and Michael Lee, who were complemented by some of our regulars. From spring poets to those in the autumn of their years, all added to the wellspring of quality. Numbers were small and the wind cold, but we were warmed by words of companionship at Kaffeine Cafe. Next meeting Wednesday September 8th at Kaffeine in New Street at 7 p.m. All welcome.

Report from Martina Maverick

NORTHLAND

The Muse at Mokaba

When Rosalie Carey issued the invitation to celebrate World Poetry Day, she could hardly have envisioned the enthusiastic response by an audience hungry to listen to the spoken word. Our thanks to Angie Deisler and colleagues who offered The Mokaba Café in Whangarei as a venue, perfect with its low lighting, red walls and yacht masts silhouetted against the windows. For nearly three hours it became a 'Chrysalis of Wind' as more than thirty bards of all ages and walks of life - published and unpublished, and some from as far as Auckland and Russell - shared their unique poetic voices.

Writing poetry can be a lonely occupation but when reading aloud in public, it comes alive. The quality was often better than what's heard on radio or television, when I've sometimes wanted to say, "The words are lovely but please get someone else to read them for you." At Mokaba, poems were read clearly and with such feeling it was a pleasure to listen; and it was touching to hear those who conquered their nerves to read what they loved.

Tony Clemow hosted the evening with aplomb, beginning with Bunty and Joy Elwells' rampaging *Shaggy Dog Story*. Peter Dane enthralled with *Poems of the Heart*; Joyce Irving with her rich Welsh voice, read *Welsh Incident*, and Graham Johnson his most humorous *Poems From The Bin* and *Career Path*. Who could forget the line ' Whose turn is it to be manic today?'

Daphne de Jong read a selection of her own pithy pieces along with one of Alison Denham's, a Northland poet now living in England. Rosalie Carey read from a collection written for the occasion including *Whangaumu*, *Whangarei*, *Coming from Kawakawa*, and *Parahaka*. Miriam Francis, once a speech pupil of Rosalie's, read beautifully a poem about writing with the left hand. Barbara Lucy Hoskens amused with *It's Pictornd Takapuna Tango*, and Piet Neulands intrigued with poetry randomly culled from the dictionary. Carl Worthington read from his new publication *Rain* and *A Song Poem*. Narine Groome told us of *War*, *Stars* and *Winter*, and Lavender Sansom's evocative poems were *Returning*, *Hokianga* and *The Phoenixians*.

The poets were followed by Reese Helmondollar, who thrilled with a haunting saxophone interpretation of Robert Bly and Marge Pearson's poetry of social injustice. Jo Hibbert provided a thought provoking *Dreams of Tara* and *Ode to Iraq*, and Beth Austin read from the original Whangarei Writers' Workshop book published in 1995. I ended the evening with readings trying to make sense of a death by suicide, and showing the other side of winter.

It is interesting to note that at least seven of the readers are published poets - Carl Worthington, Peter Dane, Graham Johnson, Rosalie Carey, Piet Neulands, Joyce Irving and Daphne de Jong - and yet the amateurs were generously received, applauded, and at the end of the evening personally acknowledged. I know I appreciated the comments made to me at the end of the evening.

After a hectic day and a long journey, I had arrived feeling jaded, not at all sure what I had let myself in for, but came away thinking, ' Thank goodness I didn't miss out.' I have since launched a poetry week, at the school where I teach, which has taken off like a rocket. Clearly the Muse at Mokaba was inspirational!

Report from Kathleen Wynn

PICTON

Picton Poets

Our Elisabeth Elliffe held the floor (heroically, having damaged an eye in a fall) at our monthly meeting on Wednesday Aug 11th. Her *pièce de résistance* was the poetry of the Scottish poet William McGonagall (1830-1902) - which generated much discussion on what is doggerel, though we concluded that McG probably believed himself to be a serious poet.

Elisabeth also read a *Times* article on the statistics of mortality of writers and other artists. Poets are especially short-lived - average 62.2 years, with many famous examples dying especially young. Fiction writers lived longer, and non-fiction writers lived longest. Finally, Elisabeth produced an aged book, bought for a penny in the days of Old Money - poems by F C Meyer, arguably New Zealand's own McGonagall. We read in turn poems inspired by what the author claimed as our best scenic spots - quite a few of which were invented or misspelled.

Report by Sandy Arcus

TAURANGA

Bravado @ Browsers – Poetry Live!

Under the able guidance of compere Sandra Simpson, we enjoyed an entertaining and varied afternoon. The featured poet was Owen Bullock, poetry editor of *Spin* and *Bravado*, who kept the audience happy with poems, songs and music on guitar and tin whistle. He then provided a musical accompaniment to Leonard Lambert's reading. Jan FitzGerald followed and will be appearing next month in *Women's Words* with Sandra Simpson and Jenny Argante on September 12th from 1 – 2 p.m. in Browsers Bookshop, 26 Wharf Street, Tauranga.

Report by Nola Bright

Poet's Parlour Tauranga

We meet together on the squishy couches at the back of the Robert Harris Cafe. We're a diverse group who write, talk about poetry and bring along 'work in progress' for feedback. We get a writing exercise as homework, and for September our task is to write a 5-line descriptive poem about 'a secret colour'. Our afternoons together are humorous and relaxed – and we finish when we're finished. New faces – and old – always welcome! Next meeting Sunday 19th September at 12.30 p.m.

Report by Kay Hubner

WELLINGTON

Master & students read at Turnbull House

Our August meeting was graced by a master poet, Vincent O'Sullivan - a patron of the NZPS - who was followed by students of the 2004 Whitireia Creative Writing Programme. So poets at the start of their literary careers had the opportunity to listen to a poet at the peak of his craft, who, in turn, enjoyed the freshness of their writing.

"All poems are really stories," O'Sullivan told us. "The minute you say 'and' three times you're telling a story, you're implicated with other people and part of the larger world."

This was demonstrated in the title poem of *Seeing you asked*, which gathers in a sequence of images and builds them into a lyrical love poem set in a house by a lake. O'Sullivan contends that a poem has to be about something more important than the purely personal or confessional. He gave as example D. H. Lawrence's poems *Look, We Have Come Through* about his relationship with Frieda. "Well, commented Bertrand Russell, 'they might have come through, but is that a reason why we should look?'"

The child in the gardens: winter is the opening poem from the latest of his fourteen collections, *Nice morning for it, Adam*. Rather than being an Eden we don't want to leave, a metaphor for childhood itself, this garden repels:

We are in a story
called Father, We Must Get Out."

How sudden, this entering the fallen
gardens for the first time, to feel the blisters
of the world's father, as his own hand
does...

Why biographers fudge is another quirky O'Sullivan title that brims with humour and empathy for children. A family game of 'What would you be if you weren't human?' elicits 'silverfish' from his sister, 'a dashboard' from his brother. O'Sullivan quoted French writer Valery, 'Poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking' - an activity whose satisfaction is in the thing itself. *Mid-sentence, so to speak* is one of his death poems. "What saves such poems from gloom," he said, "is the elation in the use of the language. Form is important because we start playing a game and the more complex it becomes, the more interesting. 'Form,' said Herman Melville, 'is the preserving salt.' Form helps an endurance for the language - a way of preserving an interest beyond yourself."

Most of my life, it seems, I have been on a bus
not so long after the late evening smeared
its flaring rag across the mirror of the river ...

River road, due south transforms the boredom of a familiar bus journey into an imaginative penetration of the dark countryside, the light spilling from one lonely house with its kitchen smells, 'the current's muscling twenty yards off', 'the dashboard a distant altar', the thickening lights of the suburbs. This is the world around us mediated through O'Sullivan's unique sensibility that jolts us into paying attention. *Life sentence* and *Basil at the gate* showcased his comic talents and then we heard *Simply*, a quiet and lovely poem:

When we're saying, simply,
this is the way it should be,
looking at things together, together
the word that shimmers, simply.

"There's a bit of monasticism in all of us when we become obsessive about whatever we care deeply about," O'Sullivan said, introducing *The monastic life*, about a man whose obsession was elephants. Though not a rich man 'he re-mortgaged/ to visit zoos in distant cities.' (His cover image Polyzoomorphic Elephant relates to this poem).

..His definition came down
to this: No elephant was required to meet
human demand. We aspire. They are there.
An elephant, au fond, is theology that sways.

Vincent O'Sullivan ended his reading with the last poem in this latest collection, *Still waiting, are we?:*

... "still at your window," they say, "can't
you give it a rest?" Not on your life, tell them,
not on your earthly.

This surely is the poet speaking, the man who, while he lives, looks intently at the world, lives among its people and sends back these wonderful, complex, questing bulletins. What Vincent O'Sullivan so generously shared with us was not only his poems, but also the theory that underpins them and the worldview that animates them.

Report by Robin Fry

Writers on Fridays

Recently featured at Writers on Fridays at the Stout Research Centre in Wellington were **Sonja Yelich** and **Anna Livesey**, who have both published a first book in the last year. Anna Livesey was winner of the Glenn Schaeffer Award in 2002, and has recently returned from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her poems have been widely published in magazines (as well as - perhaps a first? - on coasters) and her first book, *Good Luck*, appeared in 2003. It includes the long poems *South Seas Analecta* (2000) and *Napier*, which won the Macmillan Brown Prize in 2000 and 2002.

Auckland poet Sonja Yelich is the child of a Dalmatian immigrant family who feature regularly in her poems. Her work first appeared in the anthology *AUP Poets 2*, and her first solo collection, *Clung*, was launched on Montana Poetry Day. In *Clung* the radio serves to connect the narrator to other worlds, and she discovers that the more you hear, the less you believe.

All Writers on Fridays sessions are open to the public and free of charge. No booking or RSVP required. Hosted by IIML and The Stout Research Centre.

☞ Poetry Advisory Service ☞

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For further information, contact:

Poetry Advisory Service NZPS
PO Box 5283
Lambton Quay Wellington.
info@poetrysociety.org.nz

☞ Overseas Reports ☞

Poetry uniting Jews and Arabs

In *The Christian Science Monitor* online on 10th August was a heartwarming story by Ben Lynfield of Israeli beginner poets, Arab and Jewish, coming together to study the art of writing poetry - and making bridges across a cultural divide. The programme was set up in the northern Israeli town of Zichron Yaacov by Amir Or, director of Helicon, the Society for the Foundation of Poetry in Israel, which has just published an anthology of the poems.



To quote Lynfield, 'If the comments of participants are any indication, the poets have forged a kind of separate peace despite the lack of healing in the overall political context.'

Arabic poetry has been neglected in the mainstream literary world, he notes – because though Arabs must learn Hebrew in Israel, most Israeli Jews know only a smattering of Arabic – and the process of translation has been helpful in forging individual connections.

For the full heartwarming story, go to <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0810/p11s02-legn.html?s=meset>."

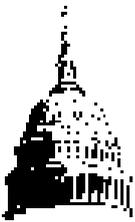
Thanks to Leigh Vickridge for this information.

Muster for the Muse

The Watermark Literary Muster, planned for October 2005 and held in the Camden Haven on the New South Wales Mid-North Coast will have a particular focus on poetry. Dinah Hawken has accepted an invitation to attend and will be joining a group of celebrated Australian poets including Mark O' Connor, Peter Boyle, Martin Harrison, Eric Rolls and Conal Fitzpatrick.

Information on this second gathering of writers of nature and place is on the website www.watermarkliterarysociety.asn.au

Presidential poetry & other outbursts



Readers will recall the poetry of Donald Rumsfeld, particularly *The Unknown* ('As we know, there are known knowns...'). Senator John Kerry has now taken to quoting poet Langston Hughes on the campaign trail, although at least one American pundit has worried that 'quoting poetry suggests someone who may be a daydreamer, and we tend not to elect daydreamers as President.'

Essayist Eliot Weinberger, a recent visitor to New Zealand for Writers and Readers Week, has composed *Republicans: A Prose Poem* as his contribution to the campaign.

A lyrical contribution comes from New Zealand, too. *Don't t Misunderestimate Me* is a song for George Bush attributed to The Neocons by a New Zealand bass player best known for his role in a highly regarded local band, who also features in James Brown's poem *I Come From Palmerston North* ...Read more on poetry in politics or listen to The Neocons at:

<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/features/poetryinpolitics/>
<http://www.marshmallowmusic.com/Neocons.aspx>

Report from the IIML with thanks

Competitions

Takahe Poetry Competition

Judged by Jack Ross, editor, novelist and short story writer. 1st Prize \$250 & 2nd Prize \$100, plus two runners-up receive one year's subscription to *Takahe*. The NZ Book Council will also grant winner and runners-up a year's membership that entitles them to four issues of *Booknotes*. Closing Date: 30th September 2004. Results will be posted out in December 2004.

Details & entry forms on NZSA website – www.authors.org.nz

Takahe Cultural Studies Competition

Judged by Rudolf Boelee & Cassandra Fusco. First Prize \$100, plus four runners-up will receive one year's subscription to *Takahe*. Closing Date: 30th September 2004. Results will be posted out in December 2004. Full details and entry forms on the NZSA website – www.authors.org.nz.

Yellow Moon Competitions - Australia

Nutshell – Closing Date October 19th

- A. Cinquain. \$70 & \$30.
- B. Quiet Places in the City. Max. 22 lines. \$70 & \$30.
- C. Limerick – page of three. \$70 & \$30.
- D. Humorous Poem. Max. 24 lines. \$70 & \$30.
- E. Tetractys – page of two. \$60 & \$30.

Waxing Lyrical – Closing Date October 30th

This time Yellow Moon is asking you to write a contemporary love poem of between 8-20 lines. Entries will be streamed into (a) Traditional rhyming and (b) Free verse. In each section there will be a 1st Prize of \$100 and a 2nd Prize of \$50.

\$3 per entry. Winning & Commended Poems published in *Yellow Moon*. Official entry form essential. Please print from <http://www.yellowmoon.info> or s22x11cm. SSAE to: Beverley George PO Box 37 Pearl Beach NSW 2256.

Websites

A UK-based organisation describing itself as 'an independent pressure group fighting for public information to be written in plain English' has done some work down under. According to their website, they have edited documents for AMP Insurance in New Zealand. We can't vouch for the success of their efforts - any AMP customers out there care to venture an opinion? - but the website offers a number of free guides for the perplexed, lists the winners of their annual 'Golden Bull' awards for the worst gobbledegook of the year, and even a 'gobbledegook generator' to create your own meaningless officialese. Sample text: 'Our upgraded model now offers parallel modular paradigm shifts.' Visit <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

Report from the IIML

Regular Gatherings

If you belong to a group not listed here, or you need to change the information on show please send an e-mail to the Editor.



AUCKLAND

Poetry Live Auckland. Book yourself in to read at Poetry Live, Grand Central (upstairs bar) 126 Ponsonby Road Auckland. Tuesdays 8 p.m. Guest poets & open mike. Contact: Co-ordinator Judith McNeil (ph 09 360 2510, four-by-two@xtra.co.nz). Visit Poetry Live at: <http://groups.msn.com/PoetryLivefourbytwopublishing/homepage2.msnw>

Poetry Readings. Wednesday nights at the Brix Cafe & Bar 8 – 11 p.m. 280 K' Road Auckland. If you are interested in reading please contact John Hamilton (021 451 745)

The Glad Poets of Henderson meet at the Waitakere Community Resource Centre Ratanui Street Henderson on the last Sunday of each month at 2 p.m. All welcome. Contact Barry (ph 09 832 4605).

BALCLUTHA

Meetings every first Wednesday of the month from 7 p.m. at The LumberJack Café Owaka (15 minutes down Southern Scenic Route). Information: Gwyneth Williamson (ph 03 418 983).



CHRISTCHURCH

The Airing Cupboard Women Poets meet at 10 a.m. every 2 weeks at The Quiet Room YMCA Hereford Street. Ring Judith Walsh (ph 03 359 7433) or Barbara Strang (ph 03 376 4486).

Another group is **The Live Poets' Society**, which meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Linwood Community Arts Centre (corner of Worcester Street/Stammore Road). Contact Alan McLean (ph 03 389 0908).

A haiku group, **The Small White Teapot**, meets upstairs at the Mainstreet Café Colombo Street at 7.30 p.m. monthly, 3rd Tuesday. Contact Barbara Strang: ph 03 376 4486

CROMWELL

Cromwell Writers meet on the last Tuesday of the month in the homes of members on a shared basis. Contact Tom Llandreth (ph 03 4451352) or e-mail 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.

Upfront: Spotighting Women Poets meets on the last Tuesday of each month at Cobb & Co. (first floor lounge) from 7 p.m. Open mike reading promptly at 7.30 p.m. followed by featured poets. Contact Sue Wootton, e-mail david.sue@xtra.co.nz.

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.

(For dates go to www.musselinn.co.nz.) Visiting poets are most welcome. For news of meetings contact Joe (ph 03 524 8146, fax 03 524 8047; or e-mail gbybell@xtra.co.nz).

HAMILTON

The Hamilton Alive Poets Society meets on the last Thursday of each month at the Satellite Campus on Ruakura Road Hamilton at 7.30 p.m. Contact Penny at: pen101nz@yahoo.co.nz (ph 07 854 0378).

HAWKE'S BAY

The Hawke's Bay Live Poets' Society meets at 8 p.m. on the second Monday of each month (except January) at the Cat and Fiddle Ale House in Hastings. Contact Keith Thorsen (ph 06 870 9447) or e-mail: kthorsen@xtra.co.nz

KAPITI

Mahara Poetry Group meets at Mahara Gallery, Mahara Place, Waikanae, at 7.30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of every month.

LOWER HUTT

Poets' Pub A free entry community sponsored poetry reading happening. First Monday of the month from 7 p.m. at Angus Inn, Murphy's Bar, Waterloo Road. Bar is open & food to order. Free coffee and tea. Guest reader plus open floor mike session. For more information contact convenor Stephen Douglas (ph 04 569 9904, e-mail DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz).

NELSON

The Nelson Poets meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. in Kaffeine New Street Nelson. New poets welcome. Contact: Martina (ph 03 548 2989) or Gaelynne (ph 03 546 8434).

OPOTIKI

Opotiki Writers meet at 10 a.m. on the last Wednesday of the month at the Opotiki Hotel, for chat, support and motivation, all loosely based on our writing experiences. Contact Ann Funnell (ph 07 315 6664 or e-mail timann@paradise.net.nz)

PICTON

Picton Poets (founded by Ernest Berry in 1996) meet at The Cottage 75a Waikawa Road Picton at 10.30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. Contact: Anne Barrett (ph 03 574 2757, e-mail wheezyanna@msn.com) or Jenny Carroll (ph 03 579 3031, e-mail jayemcee@paradise.net.nz).

PORIRUA

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

ROTORUA

The Rotorua Mad Poets meet every Monday night at the Lakes Hotel Lake Road, 7.30-9.30 p.m. Contact: Colleen (ph 07 347 9847) or Kay (ph 07 349 0219).

TAURANGA

Bravado @ Browsers – Poetry Live! Readings at Browsers Bookshop, 26 Wharf Street every 2nd Sunday at 1 p.m. Gold coin entry. Featured poets and open mike.

Poets' Parlour is a workshop meeting monthly for 3rd Sunday 12.30 p.m. in the Robert Harris Café, State Insurance Arcade, off Grey Street. Bring copies of work in progress for constructive feedback. Contact Jenny Argante (ph 07 576 3040, e-mail: jenny.argante@xtra.co.nz).

TIMARU

If you are interested in the Timaru **Poetry in Motion** performance poetry group contact Karalyn Joyce (ph 03 614 7050) or e-mail karalynjoyce@xtra.co.nz.

WANAKA

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

WELLINGTON

The New Zealand Poetry Society meets on the third Thursday of each month (except for December and January) at Turnbull House Bowen Street, usually at 8 p.m. but check Upcoming.

Bluenote 191-195 cnr Cuba Street & Vivian Street, **Poetry Studio** every Sunday afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m. Free admission. ph 04 801 5007. Also at **Bluenote** performance poetry most Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. Contact Blaise Orsman (mob 025 616 04 53) or Blue Note (ph 04 801 5007) after 4 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 find friends, learn to read aloud and exchange tips and books. Last Thursday of the month, supper provided, gold coin donation appreciated. Contact Stephen and Rosa Douglas (ph 04 569 9904, or e-mail DouglasSR@xtra.co.nz or phone 04 5699904).

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.

WELLINGTON *continued*

Open Readings, Newton. Bar Edward 167 Riddiford Street, Newtown Every Sunday at 7 p.m. all ages welcome with an emphasis on young writers For more information, phone Amelia 021 0401 932 (fearicamelia@yahoo.com.)

WEST COAST: HOKITIKA

Contact Don Neale (ph 03 755 7092) or e-mail: 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 Craic. Contact: Mary Pullar (ph 07 307 1126, e-mail jwpullar@wave.co.nz)

WHANGAREI

Poetry, Prose, Tea & Talk. Last Sunday of the month, 2.00 p.m. at 18a Vale Road Whangarei. Contact: Rosalie (ph 04 388 913) or e-mail chtoomer@xtra.co.nz.



☞ **Talk Poem 8** ☞

The Fish

Gordon Challis

My friend went casting in the tidal flats at dusk
catching the fish that did not want to die.
'Use him as bait,' he said
-animals called him are easier to kill-
but then the fish
flapped with resonant power drumming the dinghy
showing it wasn' t
done for yet.
' We' ll put him back,' he told his son
who was learning from all this.

We waited:
a time of lolling immobility
then the reflex surge
from muscles rhythmical as always
we hoped
though we knew that fish do not usually
swim on their sides.

I try to picture
what chaotic images came lastly on its upward eye
the creatures arched above it

shutting out the light
and what it sensed about our world
of scorching flesh
unbending bone
of mercy and decision.

Mostly I imagine
that slow lopsided plunge
back to deeper water
the downward eye
staring at sand below
the almost sameness of the grains passing as always
unfocusing to darkness
where no difference is.

The Fish contains the poet's observations of a friend who catches the fish that 'did not want to die.' The fisherman decides to use him, ('animals called him are easier to kill') for bait but when the fish flaps for his life he backs out and tells his son ('who was learning from all of this') 'We' ll put him back.'

In contrast to the original intention to kill the fish, there is now a hopeful waiting for it to survive. It doesn't. The last two stanzas are a reflection on the fish's death. This poem's gentle pace gives us space to ponder ideas such as what the fish sensed about our world of 'scorching flesh' and 'unbending bone', when it comes to 'mercy and decision.'

This poem is written in free verse. The use of alliterative phrases such as 'drumming the dinghy', 'lolling immobility' and 'unbending bone' give it musicality, as do the many internal rhymes. These are so discreet as to appear unintentional. For example, in the second verse there are a lot of 'i' (as in it) sounds such as lolling, immobility, rhythmical, fish and swim. In the third verse there are 'e' (as in sensed, unbending and flesh) and 's' as in shutting, sensed and scorching.

Stanza four has 'ss' sounds as in passing and sameness and 'd' sounds as in lopsided, deeper, downward, darkness and difference. There is magic in phrases such as 'what chaotic images came lastly on its upward eye', which evoke clear pictures of the dying fish.

The poet' s use of line breaks adds dramatic emphasis to the slow dying of the fish, as at the start of stanza two: 'We waited a time of lolling immobility' and the start of stanza three: 'we hoped though we know that fish do not usually swim on their sides.'

The downward cadences of the last two verses metrically illustrate the fish's demise: 'passing as always/ unfocusing to darkness/ where no difference is'.

When I first read this poem, I loved it for its imagery and rhythm. It is timeless for these reasons alone.

It is also timeless for the many levels it takes us to as it poses universal questions on killing, mercy and death itself.

Helen McKinlay

The Fish IN (2003) CHALLIS G. *The Other Side of the Brain.* Wellington, Steele Roberts.

☞ **KiwiHaiku** ☞



Please submit KiwiHaiku to Owen Bullock PO Box 13-533 Grey Street Tauranga. Preferably but not essentially with a New Zealand theme.

**OCTOBER DEADLINE
23rd SEPTEMBER**