



a fine line

September 2010

The Magazine of The New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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SEPTEMBER MEETINGS

There are two:

Wednesday 8 September, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Iggy McGovern (Ireland)

&

Monday 20 September, 7.30pm

Guest Poets: Roland Vogt & Niel Wright

OCTOBER MEETING

Monday 18 October, 7.30pm

Guest Poet: Gordon Challis (Nelson)

7.30pm The Thistle Inn, 3 Mulgrave St, Wellington. Open mic. \$3 entry for members.
Meetings Sponsored by Creative Communities Wellington Local Funding Scheme.

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Feature Article

Interview with Harvey Molloy

Tim Jones

Harvey Molloy is a Wellington teacher and poet whose first collection of poetry, *Moonshot*, was published in late 2008. This interview first appeared in October 2008 on Tim's blog, Books in the Trees:

<http://timjonesbooks.blogspot.com/> *Moonshot* was reviewed in the March 2009 issue of *a fine line*; the review is online at: www.poetrysociety.org.nz/moonshot.

First of all, congratulations on the publication of *Moonshot*. What can you tell me about the book, and where can interested readers find more information, and copies to buy?

Moonshot is my first book of poems. It's divided into two sections. The first 'Gemini spacewalk' explores space, the universe, and how space features in the imagination. The second section 'Learning the t' is down to earth and concerned with travel, particularly my time in Singapore, and family relationships. The book is orchestrated to follow these themes but some poems don't fit this pattern and I've included them because I like the poems. You can find out more about the book over at my blog at <http://harveymolloy.blogspot.com> and you can order the book from me from the blog.

Moonshot is your first poetry collection: a significant milestone for any poet. How long have you been working towards having this first collection published?

I started to write poetry again back in the mid 90s. In 2000 I moved to Singapore to work at the National University of Singapore. At this time I became interested in Asperger Syndrome, which is an autism spectrum disorder, and wrote some research articles in this area. After Latika and I finished our book *Asperger Syndrome and Adolescence: Looking Beyond the Label*, which was published in 2004, and moved back to New Zealand, I began to focus more seriously on the poetry. About four years ago I decided that I had enough poems published in different journals to put together a manuscript. So I guess I've been working on it seriously for four years or so although it's been on my mind for around eight years.

They say "It's tough oop North", and if it is, the two of us should know, since you were born in Oldham and I in Grimsby. Though you've lived in many countries since then – the States, Singapore, New Zealand – do you think there's a Northern English sensibility to your poetry?

Yes, I do. The northern sensibility comes through in the sound of the words. Living right on the Pennines also has a powerful effect; the northern landscape is incredibly varied: it's both ruggedly rural and horribly industrial all within the same borough. I think that there's a particularly Manchester sensibility: it's part humour, part gothic horror, and part self-parody. Lancastrian is the only accent that sounds as if it's mocking itself or refusing to take itself seriously whilst also sounding out the very roots of the language. And I also think there's a 'Lancastrian male hysteric' element in the culture; northern masculinity is very different and more feminine than the 'kiwi bloke' culture: you see this in *Billy Liar*, in Alan Garner's novels, in Amis's *Lucky Jim*, and in bands like The Fall, Joy Division, Magazine and The Smiths, etc.

We have something else in common: an interest in science, and in science fiction. I was intrigued and impressed to see that you've put the science and science fiction poetry up front in "Moonshot", whereas in my books, it's been tucked discreetly down the back. What made you decide to put this section first?

Part of this has to do with Helen Rickerby's advice (<http://wingedink.blogspot.com/>). I sent an early version of the manuscript to her and she suggested that I organise my material more thematically and write more about space. Although all the threads were there, until I had her help I couldn't see the shape I

wanted. I'm not that fixated on SF or space – the new work is different – but I am committed to what I very loosely think of as a SF or fantasy sensibility that I clicked on around age 12. I remember seeing J.G. Ballard on a BBC book programme when I was 13, talking about his novel *Crash*. It just reprogrammed me in much the same way that Alan Garner's *Redshift* changed my life. Garner's and Ballard's work aren't SF or fantasy but they are deeply concerned with 'psycho-landscapes' or unusual geographies. I wanted the astronomical poems up the front as many poets write about their families and their childhoods but few write about astronomy.

When I jotted down the recurring themes of this collection, the words “astronomy”, “history”, “geography” and “myth” appeared. Have I made them all up? Have I missed any? Why do these areas especially interest you?

No, I think that's accurate, but "history", "geography" and "myth" are also connected with family life. I'm married to an Indian New Zealander and part of me lives in an Indian world and this hopefully comes through in some of the poems. In some ways, I think each individual is a culture with their own myths and I'm trying to explore some of these myths. But I'm also trying to include a variety of different voices and concerns in the poems.

Which poets have had the most influence on your work, and which poets do you most enjoy reading? (Of course, these might be one and the same.)

The following are a selection of poets I love to read and who have moved me: Hone Tuwhare, James K. Baxter, Elizabeth Smither, Sylvia Plath, Seamus Heaney, T.S. Eliot, Adrienne Rich (marvellous), Philip Larkin, etc. and I'm particularly fond of Alistair Paterson's *Qu'appelle* (talk about a SF sensibility: Wellington gets nuked!). Recent books I've enjoyed are Sue Wootton's *Magnetic South* and Helen Rickerby's *My Iron Spine*.

How about prose writers?

Alan Garner's an amazing writer and I think Neil Gaiman's brilliant: it's a pity that Gaiman's film work doesn't match his prose. And Samuel R Delany's *Dhalgren* has a lot to answer for! I also enjoy reading good science writing and have wide ranging reading habits: I'm currently on the last chapters of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and next up will be Mary McCallum's *The Blue* (<http://mary-mccallum.blogspot.com/>).

A tough one to end on: if you had to choose three words to describe your writing, what would they be?
On the line.

A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit.

Richard Bach

From the National Coordinator

Laurice Gilbert

The production of our annual anthology is well under way as I type. Editor Barbara Strang and I have been exchanging frequent emails as she has chosen the poems for inclusion and I've had the fun of looking them up to see who wrote them. As with the judging of the competition, the editorial selection is carried out 'blind'; Barbara has been reading the second copy of each poem. Failing to read the competition instructions and sending in only one copy denies entrants this second chance. The next exciting chapter of this yearly event is the launch, which this year is back in Wellington. Keep Saturday 6th November free to join us in celebrating another stunning collection of poems from New Zealand and around the world.

Since the last issue I've had some interesting events to attend. In late July I joined those celebrating the launch of PANZA – the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa – a fabulous resource that is the brainchild and ten-year work of passion for poet Michael O'Leary, with seriously dedicated support

from Mark Pirie (HeadworX), Roger Steele (Steele Roberts Ltd) and Niel Wright (Original Books). PANZA contains a unique archive of NZ published poetry, with around 3000 titles from the 19th century to the present day. At <http://poetryarchivenz.wordpress.com/> you can access the catalogue and read the organisation's newsletters, along with Nelson Wattie's entertaining launch speech.

Then of course it was National Poetry Day, the closest I get to a statutory holiday, since for one day of the year others are doing all the promoting and supporting of NZ poetry. I was heading for a weekend of R&R in Auckland on the day itself, so I went to Paraparaumu Library on the Thursday night for a fun-filled evening of open mic (featuring poems of 10 lines or less only) and readings from the writing team at Te Papa. These included, to my delight as an ex-audiologist, a poem by Adrienne Jansen which was translated into New Zealand Sign Language. Enthusiastic and energetic Gill Ward ran the show in her unique fashion, and you can read a little about how easy it is to get help with something like this in her Regional Report.

On Poetry Day I travelled into town by bus ostentatiously reading poetry (Vivienne Plumb's *Nefarious*) and, as so often happens when I read good poetry, felt a poem of my own coming on. On the second bus, from town to the airport, I ostentatiously wrote poetry. Never let it be said I don't get into the spirit!

Coming up in early September is a visit to Christchurch to attend The Press Christchurch Writers Festival and present the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Poetry to this year's winner. The LEA is presented biannually to a senior poet who has yet to receive accolades for their contribution to poetry.

And here's an idea that anyone can use, no charge. The international organisation Mensa is holding a conference in Auckland in late October. I have offered myself as Poet-in-Residence for the event. There's no money in it, but for 5 days I will mix with interesting people from all over the world and write poems about the experience. What events can you find to introduce poetry to?

That's enough from me – now on with the magazine.

About our Contributors

Tim Jones is a versatile Wellington writer (and committee member) with a novel, short stories, poetry collections, an anthology and a consistently updated blog to show for his time.

Robert McLean lives in Christchurch. He took a book for review in May and was never heard from again. More of a non-contributor, really.

Harvey Molloy is a Wellington teacher and poet whose first collection of poetry, *Moonshot*, was published in late 2008.

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

Vaughan Rapatahana lives and works in Hong Kong, although he keeps his house back in Te Araroa, East Coast. His latest book series, entitled *English Through Poetry* (2007 & 2009), is out in the U.K., Australia, and Aotearoa and is available for review (in pdf) from the Editor.

Knowing what audiences like, I go in for amusing introductions. It's easy enough to read out a poem, but a good introduction is worth its weight in gold and can carry a poem on its coat-tails for years....Jokes make friends with people. The trouble is there isn't any noise, like that of laughter, associated with the other emotions, so you tend to stick with the funny ones just to make sure you're not alone up there. If it were customary to burst into loud sobs at sad poems, or growls at angry ones, I'd be inclined to drop the jokes forever.

Hugo Williams

Thanks to the IIML newsletter for this quote.

A Warm Welcome to:

Hannah Ban Christchurch
kimbala Rangiora
Charlotte Guy Auckland
Emily Draper Auckland
Phill Gleeson Wellington
Eleanor Hurton Christchurch
Mariana Isara Christchurch
Roanna Lin Auckland
Yin Lin Dunedin
Kate Loveys Auckland
Daniel Maier-Gant Christchurch
Martha Morseth Dunedin
Kate McKinstry Wellington
Colleen Norton-Keesing Wellington
Atif Slim Auckland
Rowan Woods Auckland

Letter to the Editor

The joys of winning the haiku competition

It is still such a thrill to be so rewarded for doing what I love, and to know that an esteemed haijin has found my work worthy. I am indeed humbled by the honour, and grateful to the judge.

An email from Nola Borrell prompted me to google 'Jeanette Stace', and I found that Jeanette's work is accompanied by a delightful smiling face, portraying such a vibrant personality. Then I read through some of her haiku, appreciating her insight and her craftsmanship, but most of all that subtle sense of humour! I found myself laughing aloud at the senryu, 'grandson's visit'!

The monetary award is very much valued. I shall indeed be spending it to stimulate the writing of haiku in this area of the Far North Coast of New South Wales. In the first instance, it will assist in my costs of a trip to Japan, to be made with eleven other haiku enthusiasts, members of the Australian Haiku Society, travelling in Japan for ten days in October/November this year. It is a tour devised especially for us, entitled 'In the Footsteps of Basho', following the route Basho took during his journey to the 'Far North', or the 'Interior' as the translator decides. Anyway, it should be so inspirational.

Then, after I return to Australia, I shall be sharing my incentives and insights with the group of haiku poets in this area – that is, the 'Cloudcatcher' group, which meets seasonally for a ginkgo in various local venues. The influence of such an award will no doubt be motivational and creatively encouraging for a wide range of haiku poets.

Quendryth Young (*Australia*) [Abridged]

Congratulations

Jenny Argante made it onto the internet, thanks to a feature by *sunlive* just before National Poetry Day. See and hear Jenny reading her poem at: <http://www.sunlive.co.nz/16418a1.page>

Alison Denham will have 3 poems in the upcoming *Shot Glass Journal* special NZ issue, one in *Fib Review*, and her poem 'Looking for Props' was Highly Commended in the Nelson Bookseller Page & Blackmore's National Poetry Day competition. For this competition you had to include word for word all three titles of this year's NZ Book Awards for poetry: *The Tram Conductor's Blue Cap*, *The Lustre Jug* and *Just This*. You can read the poem on page 15.

Judith Gunn entered the Time Out Bookstore competition, listed in *a fine line*, and was first runner-up out of 170 entries. No prize money, but a welcome bottle of bubbly. "This really inspires me to pick up my pen on a more regular basis."

Joanna Preston won the prestigious Mary Gilmore Award for best first book of poetry, for her collection *The Summer King* (Otago University Press, 2009), reviewed for *a fine line* by Anne Harré in November 2009. You can also read the review at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/summerking>

Charlotte Trevella had a poem singled out for "special praise and recognition" in the youth section of this year's UK Poems on the Underground competition. The theme was science, to celebrate 350 years of the Royal Society, and Charlotte's poem, 'Genetics 2', can be read at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/competitions/potu2010/#Trevella>

And the NZPS is well-represented in the confirmed list of authors whose work will be included in "A New Zealand Literary Showcase: 100 NZ authors", to be published by online journal *Interlitq* in February/March 2011. Members whose names appear on the list are: Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle, Majella Cullinane, Sue Fitchett, Janis Freegard, Robin Fry, Laurice Gilbert, David Gregory, Charles Hadfield, Siobhan Harvey, Mariana Isara, Tim Jones, Helen Lowe, Frankie McMillan, Robynanne Milford, Harvey Molloy, Martha Morseth, Helen Rickerby, Kerrin P. Sharpe, Barbara Strang, Niel Wright, and Karen Zelas, who has a short story in the current (invitation-only) issue. Well done, everybody!

Write while the heat is in you. The writer who postpones the recording of his thoughts uses an iron which has cooled to burn a hole with. He cannot inflame the minds of his audience.

Henry David Thoreau

Surfing the Web

<http://www.poetrykit.org/entering.htm> Some words of wisdom on entering poetry competitions.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/17/AR2008041703573.html> I think I've used this one before, but it bears re-reading. A poet ponders walking.

<http://www.fanstory.com/contests.jsp> A poetry community where contest entries (amongst many other things) win points, and sometimes money.

<http://www.failbetter.com/02/Hayesnuclear.htm>

A poem idea that looks kind of fun, for those of us who love word play (and who doesn't?).

<http://www.bowwowshop.org.uk/page2.htm> Funny!

http://www.ehow.com/how_2145307_poetry-chapbook.html Putting together a small collection of your own poetry for friends and family (and anyone else who will take one).

http://www.ehow.com/how_5733970_recover-after-reading-bad-poetry.html Says it all, really.

Noticeboard

Ed's note: I'm sorry Wellington events monopolise this issue – I haven't had any submissions from anywhere else.

BOOK LAUNCH, Wellington

NZPS life Member **Jack Duggan** invites members to join him at the launch of a major collection of his poetry, *ECHOES from the BONES* (Steele Roberts), on **Sunday 26 September, 2.30pm**. The event will take place at the Bill Pearce Room, St Joseph's Mt Victoria, in Ellice St (just before the Mt Vic. tunnel). The launch will be presided over by His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Anand Satyanand, and there will be readings by Ian Johnstone, Naomi Trigg and Peter Sledmere, as well as Jack. RSVPs are requested for catering purposes: ph. 973 3544, or email dugganjackmary@paradise.net.nz

SPRING FESTIVAL, Wellington

18th September - 3rd October. The two-week festival kicks off at the end of Conservation Week, with almost 40 events and activities. It starts with the Otari-Wilton's Bush open day and plant sale on Saturday 18 September and features the legendary Tulip Sunday at the Botanic Garden on 26 September.

From organiser, Katrina Mitchell-Kouttab: "It encourages Wellingtonians to shake off the recession blues and memories of this long dark winter by immersing their senses in the glorious spring flowers, colour and fragrance of Wellington's™ annual Spring Festival.

"The initiative is supported and created by the Wellington City Council and the Botanic Garden in Wellington. The festival takes place every year in Spring and this year we have decided to put more of a creative spin on celebrations. I am organising a few events and am looking for performers for something different and a little special.

"I have a poetry corner, drama corner, a soap box and music corner that will rotate during these dates at Midland Park, and Grey Street to celebrate Spring in Wellington. Performances should last for 5 -10 mins and will take place at lunch time between 12 and two pm.

"Although we cannot pay performers (all events are free for the public) this is a great opportunity to perform in or to promote a reading, event or organisation to the general public... This is also an opportunity to delight the crowd with poetry performances."

If you're interested in taking part, please make direct contact with Katrina: call on 04 3835477, or email katrina@fairytrina.com

WRITERS ON MONDAYS, Wellington: July-September, at Te Marae, Te Papa. The IIML's popular winter series of readings and interviews is still under way. Still to come: **6 September: The Next Page (1)** Preview the talent emerging from the writing workshops at the IIML. This week ten writers read from prose and poetry in progress. Simone Kaho, Sylvie Thomson, Rhydian Thomas, Rose Collins, Brigid Barrer, Amy Head, Simon Reeve, Patrick Fitzsimons, Aaron Smale and **Kate McKinstry** are introduced by Damien Wilkins.

13 September: The Next Page (2) Another smorgasbord of new writing from the IIML's 2010 MA workshops: **Mercedes Webb-Pullman**, Michael Hugill, Sarah McCallum, Hannah Newport-Watson, Marama Salsano, David Coventry, **Trevor Hayes**, Catherine Palmer, Aleksandra Lane and Rayne Cockburn present work in progress, introduced by Chris Price.

Thursday 23 September: *Buddhist Rain*, 7pm, Soundings Theatre, Te Papa. Join us for this special event to launch a new CD setting Bill Manhire's poems to jazz. Norman Meehan, Colin Hemmingsen and Hannah Griffin provide the melodies, and Bill Manhire reads the lyrics. For the full programme see: www.victoria.ac.nz/modernletters/

Competitions & Submissions

MAI Review, Call for submissions from Writers on Māori and Indigenous Development (Online) The Journal aims to publish quality material that contributes to the body of knowledge about Māori and Indigenous development. It aims to do so in a way that also assists in advancing the capabilities of Māori and Indigenous people who are engaged in research and scholarly training. Now inviting poetry from indigenous writers, as well as articles and reviews. Guidelines at:

<http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/info/submissions.php>

Liverpool Lennon Poet Competition (UK) Closing date: 10 September. Liverpool is celebrating the life of John Lennon, who would have been seventy this year, with a series of events including a free entry competition, run by The Beatles Story in Liverpool - all poems must relate to John Lennon. Up to £1000.00 in prizes. Judged by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. Entry by email only (attachments not accepted). 1st £100.00; 2nd £50.00; 3rd £25.00. Enter by sending poem to poetry@beatlesstory.com Further details on www.beatlesstory.com

Bloodroot Poetry Contest (USA) Deadline: 15 September \$15 entry fee for 3 poems. Three prizes of \$200, \$100, \$50, three honorable mentions and publication in 2011 *Bloodroot* Literary Magazine edition. The competition is open to any poet who writes in English. Submit original, unpublished, free verse, 10 lines to 2 pages. <http://www.bloodrootlm.com/contest.html>

Takahe Poetry Competition. Deadline: must be received by 30 September Entry Fee: \$5 per poem; Judge: James Norcliffe. 1st: \$250; 2nd: Prize: \$100. Two runners up will receive one year's free subscription to *Takahe*. Unpublished poems up to 50 lines long on any theme will be accepted. Entry forms can be downloaded from the website: www.takahe.org.nz Each poem should be printed on one side of A4 and posted to: Takahe Poetry Competition 2010, PO Box 13-335, Christchurch 8141, New Zealand. No email entries, please. Results will be published in *Takahe* 71 (December).

Basil Bunting Poetry Award (UK) Closing date: 30 September Entry fee: £7 1st: £1,000, 2nd: £500, 3rd: £250. Three commendations of £75 each. Results will be published on the website after the awards ceremony in December. Open to anyone worldwide who is aged over 18 on September 30. Winners and those commended will be invited to submit 10 poems to Neil Astley, editor of Bloodaxe Books. <http://www.basilbuntingaward.co.uk/>

Tom Howard/John H. Reid Poetry Contest (USA)

Postmark Deadline: September 30 Poems in any style, theme or genre. Both published and unpublished poems are welcome. Prizes of \$3,000, \$1,000, \$400 and \$250, plus six Most Highly Commended Awards of \$150 each. Entry fee: \$7 for every 25 lines you submit. Submit online or by mail. Early submission encouraged. http://www.winningwriters.com/contests/tompoetry/tp_guidelines.php

Genomics Forum Poetry Competition (UK) Deadline: 7 October The human genome has been unravelled and mapped. Genes responsible for different illnesses and conditions are being identified. Will this information improve the human and help us avoid disease and death? And does this desire to be perfect mask something more sinister - a lack of empathy for the imperfect? Will this lead to a genetic divide between rich and poor? Do we even want to live for ever? Or, like the Sibyl, do we think that death gives life its meaning? Write a poem of no more than 50 lines on the theme: 'improving the human'. Poems may not be published or accepted for publication elsewhere. One poem per entrant. Send your poem as an attachment to pippa.goldschmidt@ed.ac.uk and ensure that the attachment contains only the poem and poem title (if using a title) but no other identification. In the body of the email, please list your name, contact details and poem title (or first line). Winners will be contacted in November and a list of winning entries will be posted on the Genomics Forum website by the end of November. First: £500, second: £200, third: £100. Free entry. For further information visit <http://www.genomicsnetwork.ac.uk/esrcgenomicsnetwork/news/latestnews/title,23732,en.html>

Rem Magazine - call for submissions

Deadline: 15 October, for the November issue.

Rem Magazine invites experimental, visual poetry, short stories, text, art images, critical essays, reviews on books and film. For guidelines, visit <http://remmagazine.net/submissions/> or send submissions to submissions@remmagazine.net.

Turbine - call for submissions. Deadline: 26 October. Submissions of poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction are invited for the 2010 edition of *Turbine*, which will be edited by Hannah Newport-Watson and Sylvie Thomson. Submission guidelines on website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/turbine/submissions.htm>

Plough Prize (UK) Entries must be received by: 31 October. Entries are invited in three categories: *Open Poem (up to 40 lines); *Short Poem (up to 10 lines); *Poem for Children (length unrestricted).

Online entry available. Information and competition rules at <http://www.theploughprize.co.uk/Rules.html>

Summer writing workshops, IIML, Wellington

Applications close: 9 November These are the popular Iowa courses, poetry and prose. More information on the website at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/modernletters/courses/#trimester-timetable>

Residencies

University of Waikato/Creative New Zealand Writer in Residence 2011, Closing date: 1 October 2010.

Vacancy number: 300249 Twelve months, normally from February. The emolument is currently \$45,000. The position is open to poets, novelists, short story writers, dramatists, and writers of serious non-fiction. The appointment will be made on the basis of a record of publications of high quality. The Writer is required to live in Hamilton during the tenure of the award. There are no teaching or lecturing duties attached to the award, the sole purpose of which is to give the Writer the freedom to write. Details: <http://www.jobs.waikato.ac.nz>

Michael King Writers' Centre Residency Opportunities for 2011 - Call for applications

Applications close on 8 October, and selections will be made by the end of October. Two opportunities:

- The Summer Residency, eight weeks from January 12 (stipend \$8,000);
 - The Autumn Residency, eight weeks from March 14 (stipend \$8,000).
- Detailed information and application forms for the 2011 residency opportunities are available on the centre's website <http://www.writerscentre.org.nz> under the section Writers in Residence.

Regional Reports

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

POETRY VIGIL, Kapiti

Gill Ward

[Thanks to everyone who contributed to] our poetry vigil on National Poetry Day. I don't think it could have been any better, light-hearted, fun, participatory, stimulating - all the things we wanted it to be. When I arrived at the library at 6.15 on the night I opened my car door at exactly the same moment 5 other cars pulled up and out jumped all the "committee" (for want of a better name) who rushed in began moving tables and chairs, putting out food and drink, putting poems and postcards on seats and all the other jobs. It was done in a flash. A friend said afterwards. "I turned up to help at quarter to seven and it was all done".

Again, all during the night and after it finished many of you helped make things go smoothly and took care of much packing and stacking at the end. A great community feel. And a stunning array of 'ten line poems' (everyone remarked how nice to have that short, sharp, pithy delivery). To say nothing of a line up of talent and generosity from the Te Papa poets, 'The Exhibitionists', organised by Adrienne [Jansen]. Thanks all of you.

Words need to be crafted, not sprayed. They need to be fitted together with infinite care.

Norman Cousins

Reviews

Selected Poems of James K. Baxter ed. Paul Millar (Auckland University Press/ Carcanet Press, UK, 2010)
ISBN 978 1 86940 461 1 RRP \$39.99

Vaughan Rapatahana (26/06)

Kia ora mo tenei pukapuka o nga ruri o Hemi, Paora. Kei te tino pai tenei. (Thank you for this book of Hemi's poems, Paul. It is damned good.)

James Keir Baxter (d.o.b 29/06, Cancer) was an archetypal 'Outsider' – from Colin Wilson (26/06) and his seminal 1956 tome – existentially adrift here in Pig Island, marginalized by temperament, familial backgrounds, genetics, astrological parameters. A 20th century Pakeha-Maori (see my old teaching peer from Tokoroa High School, Trevor Bentley's excellent eponymous book here.) I'm amazed Hemi didn't ultimately sport moko – would have been next on the agenda, eh.

He was an essential part of the tradition of Aotearoa poets who are fulltime poets, who do not distil their craft peering down from fenestrated ivory towers. Sam Hunt (04/07) is another in this tradition, and Hemi's bawdy, no-holding-back song to him appears on page 183. Both battled the bottle because they had to. (I'm also amazed that I've met all of the above men and imbibed with them!)

Why, you may ask, is there another collection of Hemi's poems? Why not, eh? The man was a troubled minstrel, compelled to write self-involved myth-making poems prolifically as his means of confession. These poems spew out his guts earthily, honestly, irreverently – at least as far as the pomposities of international and local political twits, and the hypocrisies of middle class gatekeepers of New Zealand qua Pakeha society were concerned. Which is why the latter was so enthralled by him, as much as repelled by him. Which is why he was such a staunch frontman for the dispossessed and the different. Which is why we need another astute collection such as Paul Millar has compiled here – replete with excellent and cogent notes, sensible subdivisions and some previously unpublished poems to boot. This book is our touchstone to the seeker in us all; Hemi keeps us honest, eh. Not just Kiwis either – the book has been published in Britain too. I hope it hits the Highlands and strikes a Celtic chord or two.

The poems are not all great by any means: "The collection endeavours to give a sense of the broad range of Baxter's achievement, not merely its peaks, and thus it ranges from the comic and bawdy to the political and devotional", notes Millar on page xxii, and there is a definite progression away from Modernist infatuations, toward a distinctive and culturally hybrid voice – the best poems are the last, written of course with more and more te reo Maori sprinting into the gaps. (Kia ora mo te rarangi ki te ingoa o Maori Glossary hoki, Paora - Thank you also for the glossary of Maori words, Paul.)

To me the best is the last and untitled scrawl on the wall from 1972, when Hemi knew he was going to pass, when he had at last synthesized his shards of personalities into firm identity under just that one word – Hemi; when finally he had found his wahi tika ki tenei whenua tupuhi (true place in this skinny country.) No longer "from exile into exile" in his homeland, but home ontologically at last. The gap had been filled; there was nowhere else for him to go. Here is this moteatea or song poem:

A pair of sandals, old black pants
A leather coat - I must go, my friends,
Into the dark, the cold, the first beginning
Where the ribs of the ancestors are the rafters
Of a meeting house - windows broken
And the floor white with bird dung - in there
The ghosts gather who will instruct me
And when the river fog rises
Te ra rite tonu te Atua -
The sun who is like the Lord
Will warm my bones, and his arrows
Will pierce to the centre of the shapeless clay of the mind.

Kia ora ano mo tenei pukapuka (Thank you again for this book.)

To finish, another personal note. I well remember Jim Baxter in the Kiwi Hotel in my early years at the University of Auckland. Even wrote a poem about this – see *Blackmail Press* # 26.

Dressing for the Cannibals Frankie McMillan (Sudden Valley Press, 2009) RRP \$20

ISBN: 978-0-9864529-0-1

Keith Nunes

Kiwi writer Frankie McMillan's first book of poetry is brimming with wisdom and wisecracks. An International Institute of Modern Letters graduate, you may know her name through her first published works, *The Bag Lady's Picnic and Other Stories* which garnered widespread acclaim in 2001.

McMillan's poetry is whimsical; her delivery is without hesitation and the end product typically profound. It may drop off the mark once in a while but predominantly the book provides a steady trip down an attractive river.

She avoids the formal aspects of poetry and focuses on what she sees as the exploration of an idea.

McMillan handles the prose poem with aplomb, contorting at times in mid-air and gathering herself before she lightly touches down. She said in an interview that "there are a number of prose poems in the collection, a form I find really exciting to work with". 'Dominion' is a fine example, with the poet opening up with both guns blazing: "One day my father stole the house. My mother stole it right back. Again my father stole the house and this time he took the front lawn as well."

'Demolition' is hell-bent on entertaining you: "then Frank whatshisname followed by the glue sniffers and then there was us two or three if you count the dog".

'Crossing' is a darling of a poem about sisters who once fought but now lean on each other with the one sister sending remedies and "a wooden stick to reveal the moon".

McMillan also likes to bring down the blues on occasion, as with the melancholy 'Charlotte Jane' and the vivid 'The Piano Learns to Swim'. Then she'll give you beautiful lines like these:

I have painted the walls
yellow, walls let the yellow
climb through

In 'Apples' she twists and turns and says: "They don't know what to make of my mother who can never see a tree or a cloud without wanting it to be something else."

McMillan says of her work: "My poems are characterised by humour, accessibility, with an often faux naïf narrator who makes observations about how it is we are 'so mysterious to ourselves and to the world.' The poems are fictional but have an underlying emotional truth. They reflect my interests; theatre, folklore, memory, family and the peculiarities of being human." She says the collection of poems was prompted by a childhood horror of being eaten.

McMillan's first book of stories attracted this comment from a reviewer: "This writing and these stories announce the arrival of a strong new voice on the New Zealand literary scene."

Her poetry appears in the anthology, *The Unbelievable Lightness of Eggs* (Hallard, 2006), a collection featuring the work of six New Zealand poets. In 2009 she won the Open Section of the NZPS International Poetry Competition. Sixty this year, she lives in Christchurch within biking distance of everyone and everything that matters – she teaches Creative Writing at the Christchurch Polytechnic and the Hagley Writers' Institute.

Further Convictions Pending - Poems 1992-2008 Vincent O'Sullivan (Victoria University Press, 2009)

\$35.00 ISBN 9780864736062

Harvey Molloy

This volume collects around forty poems from the four books of poetry O'Sullivan has published since 1992 (including poems from the two Montana New Zealand Book Award winners, 1999's *Seeing You Asked* and 2005's *Nice morning for it, Adam*), and tops it off with a hamper of forty-two new poems. It's a

staggering achievement, especially considering O'Sullivan's completion of a biography of John Mulgan during this period.

O'Sullivan's poetry is at once cerebral, sensual, and musical. There's a great rigour in his writing—the poems are playful and sometimes follow an idea as it grows but they are never sloppy or unconsidered. O'Sullivan's poems aim for precision. His work reminds us that each of us is a culture with our own languages, beliefs, histories; all of which come into play every time we stop to reflect on our own convictions. Sometimes even a simple word or phrase suggests an entire personal history and idiolect: the title of the poem 'clever, mind' evokes a Catholic childhood. O'Sullivan's rigour is part of his poetry's engagement with truth, the truth (or perhaps 'truths') of the world. The world itself seems to invite this search, in the words of 'As is, is':

Come down, each atom invites, come down to where
things actually are

The difficulty is that reality consists of more than atoms. The great joy of the poems from *Nice morning for it, Adam* is that the sequence explores what this reality might be. O'Sullivan here returns to the original sense of *theoria*—not as the building of abstract architectonic systems but rather as the perception of the truth of God (or, should the 'G' word be too frightening, at least the perception of the 'Good'). We are in the world but our world is more than atoms. We find that we are in stories—the story of our family circumstances and the stories of culture. We are also not passive observers; we are actors faced with choices and dilemmas. 'After such events' begins:

This week I have put down two bits of reality
which were far cries from what I would call
a reality of my own.

Reality also involves the bits of reality of other peoples lives and our acknowledgement of those realities (which is perhaps another word for the 'good') even if, as in the line from 'Mid-sentence, so to speak' we remain in "The last reality, so singularly one's own".

O'Sullivan's work also has a political dimension. Poems such as 'Mission statement' calls for an understanding that we must never settle for the glib consensus manufactured by rhetoric—we should not be fooled into thinking that saying makes it so. O'Sullivan's work favours dialogue with others and some form of fidelity to what we actually experience. The alternative to dialogue is war. The poem 'Off limits' begins: "No one finds poetry in the rubble."

The selection of poems from the four preceding volumes provides a context for the more recent poems which crown the book. These poems are less concerned with reading and interpretation and more focused on memory and reflection. I cannot recommend this collection enough: O'Sullivan's poetry yields constant rewards on rereading.

KiwiHaiku

standing by the water
discussing tide and traffic
a gossip of dinghies
Deryn Pittar

the kiwi's bush is
full of green drips and wetly
numinous grey sludge
Rachel Sawaya

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

Tanka Reflections

– short songs of the human spirit –

all day rain
he completes the crossword
& celebrates
with cabernet sauvignon
cheese & crackers
André Surridge

her frail frame
inching down the stairs
now in her 70s
this polio child
has a hearty laugh
Nola Borrell

Members are invited to submit unpublished tanka. Please send your submissions to: pprime@ihug.co.nz or: 42 Flanshaw Road, Te Atatu South, Waitakere 0610.

Mini Competition

I've run out of prizes, for now, not having had time to enter enough online competitions to ensure a win. So let's have a competition just for the fun of seeing yourself in print. This issue's competition is for anyone who hasn't had a poem in *a fine line* yet (sorry, Eric). I'll choose up to three poems I think are publishable, and give the poets something (else) to put in/ add to their literary CVs. Poems should be no longer than 40 lines. This doesn't need to be your first effort at publication, but you can't have had anything chosen by me before. (I keep records, so I'll know.) International members are welcome to join in, as are those who have joined recently after our annual international competition.

If you need a theme, or something to get you started then try this (not compulsory) exercise: Find writing prompts in your junk drawer. Think about the items, notes and scraps. What does the collection of things say to you? (From: eHow.com) And remember:

You don't have to write a masterpiece every time you write. You just need to write a lot. The more you write, the more likely it is that a masterpiece will stand a chance of appearing.

Laurice Gilbert

American Life in Poetry: Column 263

By Ted Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006

Music lessons, well, maybe 80 out of every 100 of us had them, once, and a few of us went on to play our chosen instruments all our lives. But the rest of us? I still own a set of red John Thompson piano books that haven't been opened since about 1950. Here Jill Bialosky, who lives in New York City, captures the atmosphere of one of those lessons.

Music Is Time

Music is time, said the violin master.
You can't miss the stop or you'll miss the train.
One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four,
one, two, three, four.

She clapped her hands together
as the boy moved the bow across the strings.
One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four,
one, two, three, four, the violin master shouted,

louder and more shrill so that her voice
traveled through the house like a metronome,
guiding him, commanding him to translate the beat,
to trust his own internal rhythm.

Good boy, she said.
See how hard you have to be on yourself?
How will your violin know who you are
unless you make it speak?

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NOVEMBER DEADLINE is 7th OCTOBER

MEMBERS' POEMS

Looking for Props

All sizes for tipping, pouring, boats for gravy and great pottery urns for warm custard, the lustre jug its glaze glowing where it sits on the polished dresser next to a brass deer and carnival glass.

You squeeze past more stock, an iron hat stand loaded with dusky scarves, berets, fedoras, akubras, multicultural medusa scarecrow.

For yourself you want just this little knick knack found as a found poem (it's the shape darling it's the colour do I have to tell you it's in the detail, that's why they sent me because of my eye which reminds me I'm meant to be hunting an era depressed and wholesome not indulging my sensibilities).

The keeper of the shop dozes in grubby window light. On his head is an essential piece of wardrobe for the next production after this ...

A terrifically shy girl from the Shires is off to Boarding School but gets to go home for hols with her lacrosse stick and here is the same unassuming man doffing, ever so polite to the young miss, the tram conductor's blue cap of serge or worsted.

You understand the plot centres around his home life and the difficulties of obtaining the correct uniform and features the proper young lady only once.

You think the stick will be hard to find.

Alison Denham

From Ungainly

In The Art Gallery

The Screaming Couch
will top itself in a year or two.

End Of The World

If the krill die, we die.
What about the lice?
Do we need them?

I Also Like Blue Heaven

Who came up with Tutti Frutti?
Who came up with Hokey Pokey?
Gucci and Prada are good too.
So is Goody Goody Gumdrops.

As A Mother, I Wish This For You

Hey kid, in your beat up old red car
with three mates your own age, cool as,
when you hit the kerb as you gun the corner
I hope you will have an expensive and painful,
but not fatal, accident.

Juju

You are the dealer and you deal in pain
you are the witch doctor and you make it rain
you are the Professor of Psychotherapy
and you're insane.

Jennifer Compton, Guest Poet

Women at Rest

Not in that Victorian fashion
of a tree sifting light over their flowering hats
their covered arms, nor at a Paris
lunch-table by Renoir, antique afternoons
lying with artists or between the silk sheets
of their patrons.

Here women drape their sighing bones
over office furniture, face down on carpet
imagining the sun laying its hands on their fatigue,
the one full and reclining womb. All of them
momently at rest, still women and still lovely,
suddenly called by their modern lives
to rise and return to their work stations.

Richard Langston, Guest Poet