

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

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Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY
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WELLINGTON MEETINGS
Poetry @ The Thistle Inn
3 Mulgrave St, Wellington Central
Third Monday of the month, February to
November. Starts at 7.30pm with open mic.

September 17th: There will be a **Special General Meeting** to ratify the auditing of the accounts, and discuss a change of subscription fees. The rest of the evening will be open mic night - for each poem of your own you read, bring along a poem by someone else as well and be prepared to introduce it.

October 15th: our guest poet is **Sue Wootton**, from Dunedin.

*Meetings supported by Wellington City Council
Creative Communities Local Funding Scheme.*

Toward an Aotearoa poetic

Vaughan Rapatahana

Grieving

For Jim

You – bugger

You – arsehole

You – stinking shithouse

Dying

without me

Leaving

me stranded

Having

to keep on

Living

without you

Knowing

I'll never

See you

again

You bastard --

You bloody bastard you --

JC Sturm

I confess to having a definite agenda when critiquing and reviewing poetry from Aotearoa – including my own. I do indeed have “an axe to grind.”

This agenda is based on an approach stemming from my own studies of English language poetry – which was often forced onto me and my classmates in our South Auckland secondary schooling of the 1960s, my own grounding in Existential Literary Criticism, my own background in reading, writing and appreciating ngā mōteatea Māori and my own heritage as a multicultural Kiwi stretching waaaaay back several generations in Aotearoa.

It is time, I believe, that New Zealand modified its continued preoccupation with a dominant and somewhat arrogant Anglophilic poetics and determined its own Aotearoa poetic (which I will soon expand on), given that – it goes without saying – there is room for many formations of poetry and that there should and could never be any calls to restrict poetry in Aotearoa to one particular ‘type’. More, as Andrew Johnstone once wrote: “There is no mainstream in New Zealand poetry. Under scrutiny, the critical categories proposed from time to time break down into ever smaller categories, whose number almost corresponds with the number of poets.”

The key word here is dominant, for poets and poetry in Aotearoa are – despite what Johnstone noted, as above – still undeniably dominated by what Ian Wedde nominated as “the small, literary audience that reads poetry in New Zealand ... the conventions of a primarily literary, salon, or academic culture.” This is the clique of the university presses and poets they publish, certain long-standing poetry journals, poetry book reviewers and websites and – here I generalize, recognizing that things are indeed changing – their dominant thread is woven from the carpet underneath their continued kow-tow to what are both long-standing and resilient Anglo-American English language poetry traditions.

J C Sturm ano:

Pākehā you

Milton directing your head

Donne pumping your heart

You singing

Some English folksong

Thus the accent in mainstream qua powerfully fiscal, powerfully potentialized New Zealand poetry remains on language and formal structuring, whether the derivation is from what Murray Edmond called the “long-standing modernist paradigm” or the oppositional post-modernist techniques that Edmond among several others (Alan Brunton et al) so earnestly sought to expel. For as Edmond continues: “‘New Zealand poetry’ was born out of this paradigm and still is guided by its cultural hierarchies “

Carole Baldock, editor of the fine English poetry journal *Orbis*, writes about, “the heresy that poems should be about truth more than words.” Her comment is tongue-in-cheek; however many New Zealand poets would tend to take it seriously. For as Alastair Paterson once railed about the situation: “in New Zealand Pākehā poets generally privilege the technical aspects of their writing over that of content”, with which I concur completely. Tika tau kōrero e hoa.

So the IIML in Wellington, as one prime example, continues to religiously churn out poets and their poems that play with words, have fun and games with fun and games and quash any personal grist into the pavement of veneer, and – often – ‘academic postures’ and name-droppings. Wrote Patrick Evans in this regard, with particular reference to Bill Manhire, who is a prime poetic exemplar of my point here: “In its insistence on turning away from the modernist ideas of the essential, from the notions of ‘inspiration’ and ‘originality’, which he rejects in the introduction to his anthology *Mutes & Earthquakes*, Manhire, through his creative writing classes, has... [been] ramming his students’ noses as he has over the years into the provisional, the playful, the factitious, and above all the ironic as the only sources of that which it is possible to write.” Indeed, when I read Bill’s poem ‘The Question Poem’ in the latest *SPORT I* scratch my generously graying locks and ponder – what on Earth is this poem actually ‘about’? Does it have any significant truth or beauty prevailing or even lurking anywhere? What makes it a good poem, thus why is it here included? What makes it a ‘New Zealand’ poem? I’m buggered if I know any ‘answers’ here, actually.

I guess that I am myself again railing here against the rampaging river of entrenched English language imperialism, which still prevails worldwide and of which Anglophilic language-based poetics is a significant current. See my *English Language as Hydra* (Multilingual Matters, UK), which was published in June 2012, for a fuller exegesis of this thesis. It is time for the regnant episteme of middle-class, usually Pākehā, poetics vested in the seawrack of years of internecine poetic squabbles, to shift tectonically – and I sense that in a very real sense this is currently happening in Aotearoa-New Zealand, given the persistent historical demise of small, alternative poetry periodicals, as witness the fine *Enamel* and *Bravado* so recently. (All the more reason, actually, to praise the steadfastness of poetic sponsors like Chad, Pirie, O’Leary among others, all of whom maintain some equidistance from the canonic mélange of dour, dry page-wringers.)

Indeed such change must eventuate as the demographic of the country is itself undergoing quantum shifts – more of which further on.

Of course language must remain a prime zone of what makes for good poetry and of course also, it still does, but the insistence on seemingly writer-less or distanced versification remains rampant. It is as if the equilateral triangle of Stead’s New Poetic has shrunken to a far-on-the-horizon, aloof author and perhaps a doppelganger reader stroking words and caressing them into clumps of lines – and little more. Yet to me this is a narrowing of what poetry could/should be. The author has been thrown out along with the Barthes water, eh.

Continued on page 7

From the National Coordinator

2011 - 2012 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Laurice Gilbert

I'm aiming to keep my report short this year, after reading reports by ex-Presidents such as Harry Ricketts, and envying their conciseness. However, even in its abbreviated form, the report wouldn't be complete without offering thanks to our Patrons, Dame Fiona Kidman and Vincent O'Sullivan for their support. Our major financial sponsor for the 2011-2012 financial year was the Creative Communities Wellington Local Funding Scheme, and we are grateful for the part this scheme played in enabling us to improve our monthly Wellington meetings

Though our Creative New Zealand funding came to an end in December, it played a vital part in expanding the spread of *a fine line* into the community in 2011 via libraries and bookstores, several of which continued to subscribe when the project was over.

The web development company Signify continues to host our website for free, for which we are most grateful, and the Thistle Inn is a comfortable and welcoming host venue for our monthly meetings, and I thank manager Richard Walsh.

I want to make a special mention of Andrew Gordon, who generously volunteered to make sense of the many folders and boxes of the Society's papers that I inherited from previous administrators. He did an amazing job of eliminating multiple copies and archiving papers going back many years, and I can now keep it all in a relatively small storage area after having it spread through my house and garage.

The committee was unchanged through the year, and I have valued the support of Gillian Cameron, Anne Faulkner, Linzy Forbes, Janis Freegard (who took care of the Facebook page), and Tim Jones as Vice-President and chief Tweeter. As always, the day-to-day work of the Society has been carried out by me, in my role as National Coordinator, with emailed support, advice and encouragement from the other committee members as required.

At the end of the 2012 financial year we had 264 members. Wellington remained the biggest membership area, with Auckland and the Far North in second place, followed by the Canterbury region, from which numbers have noticeably diminished since the onset of the earthquakes. There were 21 overseas members.

I'm very grateful to our magazine contributors for filling the magazine every two months, leaving me with little space to find copy for. They are an interesting and generous bunch of people, and the articles, reviews and submitted poems are varied and interesting. I've had positive feedback about every issue. All the poems published are submitted to the editor of *Best New Zealand Poems*, and I was delighted that one of Zarah Butcher-McGunnigle's Featured Poet poems was selected for BNZP 2011.

We no longer receive any sponsorship for the competition, AsiaNZ having withdrawn after many years of support; nevertheless the competition broke even, thanks to some adjustment in the entry fee structure. We are grateful to the Jeanette Stace Poetry Trust for continuing to offer supplementary prizes in the haiku sections.

Our 2011 editor, Linzy Forbes, had some health difficulties that made completion of the anthology, *ice diver* (named for Sue Wootton's winning poem in the Open Section), a challenge, but we got there in the end, sold out, and made a profit. For the first time we had a second launch in Auckland. Thanks Gus Simonovic for organising this.

The website ticks over, and I update it as often as I can. A planned update of the Content Management System has not been achieved, because of lack of funding, but I live in hope. Sandra Simpson is still doing a magnificent job of keeping the NZ haiku community well-informed and educated.

Thanks to the Creative Communities Local Funding Scheme we've had excellent guest poets at our Wellington meetings, and the monthly open mic has been well-supported and entertaining. We even managed to import Joanna Preston from Christchurch with the help of the Funding Scheme. An experimental pre-meeting mini-workshop ran for a few months and was appreciated by the few members who attended, but was not well enough supported to justify an extra hour out of my evening and I have discontinued it.

The financial situation is adequate for our needs overall, though we ran at a small loss. If we were an entirely voluntary organisation, the membership fees would easily cover expenses, but the necessity of paying to get everything done means we don't have sufficient assets to allow for anything other than the basics without third party funding. As my job has grown to be nearly full-time, we could really do with a dedicated fundraiser or sponsorship deal, and I would be delighted to find we had in our membership someone prepared to take this on.

Our Treasurer finished at the end of the financial year and has not yet been replaced. We have joined Xero, at a non-profit rate, and I'm still getting the hang of it. I'll continue to grapple with it, but it's an area I would rather not have to deal with. We have out-sourced our bookkeeping since the Great Treasurer Fraud of 1999, and it still makes sense to keep this aspect of running the Society separate from my day-to-day work, for the sake of complete transparency and also for my protection.

Once again I ran out of time to get the accounts reviewed, but as the Treasurer was an accountant, and I checked the monthly reconciliations, I am confident it's all accurate. I'll try harder to get it done next year.

Conclusion

The Society runs pretty well as it is set up, though there is little room for growth while the main expense is the National Coordinator's role. Fortunately, the work seems to be well-supported and appreciated by the members, and I'm truly grateful for all the positive feedback I've received. Thank you all for your confidence in the committee's work, and may you continue to enjoy the benefits of membership.

About our Contributors

Liz Breslin is currently on leave from life in New Zealand and checking out the poem potential in the UK.

Kirsten Cliff lives in Matamata and blogs at: <http://kirstencliffwrites.blogspot.com/>

Mary Cresswell is a Kapiti poet whose work appears in a variety of print and online journals.

Natasha Dennerstein is a Melbourne-born writer who lives in Wellington.

Marion Moxham taught Junior Primary School, created maths puzzles for kids, had 5 children and an M.A. in Psychology, worked in child and family mental health, and now, with a neuromuscular illness, lives mostly on bedrest, in Palmerston North, giving impromptu flute lessons to grandchildren.

Vaughan Rapatahana is a poet, educationalist and language activist who lives in Hong Kong but considers the small town of Te Araroa to be his home.

Tim Upperton won the Bronwyn Tate Memorial International Poetry Competition 2011 and the Caselberg Trust International Poetry Competition 2012.

A Warm Welcome To:

Aalix Roake Hamilton

Caroline Holas-Clark Auckland

Eric Scheper Gisborne

Financial Advances Ltd Auckland

Jack Mckerchar Dargaville

Katherine Lauchland-Farquhar Palmerston North

Lionel Sharman Lower Hutt

Michael Watson Auckland

Natasha Dennerstein Wellington

Rod Walford Auckland

Sandra Geange Franklin

Susan Haniel Lower Hutt

Whitireia Writing/Media Training Centre Wellington

Winifred Kavakieris Dunedin

2012 International Poetry Competition Results

Heartiest congratulations to all those with poems selected by the judges. It's a challenge to get yourself among the chosen ones, and success strikes me as the highest form of encouragement. As I write, the second copies of the entries are with our anthology editor, Owen Bullock, and I look forward to seeing more of you represented in the collection. For those who didn't make it this year, keep going – one day it'll be the right judge on the right day.

OPEN SECTION

First: 'Ashes' Rachel Tobin, Pukerua Bay; **Second:** 'Cathedral of the Poor' Frankie McMillan, Christchurch; **Third:** 'Swimming with Frame' Rowan Taigel, Hamilton.

Highly Commended: 'A Familiar Voice' Mary-Jane Grandinetti, USA; 'The Day Death Turned up on the Beach' Bernadette Hall, Canterbury; 'There Are No Horses in Heaven' and 'When Gorillas Wake' Frankie McMillan, Christchurch; 'The Monks of Tibhirine' Kerry Popplewell, Wellington; 'The Alhambra Suite: Five Variations' Jo Thorpe, Wellington; 'Henry James Riding a Bicycle' David Mark Williams, UK.

Commended: 'Five Minutes Peace' Ruth Arnison, Dunedin; 'Visiting Akaroa' Nola Borrell, Lower Hutt; 'Certain Numbered Streets' Rose Collins, Lyttleton; 'Open Home' Nicola Easthope, Raumati South; 'This is the Way of It' Sandra Fraser, Auckland; 'It's a Shame They Stopped Making Snifters' Laurice Gilbert, Wellington; 'The Moral Geologists' Lynne Kohen, Upper Moutere; 'Lexical Lucy' and 'Why Asterisks Are Evil' Sunit Narshai, Auckland; 'Talk' Janet Newman, Levin; 'Education' Catherine O'Brien, Hawea Flat; 'My Childhood in the Rose Garden' Trish Veltman, Raumati Beach; 'The Blues' Laura Williamson, Cromwell.

HAIKU SECTION

First (Jeanette Stace Memorial Award): 'between road and bay' Katherine Raine, Owaka; **Second:** 'red zone' John O'Connor, Christchurch; **Third:** 'bird's hollow bones' Zoe Harber, USA; **Fourth:** 'her prognosis' Scott Mason, USA; **Fifth:** 'morning glory' Nathalie Buckland, Australia.

Highly Commended: 'ragged mist' Ernest J Berry, Picton; 'between rusting mine rails' Nola Borrell, Lower Hutt; 'bus stop' Kirsten Cliff, Matamata; 'a fork in the path' and 'over the bridge' Laurice Gilbert, Wellington; 'night bus' Catherine Moxham, Palmerston North; 'rainbow' Marion Moxham, Palmerston North; 'lacing' Patricia Prime, Auckland; 'signing the will' Sandra Simpson, Tauranga.

Commended: 'old convent', 'reading issa' and 'separated' Ernest J Berry, Picton; 'painting windows' Claire Knight, UK; 'mirror' John O'Connor, Christchurch; 'one or two bruises' Greg Piko, Australia; 'home late' Cynthia Rowe, Australia; 'cauliflowers' Sandra Simpson, Tauranga; 'Bastille Day' André Surridge, Hamilton; 'summer evening' Helen Yong, Christchurch; 'the hawk circles' Karen Zelas, Christchurch.

OPEN JUNIOR SECTION

Overall winner: 'to make today pass faster, I am building a time machine' Rebecca Hawkes, Ashburton (Rangi Ruru Girls' School, Christchurch); **1st runner-up, secondary:** 'crumble' Maria Ji, Auckland (St Cuthbert's College); **2nd runner-up, secondary:** 'Atarata' Juliet McLachlan, Christchurch (Papanui High School); **1st runner-up, primary/intermediate:** 'Rain' Lilith Sangrouber, Palmerston North (Cloverlea School); **2nd runner-up, primary/intermediate:** 'Poverty is ...' Charlotte Shirreffs, Auckland (Mt Roskill Intermediate School).

Highly commended: 'Your Bruise' Enya Beynon, Rangiora (Hagley Community College, Christchurch); 'A Poem about my name' Maria Ji, Auckland; 'Funny dogs' Jack McCorkindale, Queenstown (Queenstown Primary School); 'The busy and fashionable streets of New York' Shreya Nair, Auckland (Auckland Normal Intermediate School); 'Lost Mother' Sophie van Waardenberg, Auckland (St Cuthbert's College); 'Sylvia' Cecilia Xu, Auckland (Epsom Girls' Grammar School); 'Forest' Phoebe Young, Wanaka (Mt Aspiring College).

Commended: 'Seaside Pilgrims' Maria Ji, Auckland; 'Freedom' Áine Kelly-Costello, Auckland (Pinehurst School); 'To be a Wellingtonian' Arthur Lafferty, Wellington (Wellington High School); 'White heron trapped in an oil slick' Stephanie Lester, Christchurch (Kirkwood Intermediate School); 'Ode to a match' Lily Moss-Baker, Wellington (Queen Margaret College); 'The trees rustle, the wolves' Finn Mueller, Wanaka (Mt Aspiring College); 'Is love ...' Emma Neilson, Auckland (St Cuthbert's College); 'Hurt' Madeleine Ross, Hastings (Karamu High School).

HAIKU JUNIOR SECTION

Overall winner (Jeanette Stace Memorial Award): 'Tree falls' Richard Ngo, Auckland (King's College); **1st runner-up, secondary:** 'hidden in the marram grass' Leika McIver, Palmerston North (Palmerston North Girl's High School); **2nd runner-up, secondary:** 'inside the crevice' Juliet McLachlan, Christchurch (Papanui High School); **1st runner-up, primary/intermediate:** 'rolling hills' Ella Lamont, Christchurch (Fendalton Open-air School); **2nd runner-up, primary/intermediate:** 'beach café' Laura Collins, Australia (St Bernard's Catholic Primary School).

Highly commended: 'tuatara sings ...' Payton Anderson, Christchurch (Fendalton Open-air School); 'round day moon' Meaghan Collins, Australia (St Bernard's Catholic Primary School); 'panning for gold' Harry Frenz, Tauranga (Tauranga Boys' High School); 'tiger worm' Maria Ji, Auckland; 'wind' Ella Lamont, Christchurch; '12:52 I add the flour' Lily Marris, Christchurch (Fendalton Open-air School); 'autumn morning' Lizzy Ray, Christchurch (St Andrew's College).

Commended: 'first blossom' Anna Doak, Christchurch (Rangi Ruru Girls' School); 'across the fence' Jackie Hazlehurst, Wanganui (Wanganui Intermediate School); 'my horse breathes' Sophie Lee, Christchurch (Rangi Ruru Girls' School); 'old wooden steps' Leika McIver, Palmerston North; 'reflections in water brown green' Richard Ngo, Auckland; 'the wild sea so rough' Rafe Swan, Arrowtown (Arrowtown School); 'winter wind' Frances Ullrich, Christchurch (St Andrew's Preparatory School); 'sunset' Toby Whata, Christchurch (St Andrew's Preparatory School); **Special Mention:** 'the huia sings' Portia Baine, Hamilton (Sacred Heart Girls' College).

How it was

Laurice Gilbert

I have many times noted that I love administering the annual competition - it has everything: mail to open (my not-so-secret obsession), thousands of poems and haiku to read, the joy of telling people they've succeeded. This year has been really special, thanks to a Palmerston North family with three generations represented in the competition results: Marion Moxham, her daughter Catherine Moxham and granddaughters Leika McIver and Lilith Sangrouber. Marion, Catherine and Leika have publishing histories with us and can be found in previous anthologies, but Lilith is a first-time winner in the NZPS competition. With permission, I am publishing the emails I received from Marion and Catherine just after I sent out all the winning notifications:

"Oh, Laurice, once again! I can't believe it. We're all in a twitter with excitement up here, with the girls and Catherine and me being placed as well. We were both so happy with the girls, we almost forgot about our own poems. You should have seen the scene here on Saturday. They all burst in and jumped up on to my bed and Lilith thrust her letter and cheque in front of me. I just said, "Whaaaat! Whaaat!" my mouth open in a big surprise. And then Leika did the same and I said the same all over again, looking from one to the other and back again in disbelief and wonder, and then we all squealed and giggled. The next fifteen minutes were very funny because 3 1/2 year old Bethany got all excited without knowing what the fuss was about, we thought, and started jumping on everybody, so the girls got her down on the floor and the three girls romped and rolled over and over squealing and giggling and hugging. I should have taken photos, but Catherine and I were too stunned and excited to think straight. It was like a shock in reverse, when every few seconds there was this mind jolt of 'did that really happen?' With their different surnames and Catherine's being different again, it wouldn't be apparent, except to you, they were all from the same family.

"But Bethany did understand the excitement was about writing. Although she's only just starting to talk a little, and most of it I can't understand, she took some paper and a pencil to Leika and asked her to do a 'W' for her - standing for 'Wonder Dog'. She knew we all love to write, and she wanted some writing too.

"So yesterday there was another big excitement. I had a relief home help person here, and then an old friend passing through town turned up, and not long after Catherine and all four of the children this time turned up, coming straight from the temporary ice skating rink in P.N., and with videos of Catherine falling on her butt, and everyone skating for the first time: so much excitement. After our friend had taken photos of all of us, and left, and the home help lady had left, I asked Catherine to check my computer before 4pm for its safety regarding that information on the news yesterday, and then she suddenly said, "You've got an email from the Poetry Society, Mum." I was very thrilled. Then Catherine tried to access her home emails from my dial-up computer, and realised she'd left her broadband system on an email receive mode at home, so she had to wait until they got home before she could check and find hers. And now we are all very happy all four of us were placed, and at the same time, against many odds. So thank you, Laurice, again. Regards, Marion"

And from Catherine:

"Dear Laurice, wow, we did it this year! I was absolutely stunned to get the letters for Leika and Lilith on Saturday (I suspect they sat in the letterbox overnight along with Friday's paper), we went round to mum's and the girls spent half an hour leaping around the room and rolling about the place in sheer excitement. I discovered mum's congratulatory email this afternoon when she asked me to send an email for her and it downloaded at 2.30, but had to wait 'til we got home to find my one just now.

"I actually composed 'night bus' on the way home on the bus from last year's anthology launch, which makes it particularly special to me. Kind Regards, Catherine"

You can find the *Manawatu Standard's* article and a family photo at: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/7407434/Poetic-pursuit-a-family-thing>

VISITING WRITER
POETRY, FICTION OR CREATIVE NON
FICTION (TRAVEL/LIFE WRITING)

Massey University, in conjunction with Palmerston North City Council and Community Arts Palmerston North, invites applications to join the School of English & Media Studies as Visiting Writer for the 12 week period 29 April to 19 July 2013.

The Visiting Writer will receive a salary of NZ\$10,000 and rent free use of a downtown flat.

The Visiting Artist will have the opportunity to set aside much of this time to develop his or her own work.

The successful candidate will give one public reading in our Writers Read series, contribute to our vibrant suite of creative writing courses, run a seminar for Creative Writing Masters students, and potentially run a community workshop.

For an application pack, please visit: <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/school-english-media-studies/en/visiting-artists-scheme.cfm> or contact Carol Seelye: C.A.Seelye@massey.ac.nz

Applications close 2 November 2012

Advertisement

Toward an Aotearoa poetic

Continued from page 2

Writes Harvey Molloy of Sue Wootton in the latest *Landfall*: “Wootton is too discreet to write personal or autobiographical poetry” – an accusation I could cast at far too many current New Zealand poets, given their abiding right to so write. Back in 1979, whilst reviewing Elizabeth Smither, Lauris Edmond hit the nail on its clichéd head: “I feel a lack of immediacy, of whole-heartedness; perhaps it is partly a lack of earthiness...in her future work I should like to see a little less literariness, more real life.”

Which is why J C Sturm leads off this manifesto eh. Hinewirangi or Bub Bridger could as easily have been there: mana wahine nē rā. Or the James K. Baxter of his later, confessional years: poetry for him is “a plank laid over the lions den” after all.

So what is my (romanticist) manifesto then?

Obviously I am calling for more guts in a poem – not merely despair and anger, but joy, fun, humour – although not so overly overt as to seep into sheer sentimentality. And I here reference my own work too – I need to throw some more light-balls into it, eh!

Part and parcel also of this humanization and break from aloofness is more versatility in spacing and formatting away from formal stanza group structures and line lengths, indeed a movement toward far more typographical frolic and versatility, an admixture of languages and a stepping away from sheer standardized English (more of which soon) and an inculcation of pictorial, spoken and filmic tones: all of which the fine *Brief* and *REM* and the brave *Blackmail Press* are determined to declare.

For my own overall agenda has roots deep in Existential Literary Criticism – a term first expounded on by a young Colin Wilson and – separately – Jean-Paul Sartre (two very atypical Westerners), whereby a literary work is assessed by how much it throws light on questions pertaining to epistemology and ontology, and not as ‘mere’ postings of proto-modernist or indeed postmodernist tepidity, given the very valid point that postmodern techniques did indeed serve to rummage through and rent the draglines of the Anglo-American poetics carpetbag – before it then became stranded on a dry barren shore of inanity. So anything to breakaway so as to break on through to the other side is great – again, as long as the message doesn’t suffocate under the detritus of the medium.

I am calling for – believe it or not – C K Stead’s apex of truth and beauty being restored to his equilateral triangle of poetics. In a very real sense Archibald McLeish’s whakatauki that “a poem should not mean, but be” requires polishing up. Perhaps a poem from Aotearoa should mean and be, and a fine poem from Aotearoa ‘should’ also contain some existential impulsion, given again that not all poems should or could be of this stature. Heaven forbid. That would be as boring as the current squadrons of insipid paeans against which I am quailing here.

I agree ultimately, then, with what Mark Williams once wrote: “While...poems never wholly transcend the ideological particularities of the man that made them, they translate them into terms we must respond to on grounds other than the moral, biographical or historical (which is not to say that these will not be part of our response.)” Again: “This is where critical concentration needs to be fixed: on the language of the poems as achieved things.” A great poem is an existential and linguistic epiphany.

Moving on, yet so very closely related to my points above, there must be far more incorporation of other cultures and their languages and their concomitant ways of writing in the poetry of Aotearoa. There is a longer-standing, proud, independent hagiography of ngā mōteatea Māori, a major oral tradition steeped in the existential breaths of diurnal exigencies; yet access to this valid and viable verse remains stunted, indeed still suppressed – see my recent article in the latest *Landfall* for more detailing of this process. Christ, even Paterson and Wedde notice this chasmed difference between the extant English language pantings, and the demotic lung-spasm waka rhythms of Māori song-poetry, while Koro (Dewes) and Keri (Hulme) had ceaselessly stressed the obvious: there is an entire other poetic language – whether it be te reo Māori or Māori-English – which is grounded in everyday existence. There is another ontological stratum available in the poetry of Aotearoa. (Aotearoa extends out to Polynesia per se, as opposed to the British-drawn New Zealand. See then the new book out on the Tongan poetics of Futa Helu as introduced by a fine poet himself – Scott Hamilton.)

Such a tradition cannot be demanded so as to itself dominate, but, by crikey, far more attention to its independent influence needs to be paid: far more cognizance of orality must steam through Aotearoa poetics. Thank God for Māori such as Apirana Taylor and Robert Sullivan and a massive array of others, and also for Sam Hunt and David Eggleton as living exponents of English-language poetry as being influenced by such Indigenouness. Thank God also for at last having editors like Eggleton and Laurice Gilbert and Siobhan Harvey who give full reign to Polynesian-influenced poetry and rants. It is also encouraging to see *Ora Nui* out recently too, given that some Māori poets have been stymied by far too much English-language poetic (having had their reo Māori palpably stripped from their earlier generations by agencies of the English language such as education boards) and have become mothballed by mediocrities of Manhire-isms. Sadly.

Aotearoa poetry can stand alone. Should stand alone. We are no longer a colonial vassal paying lip-service to the Queen and her English and its rooks and pawns. In fact we are, but we should no longer be! To quote Jack Ross’ pithiness:

“If there’s a book/poem/novel that doesn’t fit the approved guidelines – don’t review or notice it at all. Our tendency to emulate the ostrich’s response to possible trouble on the horizon is possibly the most irritating aspect of cultural life in this country.” Sad, also. Bad, actually.

A new sloop of Aotearoa poetic is sailing over the horizon toward the islands. There is room in the crew for poets like, for example, Airini Beautrais and Rhian Gallagher of course – and there always should be too, especially if they deliver the poetic goods as in Rhian’s damned fine ‘Burial’ - but my point here is that they should be judged and assessed as Aotearoa poets via a vastly different set of critical standards than exists at present. It is time to write to a new model. An Aotearoa poetic. This is manifestly not a reversion to Curnow Snr’s nationalistic fervour while it must always remain open to international tides. But not to tidal wave swamping from afar – rather it is a localization of all torrents.

There have been several cycles of male-dominated attempted poetics in the past in New Zealand (a name that itself requires putting away in the bottom drawer as a distant memory), from Smithyman’s *A Way of Saying* to Stead’s. Just as Allen Curnow ostracized Dommett; Peter Beatson castigated Brasch; Wystan Curnow frothed against mainstream New Zealand’s non-new-American poetic; Roger Horrocks spurned and spurred along ‘New Zealand’ and its poetry into its own relevance – Vaughan Rapatahana is voicing a rolling rapprochement with a deeper wider already extant poetics, toward a new Aotearoa poetry. I am attempting not to narrow the stream of poetry in Aotearoa but to *w i d e n* it so that ALL forms have a part to play and an equal standing ground of opportunity and publication. I’m an inclusive, not exclusive, equalizer, eh.

As noted earlier, Aotearoa is undergoing a sea-change of demographics so there will be inevitable incorporation of the still marginalized voices and ways of writing poetry anyway: “Ethnic diversity is set to increase in New Zealand in the future... Māori will comprise 16% of the population in 2026... Pacific peoples will comprise 10% of the population in 2026... The most significant change will be the broad Asian ethnic group, comprising 16% of the total population by 2026.”

It just won’t be an England of the South Seas anymore. Poets won’t be going to London so much to ‘learn how to write’ and sure as Hell won’t be having Keats and Byron thrown at them without reference to New Zealand poets in South Auckland classrooms – if in fact that still continues today anyway. In fact I’ll wager that one day northern hemisphere poetasters will be turning to Aotearoa poets to garner self-momentum – a process which I note is already occurring.

So that’s about all I have to say, eh.

For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice.

Virginia Woolf, 1882 – 1941

Featured Poet

Marion Moxham

Crown Lineage

The plate arrives. My sister thrusts it
in my hands through the door. Oh! I
clasp it, put my lunch on it,
eat sixty years of smiles.
We sit, we two, my
sister and me:
orphans. So
much to
say.

Earth

This wobble ball has story spun so
fast it goes pear-shaped. All that’s flung
goes round and round. All that leaves
is done. What will come? What
shall be made of a
pear-shaped ball spun
round? Moment-
um, hum,
poise.

Flipped

There are buckets
of tips upside down:
crashed castles
soaked in salt
meant to preserve
their stance.

But buckets
intrinsically fill
with water
and water vaporises
if it is not spilt
or drunk.

Buckets upside down
lock out drips:
the old soaks.
Wait for the next shower
of alignment
between forests.

Blinking between
the pines
are rays of sharp light
drying out
the needles
on the ground

Needles tip.
And tip and tip
for services given
when prices are fixed.
What an illusion
when contracts

are set in the sunrise
and dimmed in the set.

It is all set.

Nets catch escaped fish.

I put the bucket on my head.

The meanness of the demented

The meanness of the demented.
All fades but will.
Their heads are rented.

Never more repented:
Gone over the hill.
The meanness of the demented.

Pride is no more dented.
Blame is shifted, shrill.
Their heads are rented.

Demands are barked, vented.
Others get a grill.
The meanness of the demented.

Interference is resented.
If looks could kill!
Their heads are rented.

Ill must be represented.
It takes a lot of skill.
The meanness of the demented.
Their heads are rented.

It looks like snow

I know it's not,
coming in one direction.
I see it stuck in the wire fence,
adding white petals
to the daisies, but then
a black and white cat emerges
from under the fence and chases the flutterings.
You'd think they would dance away,
but the snow keeps landing,
flying off the fence;
and the cat goes on its way.
I know I should have checked all
of the grass for those white petals lost
long ago, but the cherry tree
is generous.

Crackles

What did I tell you
on those pages,
leaf,

that sat so thin
when tilted sideways
and fat when in your face?

Did you deduce
the problem
from such skeletal remains?

And did you put
the pieces of dead leaf together
and read the book?

Did you not listen
to the fluttered ground
where wind blew,

to soles of boots
that tramped,
the flow of birds?

Inside thin lines
lie pictures,
clues to hearts beating,

and names of trees,
of whispers, branches breaking
and thudding ears.

Fluttered

inside this house of straw, birds lace the nest
to rest into. Inside the nest, songs
curl up, sway in breezes, soar. Inside
songs sing out and out, filling all
that's left. All that's left inside this house
of straw is walls lent.

Shreds

Cotton holes are eaten by moths. They gulp air,
and holes rush through them giving rise to flapping

wings blown wide open in the cotton
fields pressed into sheets hanging on the

line. Bolt holes are for screws, moth eaten

wings without hinges. It is best

to collect cotton for sheets that need a wash
to remove starchiness and dirt. This

amuses doorstops stopped from shutting their wings
over loopholes flown by mothballed things.

a drizzly morning

ducks ambling along the middle

of the road picking

up every lost worm

a slow drive behind

her pigtailed

blossom

each spring

the other language

in the garden

leaves

Ordering a man to write a poem is like commanding a pregnant woman to give birth to a red-headed child.

Carl Sandburg, 1878 – 1967

Congratulations

Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka, Volume IV is edited by an international team, including **Owen Bullock**, and Editor-In-Chief, M. Kei. This collection underwent an exhaustive selection process with over eighteen thousand poems being considered, resulting in a distillation of the best contemporary English tanka. Nine New Zealand poets are included, among them NZPS members **André Surridge, Catherine Mair, Elaine Riddell, Helen Yong, Karen Peterson Butterworth, Kirsten Cliff, Owen Bullock** and **Patricia Prime**. This is the final volume - <https://wwwcreatespace.com/3785119>

Suzanne Herschell was both Winner and First Runner-up (of two) in the Page & Blackmore NZ Poetry Day Competition 2012, with 'Cooking Murder' and 'Of hearts', respectively. The judge was **Greg O'Connell**. You can read the poems and the judge's comments at: <http://pageblackmore.circlesoft.net/pages/399-PoetryDayCompetition2012>

Kristina Jensen has won her first competition – Forward Poetry's 'Spirit of Adventure' competition – with her poem 'Teach Me How To Be'. <http://www.forwardpoetry.co.uk/post/spirit-of-adventure.html> She also has three poems on Poetry Tyneside.

Wes Lee has been commended by Neil Astley, in Poetry London's 2012 Competition: [http://poetrylondon.co.uk/news/2012 'Ginnel'](http://poetrylondon.co.uk/news/2012%20Ginnel) was one of 4 poems commended by Neil Astley and will be published by Poetry London in September.

The David Gemmell Legend Award Winners 2012 include Christchurch writer and poet **Helen Lowe**, who won the Morningstar Award for best debut novel at this year's David Gemmell Awards For Fantasy with her novel *Heir of Night*. The Awards were presented at a ceremony held at London's Magic Circle headquarters.

Competitions & Submissions

Takahe 2012 Poetry Competition Deadline (must be received by): 30 September. 1st prize: \$250; 2nd prize: \$100. Two runners-up: one year's subscription to *Takahe*. Judge: **Kerrin P Sharpe**. Unpublished poems up to 50 lines long on any theme. 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 2012 Poetry Competition, PO Box 13-335, Christchurch 8141, New Zealand. No email entries; entry fee: \$5. Results will be published in Takahe Issue 77 (December 2012).

Pighog Moss Rich International Poetry Prize (UK)

Closing Date: 7 September. Entry: £3 per poem/£10 for 4 poems submitted together. Up to 30 lines. Entries must be written to produce a humorous or satirical effect. Each poet may enter up to 4 poems. Electronic submissions at: www.pighog.co.uk

Consequence Prize in Poetry (USA) Deadline: 1 October. Free entry; 1 - 3 poems, any length, on the culture and consequences of war; prize: \$200 and publication in *Consequence* magazine. Website: <http://www.consequencemagazine.org/>

NZPS publication a fine line – call for submissions Deadline: 7 October. The editor welcomes your contribution. We currently pay a small fee for Feature Articles and reviews. See publication guidelines for these and other sections of the magazine at <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/aboutsubmissionguidelines>.

Sonnet or Not – Cannon Poets Competition (UK)

Closing Date: 31 October. The theme is 'Sonnet or Not'. Entries should be 14 line poems that in some way reflect the sonnet form. Prizes £300, £150, £100. For more information, see the website: www.cannonpoets.co.uk Entry Fee: £4 for first poem; £2.50 for subsequent poems.

Regional Report

WINDRIFT HAIKU GROUP, JUNE

Karen Peterson Butterworth

What is and is not a haiku? Such discussions pop up at all Windrift meetings, and our winter meeting in Kerry Popplewell's cosy Ngaio home was no exception. Three members had fun with word play, and their poems were enjoyed as 'punku'. Other poems strayed across haiku guidelines that favour direct sensory images over abstraction, opinion, and personification. Some were still considered effective short poems. For example, one in the style of a Celtic blessing by corresponding member Sally Holmes, and this:

a thousand scarlet eyes
peer in the mist
the tui sings the colour

Bevan Greenslade

A lively discussion of where and when seagulls roost was evoked by this haiku:

morning
seagulls fly from their roosts
towards the sea

Penny Pruden

Also under free choice of subject:

my bomber pilot uncle
writes of plans to marry,
his diary then blank

John Ross

clematis
twilight climbs
the brightness

Ernest J Berry

On the theme of 'cold' a wide variety of images emerged, from falling on an icy bridge (Ouch!), to the sound of frozen power lines sculpting a cabbage tree.

June camp in the Makino –
in the morning
our bootlaces stand upright

Kerry Popplewell

huskies
frolic in Christchurch
winter

Neil Whitehead

The third subject, shadow(s), was challenging. This one evoked multiple associations for its hearers:

the shadow
of a thundercloud
drifts across Mt Kaukau

Harumi Hasegawa

haikai café

Your bite-sized serving of haiku, senryū and tanka

Kirsten Cliff

summer heat
overripe plums spill
into a bowl

~ haiku by Anne Curran

credit card by post
the scent of
new plastic
~ *senryū* by Barbara Strang

starting
my memoirs before
I lose my mind
leaves are falling
from the golden robinia
~ *tanka* by André Surridge

Submissions: Please send your best three unpublished haiku/senryū/tanka for consideration to kirsten.cliff@gmail.com with 'HAIKAI CAFE' in the subject line.

Straight From the Haijin's Mouth

I asked haiku and tanka poets, André Surridge and Tony Beyer, 'What process did you go through to expand into writing tanka?'

André Surridge's answer: Pat Prime's article 'Introduction to Tanka' started me on the tanka road in 2005. Up until that point I'd been writing haiku for 3 years and was keen to try my hand at another Japanese form.

I also had an added incentive when editor M. Kei invited tanka submissions for his anthology of modern love tanka, *Fire Pearls: Short Masterpieces of the Human Heart*.

My approach was two-fold, first to write new tanka and secondly to take existing short love poems that I'd written over many years and strip them bare to create tanka.

I found the Modern English Tanka website of great help for studying first-class tanka and through Amazon I ordered the outstanding tanka book *The Ink Dark Moon - Love poems* by Ono no Komachi with Izumi Shikibu, women of the ancient court of Japan. (Translated by Jane Hirshfield with Mariko Aratani). This book continues to inspire. This fascinating genre took hold and I was delighted to have seven tanka published in *Fire Pearls*. Since then my tanka have appeared in many venues and in successive *Take Five* anthologies.

I would like to record my thanks to Pat Prime, who has been a terrific mentor and a great friend.

***Tony Beyer's answer:** It wasn't until I read Shiki's wisteria sequence and had a go at tanka sequences of my own that I began to see where I wanted to be formally. I think the tanka sequence has been my most successful kind of foray into Japanese form.

The deliberate suppression of ego in haiku gives way to a more explicit emotional engagement in tanka. I like both disciplines, but the frankness required in haiku is that of the object or perception, whereas that in tanka is more human and personal. It isn't so much a question of expansion as of different modes of writing.

I still like the sequence because it moves like frames in a film, altering or adjusting images so they recall each other. Tanka are best when they leave narrative details for the reader to work out or supply.

The following poem won an individual Tanka Splendor award in 2002:

between rocks
heron scraps
scattered by the wind
settle and become
birds again

It also occurs as part of the sequence 'The Foreshore' in my book *Isthmus* (Puriri Press, 2004). Readers can decide for themselves which format suits it better.

* Tony Beyer is the judge for The 4th Kokako Tanka Competition, which closes for entries 31st October 2012. For information, please email Pat Prime: pprime@ihug.co.nz

The Haiku Help-Desk

Special guest edited by Sandra Simpson

The Beauty of Truth in Haiku

Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

John Keats, from 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'

Truth matters to me when I write and read haiku.

However, pinning down what 'truth' means is one of those journeys that rugby coaches like to lead their teams on. The following list may need a midfield replacement before fulltime.

I believe ... (No. 1) ... that if you find the truth in your moment you will have a better poem. Getting to that truth may be as simple as closing your eyes and putting yourself back there – what was it that caught your attention? Something said, a sensory experience, a realisation?

I believe ... (No. 2) ... that everything we experience becomes part of us. Seeing a civil war scene on the television news may inspire a haiku. Fair enough, it's part of my experience now and will be filtered by the rest of my life experiences. It becomes my 'truth'. One of my favourite haiku came from a comment in a discussion about anatomy on National Radio.

banging about
inside my ribs
cherry blossom

Daily Haiku, 6:11 (2011)

I believe ... (No. 3) ... that being patient is a good thing (Mum was right). Do you have a killer fragment that is yet to meet its perfect phrase? Don't worry. It may not happen overnight but it will happen! I had the first two words of this haiku rolling around in my head for weeks before I saw the scene that completes it.

spattering rain the pulse in a sparrow's throat

Second place, Robert Spiess Memorial Haiku Award, 2011

Noticing the pulse in the sparrow's throat outside my window had me spellbound. Sure, I didn't see/feel the rain at the same time as I saw/heard the bird but, and this is the get-out-of-jail-free card, I had experienced both elements and brought them together to create poetry. Because that's what we're doing, isn't it? Creating poetry.

Which leads me to ... (No. 4) ... truth alone doesn't necessarily make the best poem. Once the central, honest, core of the haiku is established it's time to think about technique and how the verse may be bettered. See what the opposite of a key word, say 'loosen' to 'tighten', does.

As you may have guessed, making up something for effect doesn't interest me – life is surprising enough in its own write.

spring!
a bug I don't know
looks me straight in the eye

The Heron's Nest XIV, 2012

Mini Competition

Here's a competition for email subscribers only (because this space doesn't appear in the print copy of the magazine). Send me a poem 'translated' from a language you are unfamiliar with; i.e. find a poem written in a foreign language and re-write it strictly from the appearance of the words, with no reference to what the words might actually mean. The first draft might not make much sense, but keep working with it until it becomes a poem you're happy to submit. The final version can be as far away from the original as it needs to be to become a readable poem.

The deadline is the same as for the next issue - 7 October - and the maximum line length is 15. The prize is a grab bag of random poetry books. Hopefully there'll be some in there you don't already have, but you can always re-gift any you don't want. Email your effort (including a copy of the original poem) to: editor@poetrysociety.org.nz

Reviews

By *Birdlight* Sue Wootton (Steele Roberts, 2011) RRP \$24.99 ISBN 978 877577 55 0

Mary Cresswell

Scallop-hulled, my lovely vessel plies the air
on feathered wings. ...

Her canopy's
an iron net strung liberally with amber beads. Gentlemen,
it's by this secret, modern, scientific operation (and by
God's will) we'll keep aloft. And swift, so swift!
(‘The Brazilian priest's flying ship’)

If this sounds like wearable art in words, it's no accident. The collection is a rich and wide-ranging embroidery sampler of different styles and forms, all of them worked with imagination and talent. There are tercets and enjambed couplets – for example, the wistful/wishful ‘Fall sonata’, a seven-part series of wind and breath and memory. There's at least one found poem. There are concrete poems: ‘Dart’ and ‘No string banjo’.

There are unrhymed sonnets. I like ‘The glorious dead’, in which the phrase “the Last Post” crawls down the poem from the first line to the last. Another is ‘Tryst’, a meeting of three paintings in the Museum of Modern Art in New York; this featured in April, 2010, on The Tuesday Poem <http://tuesdaypoem.blogspot.co.nz/search?q=wootton>).

‘Tako-tsubo’, aka Broken Heart Syndrome, moves along the boundary between words as meaning and words as sound (you'll have to read this one all together), as do the facing poems ‘Lovebird’ and ‘Hatebird.’ Here's from ‘Lovebird’: “feverish feverstrum sings/ bird hum of strings, thrill-fevered skin/ hot hover humming and wings”. This also shows us Wootton's skill with alliteration, which appears throughout the book, sometimes looking downright Anglo-Saxon in format, sometimes sneaking in with everyday speech.

The author deals elegantly with her chosen images. Sometimes she uses them in prose poems (‘Ideas above my station’, afternoon tea with a canonical Old Identity). Sometimes she takes us through fierce and unpleasant landscapes – ‘And the face of the deep is frozen’ is a five-part homage to ‘The Endurance’ expedition, balancing Shackleton against the Book of Job.

‘Wind quintet’ is five poems played by the whole orchestra: an airplane flight bouncing in tercets, with splendid alliteration, a celebration of the Wellington wind, an escape from the wind into the kinder spaces of Lambton Quay and a wonderful metaphor to go with it:

...one long-sustaining breath

before you go down, pressed
into the surging bull-kelp – Kirk's
mid-winter sale. The great whites

are out in force, cruising the displays
of cut-price cashmere, never blinking
their cold disc eyes, ...

Wootton's subjects are as wide-ranging as her skills: politics, medicine, domesticity, love, scenery, patriotism, history... . Sometimes we're in an identifiable location, but just as often we're not or it changes beneath us:

It is a parlour, after dusk. Day's rough-hewn logs
vanish beneath a feather-brushed gloss tempura finish.

...Your calicos – velvet now –
overbrim your lap and fall, plum syrup pleats to pool
upon the floor.
(‘American bird’)

The beat of the poems can change in mid-stream: 'Equinox' begins quietly and ends up noisy. Parts of the Antarctic poems have frozen in place. 'Catching tigers in red weather on Albany Street' races in full bore alongside a rainstorm in the city and a woman's near-disaster with her fashionable Italian belt:

She glances round to see who witnessed that debacle –
me – seals her raincoat tight across her breasts, and I stride east and she
swims west, hey ho, hey ho, the Albany. Within two blocks pin-oaks and maples
candle-flare and leaves go hurtling on the bear-brown Leith: red coracles
with insect skippers drunk in purple boots, dancing hornpipes all the wild wild way to sea.

Enjoy.

Licorice Charmaine Thompson, ISBN 978-0-473-20750-2. Free to download from Smashwords (<http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/151670>) and available in print from charmainethomson195@gmail.com.

Liz Breslin

If poetry reviews were Venn diagrams, this one would intersect with other circles containing discussions about e-books and free books. But as they're not, we'll stick to the wordwork of Charmaine Thompson in *Licorice*.

This is Thompson's first book: some of her poems have previously been published in online journals and featured in *a fine line*. It's organised into three sections, although similar themes run through the whole collection.

Wellington-based readers will no doubt recognise some specific sites and sights, for example in 'Arohata', which describes the women's prison, where

They stripped the hills bare
leaving only the compound
stretching for the sun.
... left the clay banks
unfinished and untidy
as an added punishment

Being based in the capital, wind and caffeine are also recurring themes, as in 'Surfies and yachts ornament the harbour', where

... baristas sculpt caffeine for cold hands.
Draped in a homeless scarf a diver is
leaning into the wind.

This poem ends with the ubiquitous image of an inverted umbrella, and on its way there, Wellington is described as "a networked symphony", which nods to another theme used throughout – that of composers and composition. There's a piano to be found in many guises: in rehab, keeping vigil and in chains in 'The Piano Stands Up Straight'. Later on we have 'Variations', and 'Solo' ends the third section as "notes are jettisoned / like unquiet luggage".

And in her poem for the late NZ composer, Douglas Lilburn, 'Waiteata', Thompson tells us,

The southerlies are easing,
bypassing the piano.
His notes are fissures
better than friends.
...
Casting strings into seas.
A rising and falling
of endless outside.

A couple more of Thompson's poems are commemorations to recent deaths – 'Iroquois ANZAC' commemorates the men who lost their lives in a helicopter crash on ANZAC Day 2010, when,

Journalists ransacked the hills,
Seeking the money shot
and the pines wept.

Hone Tuwhare's life and work is also celebrated in 'Como la lluvia':

The
hands
are deft
delicate
pure incantations.
The hands are subtle, disciplined
Not easily distracted, his hands are just perfect.
The hands are surprisingly small
and nest well in palms
The hands are
refined
like
rain.

This poem has a couple of things in common with a few others in the collection. Firstly, it's written in the Fibonacci sequential form that Thompson favours. Other examples are 'Equilibrium' and 'Sustained Silent Reading'. And secondly, it's got a foreign title. This may marry well with the musical flavour, what with most musical notation traditionally being in Italian, but seeing as some poems are footnoted and dedicated, would explaining these title terms add to our understanding?

Paper planes, pigeons and a green parrot coat also make appearances in the book, all adding to an elusive collection. Perhaps the completion of this review lies in the overlapping edges of that Venn diagram?

***Birds of Clay* Aleksandra Lane (VUP, 2012) RRP \$30 ISBN 9780864737588**

Natasha Dennerstein

This is a sharp and skilfully crafted collection. There is a rich smorgasbord of form in here: a clever villanelle ('Knife'); a sparkling constellation of concrete poems ('Another Legendary Sky'); prose poems ('Dead Pixel'); list poems ('Unabridged'); found poems ('There Are No Ghosts in America'). Lane knows what she is doing, but does it with a light hand, making nothing feel mannered or contrived.

Time and Place are manipulated like the folds of a Japanese fan: sometimes it's open, sometimes it's closed. There is a flick and suddenly the reader is transported from Serbia to Wellington, from childhood to old age. And back again. The entire section *Birds of Clay* is set in a town in Serbia and a life is told in tiny prose-poem snippets like freeze-frame, jerky filmstock. A series of images/sense impressions flickers before the reader's eyes and the story is told.

There are absolute killer poetic phrases too numerous to mention. Some excellent ones are "...her fur gathers in the corners of the room", "...sun veneer", "...his mouth is now shut pitch black", "...the we are not in line line". Lane has some remarkable usages of words, which I suspect is a benefit of being multi-lingual. "He stamps on the plastic bottles to make them submit to recycling..." is a pearler. Particularly elegant is "... something yellow insists on smelling of Spring". I love the "submit" and the "insists", both excellent and unusual selections and usages of words.

The survival of the trauma of war is a persistent theme, as is the feeling of displacement of emigration. This is a satisfying and intelligent collection which invites several readings in order to penetrate its many levels.

***Just Then Harry Ricketts* (VUP, 2012) RRP \$25 ISBN 978 086473 822 6**

Mary Cresswell

But here tonight you're standing stage right
behind your barricade of drums. Shaved
head, black singlet, sticks raised, you might be

the sorcerer's latest apprentice.

The guitars kick in, the blue light spins,
your hands begin to fly.
(‘Phoenix Foundation’)

Do we need more introduction than this? The book, we are told, is Ricketts' ninth collection of poems. It takes us hither and yon in space and time, and it works as a commonplace book for a collection of thoughts too good to toss.

There are songs from forty years ago in Hong Kong, with a hefty whiff of barroom piano and cigarette smoke:
What we had we left for dead,
watching the green one turn to red,
rhinestone Sylvia and plastic Ted:
got the nearly two o'clock blues.
(‘Three Hong Kong songs’)

Some poems celebrate poetry classes, past and present, the people who taught them and the people who endured them. ‘The poetry slam’ is a limerick which mendaciously begins, ‘This poem's almost all about me’ and ends with the only possible last line to a beginning like that.

But life is not all beer and skittles. There are (more than) four encomiums and an epithalamium, the last the wonderfully considered ‘Quarantine Island’:

These charts you've packed are full of blanks,
bluffs and sounds you must rename.
World turns strange and yet the same.

Tempests, typhoons, the taniwha stored away
in the hold: all can be weathered.
Love is and is not the point.

‘Arty Bees: quality pre-loved books bought, sold and exchanged’ is a fantasia on a book's previous owner, awarded the “3rd Prize Attendance, 1957”: who was ‘Anne Falkner’? was she sprightly or sunny or spotty? did she even read the thing? The same gambit is used in the next poem (we're in Sydney now), delivered over a used copy of *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*.

‘Some flotsam’ proves that this is a commonplace book. Titles are given to thoughts ‘On being a pall-bearer’, ‘Overheard, Wellington Airport, 2009’ – and ‘A possible line by Ted Hughes’: “The vacuum-cleaner retches, coughs up a fur-ball”. These will all have their place in the poet's corpus ... some time ... somewhere. Now, even.

Good field notes on the Prado and the Getty art collections begin and wind up the book. The Prado is re-visited 35 years later:

Now what hits home is ‘Saint Barbara’
by Parmigianino,
a left profile. Her face shines with youth.

And in the Getty, a late 15th century Dutch crucifixion
could – this sounds mad, I know – be you.
Not the you I so fondly recall
in some bar off the Piazza ...

but the you I glimpsed one Christmas
Eve in St. Paul's Within the Walls,
swinging the censer, eyes wide shut.

A good collection of thoughts. And there's this advantage:
In this snapshot it's always spring.
She and I look up, smiling
at someone or something now forgotten,
lying androgenously idle on the lawn
beside faded sandstone walls, our faces
bright in April sunlight.
(‘In Camera’)

***The Same As Yes* Joan Fleming (VUP, 2011) RRP \$28 ISBN 9780864736987**

Tim Upperton

Anyone who's seen the movie *Donnie Darko* knows that ‘cellardoor’ was J.R.R. Tolkien's favourite word. A cellar door itself was a mundane disappointment; it was the word he loved. I think he would rather have done without the referent altogether, and let the word float free: cellardoor, cellardoor.

In Joan Fleming's first collection of prose poems, words often float in the same way, unmoored from things. “Blue's not my favourite colour,” one poem says, “but it might be my favourite word.” (The word “blue” recurs throughout the collection.) From the moment it begins, this book is making chattering sounds. In the table of contents, the titles of poems aren't distinct and separate on the page; they run together, forming lines, becoming a kind of poem themselves, fragments of talk, muttering to each other and to anyone with ears to listen. Everything talks, and from this constant hubbub, strange poems arise.

Sylvia Plath's poem, ‘Mirror’, is perhaps a model for what Joan Fleming is doing here. Plath's poem isn't interested in the question, “What if mirrors could talk?” It's interested in human beings, and makes us strange and unfamiliar by observing us from a non-human perspective. That's what these poems do. Take the brief, extraordinary poem, ‘Clothespeg Talks To The Cothesline’:

Underwear in my teeth. Socks in my teeth. The shoulder of a shirt in my teeth. Briefly, air—and then the bit of *you* in my teeth again, strung across the reach of sun and breeze like a prayer to the god of practical things. Every worn thing becomes a flag, waving, waving, and me, small mouth, its way of hanging on.

That italicized you is of course the clothesline, but it's also emphatically the reader, and it's like a poke in the chest. The poem has us in its teeth, and it isn't letting go. The final sentence is a kind of manifesto: “every worn thing” has something to say, and the poem itself is a kind of small mouth, allowing that something to be said.

These poems demonstrate that we don't need Martians to show us to ourselves. The everyday objects surrounding us can do the job, given voices to speak with. “The rug says lie down, the walls say stand up straighter, the curtains say hide.” So much of the language here is urgent, and slightly sinister, the poems crowded with animate, not necessarily benign presences. Joan Fleming's odd, singular vision is a wonderfully new and valuable addition to contemporary New Zealand poetry.

November deadline: 7 October

Members' Poems

Beautiful Rubbish

I love you, dear artefact
of a time & place straining for higher knowledge
& reasons.
your purpose is over –
a mere plastic wrapper, floating up from the Thames
& easily defined:
part of all the shit we create - yet also
complete.
we're the living product
of modern, sophisticated factories
& are also ripped open; used
twisted & crushed
squeezed dry
blown from the river.
little leaves dipped in fake gold
supposed to disappear
& we do -
back into the jackpot of volition.
let's cling to the belief
that there is vision in demolition, destruction
& decay.
let's cling to the hope that life has always rhymed
with mysterious - for good reason
& there are no more labels when the dots are all joined
by whatever it is - that pushes the button.
let that wind take us.

Jeremy Roberts

Spider

I pick up the broom
but
I hate it
when they drop
and scuttle...

Maureen Sudlow

Amputation

My Grandfather survived
the battle because of amputation.
He had a peg leg for work and a dress-leg
that always wore his best trousers.
It stood in the corner of the spare room
the top of the leg a nude plastic pink.
At lunch time he rested his peg leg
on the pedestal in the centre of the table.
If I put my bare foot up, I would feel
the cold, mud from the market garden
in my imagination the mud from France.

Maryrose Doull

Four shots of Warsaw

A drink to health,
seated with matchstick legs
some remembered pleasure
that hurts like a tango
He downs the tears
with the dinner menu
A toast to madness
and nostalgia

Charmaine Thomson

after the fall

I see you spider
skeltering from my slow step
not a peep – perfect companion
carers tend my fractured frame
callers bring in the bills
a radio randoms Bach & banality
horizons hide behind glass
fraudulent summer has failed to front
options have shrunk to this
after the fall
we weather
the bare bones of winter

Lynn Frances