

a fine line

The magazine of the New Zealand Poetry Society

Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

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Quotations of the Month

All writers are exiles wherever they live and their work is a lifelong journey towards the lost land.

—Janet Frame

Writing poetry is an unnatural act. It takes skill to make it seem natural.

—Elizabeth Bishop

In a poem, language remains itself yet is also made to feel different, even sacred, like a spell. How this happens is the mystery of each poem, and maybe its deepest meaning.

—Matthew Zapruder

Feature Article

Tanka Compared with Haiku

by Naomi Beth Wakan

Tanka is not a stretched haiku! —Michael Dylan Welch

It might be best to start with a definition of both haiku and tanka to see what we are dealing with here; and believe me there are almost as many definitions of the two as there are writers.

Here are my rough definitions: a **haiku** is a brief poem consisting of two or more everyday images juxtaposed in a way that not only defines the moment, but defines it so penetratingly that each image is augmented by the other. A **tanka** is a five-line poem that moves from image to image, idea to idea, feeling to feeling, yet the whole five lines flow together seamlessly to present a strong statement of peoples' place in the universe, even though the poem may be intensely personal.

Many descriptions of tanka could so easily be applied to haiku, and yet haiku and tanka are basically very different forms of poetry, for haiku is immediate and tanka is basically reflective. This is, I think, because of their original sources.

Haiku derived from the first three lines of renga, a poetry game that has been around for about 500 years. For renga, a group of poets sit around creating spontaneously linked lines of poetry. The first person offers three lines, the next two lines and the third three lines. The 3- and 2-line alternation continues until the end of the renga is reached. The first three lines was usually offered to the most distinguished poet present to start the poetry-writing session, and poets would often prepare these 'spontaneous' lines ahead, hoping to be asked. Usually these first lines would state when and where the meeting was taking place and also something that attracted the lead poet's attention at the moment of writing. As they were about the immediate present, what was happening at that moment, those first three lines were always written in the present tense. Eventually, the first three lines split off and became a poetry form in their own right, as haiku.

Tanka, five-line verse, on the other hand, came from uta (songs) and the ends of longer poems, called choka. They were actually a kind of summing up of what had gone before, a reflection, a gathering of thoughts on the subject covered. For this reason, tanka can be written in the past or present tense, and can be philosophical, meditative, critical... [and] can involve thoughts and emotions.

Haiku speak only of things sensed in the present; that is, they concern only sense objects — cherry blossom, mist, the smell of cooking, the touch of a baby's skin, mountains — and never directly contain feelings or ideas. Haiku is the poetry of nouns, strong nouns, nouns that may suggest and imply ideas and feelings but never express them overtly. It is as though haiku are expounding William Carlos Williams' outlook: 'No truth but in things.' Haiku concerns what is being seen, smelled, tasted, touched and heard and, until recently, these sense objects were confined to observations about nature. Tanka, on the other hand, are more the poetry of verbs, cover any subject, and are contemplative, offering ideas to be

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NZ Poetry Conference & Festival – Auckland 2017

Sir Paul Reeves Bldg, Mayoral Drive, Auckland City
10 – 12 November

connection celebration creativity collaboration community

After big successes in Hawke's Bay in 2013 and Wellington in 2015, the third NZ Poetry Conference is happening in Auckland this November. The aims are to celebrate NZ's poetry and its writers, initiate korero, offer workshops and reading opportunities and collaborate with the wider arts-loving community – all with a distinctive Auckland flavour. You'll hear and see a line-up of this country's acclaimed poets and poet laureates. You'll witness poetry that's happening now.

A variety of festival events, mainly in the evenings, is designed to complement the conference.

Core organising team:

Anita Arlov, Shane Hollands, Bronwen Hughes, Simone Kaho, Rachael Naomi Heimann.

Supporters include:

- NZ Society of Authors (PEN Inc) (Auckland branch)
- The NZ Poetry Society
- AUT Auckland University of Technology

ENROLMENTS OPEN NOW

To register, please email akpoetryconf2017@gmail.com or write to the address below, including your name, address and phone number.

You will be emailed an invoice with payment details, and receive regular email updates.

Enrolments:

NZ Society of Authors (PEN Inc) and/or NZ Poetry Society members*:

Earlybird to 30 Sept: \$160.00

Non-members Earlybird to 30 Sept: \$175.00.

Places will be limited

Address for postal enrolments:

Auckland Poetry Conference and Festival 2017

PO Box 33-353

Takapuna

Auckland 0740

Please direct all inquiries to: akpoetryconf2017@gmail.com

More updates soon!

Facebook link:

[https://www.facebook.com/events/299460997085195/
conference@poetrysociety.org.nz](https://www.facebook.com/events/299460997085195/conference@poetrysociety.org.nz)

Ko toku ko toku ohooho, ko toku reo, ko toku mapihi maurea, ko toku reo toku whakakaimarihi

My language is my awakening.

My language is the window to my soul.

considered, such as the meaning of reality and the human experience from birth to death. Things are spoken of directly in tanka, and their significance in the ways of the world is commented on.

Haiku, because it is only concerned with sense-objects, makes no moral statement; no judgement. It speaks of things as they are. It is objective. Tanka, on the other hand, because it is a consideration of things, can speak of 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'evil', and 'good'. Tanka, being subjective, tend to be reflective and make moral statements.

empty cabin
the beached canoe
fills with leaves

DeVar Dahl

in the morning fog we slip our
oars and drift between loon
calls all that's left of this world
the warmth of our bodies

Christopher Herold

Both this haiku and this tanka are set in cottage country. The haiku tells only of images — an empty cabin, a canoe filled with leaves. Yet, on reflection, this haiku speaks so clearly to us of the impermanence of things using just those images. The tanka also has strong sense images — the drifting boat, the loons' call, but it allows itself a comment that directs our thoughts to the high value of human contact in a cold environment.

Haiku uses nature as a hidden metaphor for the ways of mankind, tanka tells directly of human beings and their goings-on. If one subject predominates in tanka, it is human love, mostly unrequited. Of course haiku can be occasionally about humans, and tanka occasionally about nature, but the basic distinction, at least in traditional-style writing, is that haiku is concerned with the natural world and tanka dwells on the human condition.

removal van pulls away
already cold
fills the room

Jeffry Harpeng

her plane disappears
into starlight... and
somewhere
in her luggage
my love poem

Michael Dylan Welch

Both this haiku and this tanka speak of a love departing, yet the haiku doesn't mention the loved one at all, only by implication can we guess whether the departure is temporary, or permanent. In the tanka, we see more clearly the lover sending a portion of his love with her. In the haiku, also, it feels as if the lover has lost some of himself, involuntarily, in the moving van.

As to the actual images written about, a haiku usually has two that are juxtaposed to imply a contrast, a similarity, an association that allows the reader to extrapolate the feelings and thoughts that resonate from the given objects. Tanka can have as many as five images, one per line, or can be one long image flowing through the five lines. In traditional haiku-writing, and also in those written in English, the most ordinary, everyday simple words are used to describe what is being sensed. Traditional Japanese tanka used more of the symbolically-powered words that, because of Japan's homogenous society, would immediately be understood by the cultured reader and, even written in English, tend to have a more complex vocabulary than those of haiku.

Haiku, when still attached as the first lines of renga, had to be immediate, for in renga-writing, poets were waiting to pick up the lines created and add their own. There was no time for simile or metaphor. One couldn't pause to consider how this is like that, for one was telling how this is like this, its 'isness' as it were.

Tanka could be produced more slowly because there was a lot to be considered, e.g. how to word a love letter so as to entrance the recipient, how to write to a famous monk so as to reflect your respect for him, as well as your own insights.

Here are a haiku and a tanka that both speak of the unsatisfactoriness of human relations — as defined by the family.

family visit he tries to fix what's
wrong
with the answering machine

Winona Baker

family album decades of smiling
faces chart generations – not
one of us brave enough
to photograph the tears

Beverley George

Both haiku and tanka are concerned with communication within families, but only the tanka has room to spell it out explicitly. Yet both are equally strong in their power of conveying the message.

In English, haiku are usually written in three lines of somewhere around 12 syllables. Tanka are usually written in five lines of roughly 21 syllables. Whether you stick to the traditional Japanese 5-7-5 syllables for haiku, or the 5-7-5-7-7 for tanka (and there is little reason to do this, since Japanese sound syllables have no relationship to the English syllable), or use the more frequently seen two beats / three beats / two beats for haiku, and two beats / three beats / three beats / three beats / three beats for tanka, there is no doubt that tanka allows for a lot more information to be included.

Although the haiku depends on an intense personal sensing of the moment, the pronoun 'I' rarely appears, whereas the tanka, also a personal statement in which one can hear the writer's voice in the lines, often uses 'I'. In a

good haiku, the subject and object are fused, the archer, arrow and target become one, as it were, and the 'I' disappears into the moment. In tanka, the writer is separated from their subject, pulls back from it, and can discuss it in an objective manner, giving opinions, expressing feelings, making moral judgements, waxing philosophical. The tanka writer and the subject matter are two different entities. There is no room for this separation in the haiku.

it's happened my mother doesn't
know me
autumn rain

Winona Baker

"mum don't you recognize
my voice any more?"
I blame the connection
but the truth is worse

Amelia Fielden

The exact same subject, yet the haiku implies the degree of sadness by the words 'autumn rain', whereas the tanka can spell out that the writer fears that 'the truth is worse.'

bumper cars
all facing the same way
summer's end
end of summer
a bikini-top pinned to the
notice-board
all that's left of the hoards
filling the park a week ago

Dan McCullough

Naomi Beth Wakan

• *This is an abbreviated chapter from the Way of Tanka by Naomi Beth Wakan, now available from Shanti Arts and as an e-book.*

Letter to the Editor

Do Poems Deserve Titles?

In a May 2017 article of *a fine line*, Annie Neugebauer wrote commonsense advice about titling poems ("What a Title Should Do", *et seq.*). But she didn't address whether poems needed titles, or even should be permitted them.

Plastic and visual artworks are often detracted from by hanging 'titles' on them. Often these are simply pretentious or diversionary. Almost always, they distract or detract. What precisely *does* calling Rodin's classic "The Kiss" do, except provide a handle for jokes and dinner-table semaphore?

Many New Zealanders feel public service honorifics are misplaced: those who deserve them don't need/want

them, those that receive them often have already been more than adequately rewarded in cash and kudos.

Poem titles should be like that. If the poem is worth remembering, referring to, or indexing as a 'keep', why then, just do what most anthologies do: cite by its first line. This obviates the angst over appositeness or spoilers or pretentiousness.

—Bevan Greenslade, Wellington

From the Editor



Ivy Alvarez

How the seasons flicker past like calendar pages, heralding some significant changes in *a fine line*, including the addition of a member to the editorial team. **Jessie Puru**, our new intern, now joins Anna Hudson and me. Not only is Jessie making a worthwhile contribution to the team, she is also already garnering kudos for her own writing, including a shortlisting nod from the 2017 NZ National Flash Fiction Day contest. Welcome, Jessie!

Recent helpful comments on the look and accessibility of *a fine line* has set in motion a future revamp, catering for the magazine's changing readership. As we investigate options, do have your say in a quick three-question **survey**. How would you like to engage with *a fine line*?

I am keen to highlight members' work, for those with a new poetry collection, pamphlet or chapbook, either released in 2016 or launching this year. Email me with your name, book title, publisher, month/year of its release, cover image (optional) and a quick description.

Preparations for the NZ Poetry Conference and Festival (10-12 November, Auckland) are in full swing. Do make a note in your calendar, and send an email to register: akpoetryconf2017@gmail.com

Another date for your calendar is **10 October 2017**, when it's time to send in your poetry-related articles, letters, reviews and, from our members, up to four poems (40 lines max) to **editor@poetrysociety.org.nz**

The theme is ANIMAL.

Be sure to check in on our new NZPS Instagram competition, too. Follow us: @NZPoetrySociety

For this edition, discover the differences between tanka and haiku (Naomi Beth Wakan), get a peek behind-the-scenes into letterpress printing and poetry (Sydney Shep), and share in a touching meditation on literary legacy (Joanna Preston). It is also my distinct pleasure to highlight our Members' Poems, with works that explore the theme of TRANSFORMATION in ways both wondrous and strange.

Finally, I am delighted to present to you our August Featured Poet Liz Breslin, whose poems contemplate the precision and imprecision of life, as selected from her newly-published collection *Alzheimer's and a Spoon* (Otago University Press).

Happy reading!

» NZPS's Annual General Meeting details are on page 20 of this magazine.

About Our Contributors

Allan Armstrong: Born 1942. Married Shona in 1976. Developed NZs leading inbound tour company for disabled tourists, which led to becoming more aware of the dangers our disabled community faces in emergency situations. Loves Banjo Patterson and Robert Service.

Barbara Bailey is an Auckland writer and painter. Her writing and painting are intrinsically linked; they share expressive elements that connect human beings' perceptions, emotions and experiences. Barbara has exhibited paintings throughout New Zealand and overseas. She has published poems, articles, and product descriptions.

Liz Breslin's first collection is *Alzheimer's and a Spoon*, published by OUP. She also writes plays and a fortnightly column for the *Otago Daily Times*. Her website is www.lizbreslin.com

Anne Curran is a Hamiltonian who loves to write poetry when time and inspiration allows. She is grateful for the mentoring of editors, and for the encouragement of family and friends.

Fiona Farrell is an award-winning writer of poetry and prose. She is currently based in Dunedin.

Bevan Greenslade lives in Wellington.

Paula Harris is a Palmerston North-based poet. She is on a continuing search for the purpose of life: so far she's pretty sure chocolate is involved.

KV Martins lives in Kerikeri and writes poetry, flash fiction and short stories. She likes to take photos using black and white film, and she often uses these as inspiration.

Joanna Preston is a Tasmanaut poet, editor and freelance creative writing tutor, living in semi-rural Canterbury with a flock of chooks, an overgrown garden, and a Very Understanding Husband.

Jeremy Roberts is a Napier resident, who is busily involved in Hawke's Bay Poetry events. The author of the poetry collection *Cards on the Table* (Interactive Press), he has also made poetry recordings with musicians.

Sydney Shep is Reader in Book History, The Printer, Wai-te-ata Press, Victoria University of Wellington. Academic research and teaching are counterpoised by letterpress commissions and explorations into new digital-analogue hybrids.

Mercedes Webb-Pullman: IIML Victoria MA in Creative Writing 2011. Work published worldwide, in *Turbine, 4th Floor, Swamp, Scum, Reconfigurations, Otoliths*, and *Main Street Rag*, and in her books.

In September, **Naomi Beth Wakan** will be offering an online workshop introducing haiku and tanka. Details at www.shantiarts.co/workshops/#wakan_poetry

Visit www.naomiwakan.com

Featured Poet Liz Breslin

What they didn't teach me at school

how to pick the real from the false chanterelles
the feeding of the many with the cut-price fish
the ways to make brisket soft as chocolate whip
the balancing of a business, a husband, kids

*they knew how to live those wartime gals
they knew how easy it is to die*

genuflection, supplication, the pitfalls of pride
the sidesaddle bikestraddle move in a dress
the art of fitting the shopping in the front basket
and riding home with immaculate hair

*they knew how to live those wartime gals
they knew how easy it is to die*

how to keep crocheted tablecloths folded in drawers
proper manners in the proper place
a lockbox for keyed-up memories
and the best china saved for best

Skype

because you
won't switch on the webcam, i
can't see you
sitting at the dining room table as we speak, but i

can picture
your hands around your cup of tea.
you, framed by the pictures
higgledy on the pride wall, tears

in your voicecovered news. the icon
of the bluebell woods we walked
in last time i was what you call, and i can't,
home, is the wallpaper

to the halting, screened
conversation that peters, pixelstutters. you call
out my name but you're gone and the white screen
asks *how do you rate the quality of your call?*

Invalid truths

"We don't lie to people, we don't do that. We just tell invalid truths." —Sergio Roma, *Get Him to the Greek*

It's just for a tiny little while
Oh, the car's being fixed, you can't drive today
No, the unit doesn't cost a lot at all
You're going to be OK

He'll be back soon, he's off for a fish
Your mum? She'll be along presently
Sure, you can pack your bags to leave
You're going to be OK

Come on, another little sip
It's only going to hurt a bit
You're going to be OK
You know you're going
to be OK

Alzheimer's and a spoon

Where are they off to, these words
I am losing? The glass in
the frame I can see through, the sticks
with the cotton wool rolled

on both sides.

Maybe I have reached peak word
and will shed them now like those
sliding what-are-those sliding

things that slip their skin.

Maybe it is finally
that year in that book by that guy
and the dictionary will shrink

until it is but booh bah
but what is it called when there
are lots in a row of sonic
baby wails.

They are escaping, the words,
fed to other minds, precise mush
off the end of a metal
round thing with a handle

right into your smile hole. And out
come the words that were mine
and into the choo choo hole
in the hill and others' smile

holes speak for me. Snatch
the floating airfilled things.
Hold my stammering hand.
I know. I know.

Feature Articles



Editing Helen Bascand

by Joanna Preston

One day in November 2009, Helen Bascand, my friend and writing partner of over a decade, asked me what seemed like a casual question. Would I be her literary executor?

We'd just finished working together on her heartbreaking third collection *Nautilus*, which chronicled the last years of her husband's life and the aftermath of his death. Dealing with the affairs of someone deceased was very much on her mind, and the question of what would become of her writing after her death had started to concern her. Her family, although supportive, weren't poets. They wouldn't be able to tell which poems were ready to be seen by the outside world, and which were just drafts, or private jokes, or something she had no desire to be judged on later. So, would I take the job on? I said yes, of course, still thinking it was a casual request.

At which point, Helen decided we would make a detour on the way to our fortnightly coffee-and-critique session, to visit her son, Bruce. And produced a typed document outlining her wishes, complete with legal(-ish) terminology. With a place for each of our three signatures. In triplicate.

So, maybe not so casual then.

We only know our mothers
from the day of our
importance –
then
the man stands, shakes us
with her obituary.

("Routes")

Helen died on 27th April 2015, aged 86.

It's a few months after her funeral, on a miserable winter's day, and I'm sitting opposite Bruce and his wife,

Jane. I'm still in shock over her death. Outside, my car is full — boot, back seat and even passenger seat — of banana boxes, containing Helen's poem files and notes. And it's all taking place in the same café — at the same table even — that Helen and I used to come to.

The three of us are discussing plans for bringing together her poems and editing them into a posthumous collection. It's surreal. I keep expecting Helen to join us. They ask how long it will take. I say six months, thinking that six months will be plenty of time.

It takes years to understand how thought
reached out, pulled down the blind,
folded the sheets, stacked them with lavender
in some spare cupboard.

You are not the only bereft, they say.

(“Loss”)

Inside the boxes, her poems were arranged by year of composition. Some were still in-progress, accompanied by sheaves of drafts with notes in her increasingly spidery handwriting. A few with NOT FOR PUBLICATION! marked on them. (I will honour her wishes here, albeit regretfully.) Most are pieces that I've seen before — poems Helen brought to the critique group we both attended, or that she and I had coursed through together. There are her signature items — birds, the colour blue, flight, dancing. But also the themes that were developing later — a strong female anger, a political awareness, a desire to challenge the myths and rules that she had been brought up observing unquestioningly. She was writing without fear — she had nothing to prove to anyone, so she didn't censor herself any more. Didn't worry about being “seemly”, or about what someone else might think. She had a new collection in sight, and was fired up, joyful at the prospect.

Sky wraps itself in the wing-span of storm –
brilliance. And the cold whirr of myth turns her hot.
Smell of grass and mute desire, trap her under
rough wings, grasping for the soft down of his belly.
Even a Sun turns aside.

The artist knows the hard ground they lie on: how
a god wraps lust in beautiful places, how trees bend,
flowers lend fragrance. And how she will fool herself,
whisper phrases for him – he will peck
the words from her throat.
Who can deny a god?

(“The artist knows—”)

There's a line from Carolyn Forché which keeps
coming up as I work — ‘Grandma, come back, I forgot, /
How much lard for these rolls?’ (“The Morning Baking”)

When I come to something in one of the poems that

doesn't seem to fit, that doesn't quite make sense, I've
caught myself asking the banana boxes the questions I
can't ask her any more — Helen, what were you trying to
get this bit to do? Did you mean to repeat this word?
Which of these layouts did you decide to go with? Do you
need that stanza? Aren't these two really the same poem?
That's a cliché, you need a better image, so ...?

We have broken things,
in particular, this sky –

not content with steeples, thrust
our dwellings higher, raised a maze
of fences, stolen the backyards.

We are the generation collecting
a second family car.

So we leave you the highways.
You will get there faster, miss
the byways, the shepherd
on his four-wheeler, shifting mobs, the farmer,
his lumbering cows ambling by – you'd smell
the sweet heat of their hide.

Or will you picnic by a river, idly
pick a stone to read its rough
smooth message?

Please God, we leave you beaches.

(“To you who follow”)

I know that part of the reason Helen asked me to take on
this role — and something I really wish we'd discussed,
properly, with notes being taken and guidelines drawn up
— was to protect her legacy. To do the work of editing,
not just assembling. To do her justice. It would be so
much easier if I thought I could get away with just typing
them up and correcting the spelling. But anyone could
have done that. She expected more.

It's a matter of ethics. As a poet, how much tinkering
would I be ok with? If, like Bilbo Baggins, I was declared
dead, and returned to discover another poet
metaphorically making off with my silverware, at which
point would I start laying about me with a sword?

The lagoon runs fast. Our son
tosses jonquils on the grey water
under the low grey sky – and I
cup my hands around this other grey
they say is you – and throw
as high as a man might leap.
Some of you falls, and some of you flies,

some of you sails

with yellow jonquils.

(“Laughter”)

So here I am, rather more than six months on, with pen in hand and coffee cooling beside me, and Helen’s poems spread across my desk. It’s still disturbing, to be editing the work of someone who isn’t there to be consulted. At each stage of the process, I have to keep asking myself the same question — is this Helen, or me? Is this change something she would have made gladly, or grudging-but-still-willingly, or something she would likely have rejected?

Short of finding a reliable conduit to the afterlife, the best I can do is keep working in good faith, and checking that I haven’t overstepped. I can still hear Helen’s voice in my head as I read her poems. As long as that keeps going, I reckon I’ll be on the right side of the ledger.

If not, I wouldn’t be surprised if she finds a way to let me know.

The bird’s poem

You asked me to write it down
and so I did,
set it to the bare page.

It circles, like the screeching bird that just now
has scribbled on an empty sky.

Today’s bird, the one outside my window,
has forgotten the secret of that first skill
against the ravages of raptors –

flutter,
leap, lift
lie on the wind

but it remembers how survival begins
on the edge of a nest;
how space lies on the margins
of existence.

This bird,
the one writing the poem
on the blue page outside my window.

• *Helen Bascand’s final collection, Time to sing before the dark, will be published in late 2017/early 2018. Probably.*

Inhabiting Poetic Space: letterpress printing and creative practice

by Sydney Shep, *The Printer, Wai-te-ata Press*

Most of the time when we talk about contemporary letterpress printing, we imagine beautifully designed, lovingly produced, handmade books, posters, or ephemera. Text is typeset by hand with metal or wood types, the compositor inhabiting the mind, if not the inner eye of the writer, visualising words in space, all set in reverse. Once proofed in galley trays and assembled into chases, these typographic interpretations are hand-printed using historic platen, treadle platen, or cylinder presses. This intensive process creates a print quality unlike any other. Hand-inked relief letterforms are transferred to luscious, full-bodied, dampened paper through pressure, creating that distinctive deep emboss that ripples when you stroke a page, exemplifying what we often call the kiss or bite of the type: that unique multi-dimensional fingerprint of a centuries-old technology. Handbound, often with inventive binding structures, the world of the book becomes a world in itself, honouring the content through an interactive reading experience.

Wai-te-ata Press at Victoria University of Wellington has a 55-year history of producing fine, limited, letterpress editions that capture this tangible, tactile experience. Our back catalogue boasts some of the biggest names in New Zealand writing, including Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, Bill Manhire, Vincent O’Sullivan, Roma Potiki, Greg O’Brien, Jenny Bornholdt, Miria George, Kevin Ireland, and Peter Bland. More recently, we have explored the visual and verbal delights of paper engineering and creative translations in: *The Colour of Water; 7:34; The World in Box*; and in *WCP: the Wai-te-ata Companion to Poetry*. Our latest experiments embody the world of what we call ‘the digital handmade’, combining old and new technologies to produce rich and strange hybrids that challenge, extend, and transform our notions of making and consuming the written word.

So what is it about letterpress printing that attracts writers, artists, and readers? Canadian poet, translator, and typographer, Robert Bringhurst, captures it well: ‘In a badly designed book, the letters mill and stand like



starving horses in a field. In a book designed by rote, they sit like stale bread and mutton on the page. In a well-made book, where designer, compositor and printer have all done their jobs, no matter how many thousands of lines and pages, the letters are alive. They dance in their seats. Sometimes they rise and dance in the margins and aisles.¹

How do we want our poems to look on the page, and does it make a difference to what we want to communicate? Most writers are strongly committed to the look and feel of their work, and curate their writing as carefully as they curate their voice in public readings. Finding a publisher who is in sympathy with your wishes is frequently a challenge, hence many poets self-publish. Indeed, many turn to letterpress printing as a way of controlling the entire creative process. But when you think of it, how close do we really get to the words we make? As creators, we inhabit our wordscapes intellectually and emotionally; do we also inhabit them typographically? For example, do we rely on the default font on our computer? Maybe Calibri, if we like sans serif and want to appear modern; or maybe Cambria, since the older serif styles give weight, authority and timeliness to our work. Do we accept the default layouts in Word or strive to attain the house style of, say, an Oxford Book of Verse? Why not try flush right rather than flush left? Does the voice on the page sound differently because it visually disrupts our expectations, giving choric point to a word, a phrase, or a stanza?

Certainly, there are conventions of display which, over time, have been accepted as the norm; often these have arisen as a branding strategy and economic necessity by publishers. Such visual rhetorics shape the reading experience yet they frequently run counter to the expressive potential of the writing. The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Dadaists and Futurists endeavoured to break the tyranny of letterpress's horizontal and vertical grids, and created amazingly fluid, sinuous, animated forms. And although they were by no means the first to render language as shape and pattern, concrete poets from the 1950s literally wanted to mirror the expressive content in the layout of the type. In fact, if we think of the book itself as a performative object, then each double-page spread — that visual unit of the book — becomes a kind of hand-held theatre with all the setting,

lighting, tone, character, costume, and movement of an action-packed drama.

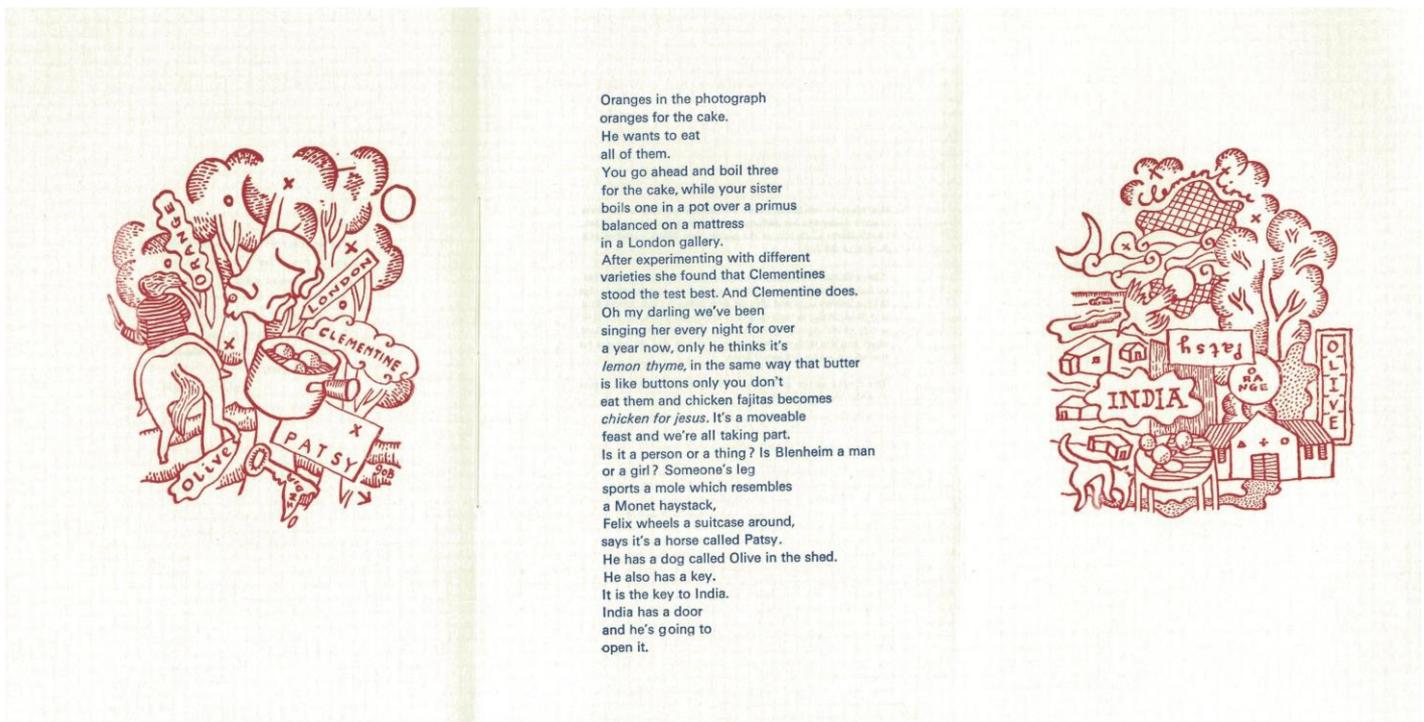
Whether your words inhabit paper-based or online spaces, giving some thought to how your writing appears on the page or screen as you compose with pen and ink, typewriter, or computer is a stimulating opportunity to extend your visual, verbal, and aural imagination. Denis Glover famously set some of his poetry 'at case'; that is, in front of a single point size of a single metal font arranged in the letterpress typecase, with its various compartments of individual letterforms, both upper and lower case.

For me, designing, typesetting, printing and binding the poem "An Tur Cailte / The Lost Tower" by Scottish writer Aonghas MacNeacail was an exercise in getting inside the head of the poet. Every decision, from selecting the font to spacing the letters and words, from laying out the type to printing in two colours, and from selecting the cover paper to binding the completed work by hand, was predicated by a deep understanding of the linguistic tyranny of a colonised language (English) usurping the cultural and typographic identity of the mother tongue (Scots Gaelic).

Opening a conversation with a letterpress printer is an engaging experience. Even better, knock on a letterpress printer's door, come in and set some type — there is nothing like it. Should you be in Wellington on National Poetry Day (25 August), book a spot, drop by Wai-te-ata Press and experience the world of letterpress for yourself. Check out our **Finding Poetry on the Page** workshops at www.victoria.ac.nz/wtappress/about/events/finding-poetry-on-the-page-workshop-1 or email us wtappress@vuw.ac.nz

See you very soon!

¹ Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*. Second edition. Vancouver : Hartley & Marks, 1996, p.19.



Reviews



Jerusalem Sonnets, Love, Wellington Zoo.
David Beach. (Wellington: VUP, 2015).
ISBN 9781776560424. RRP: \$25. Paperback.
64pp.

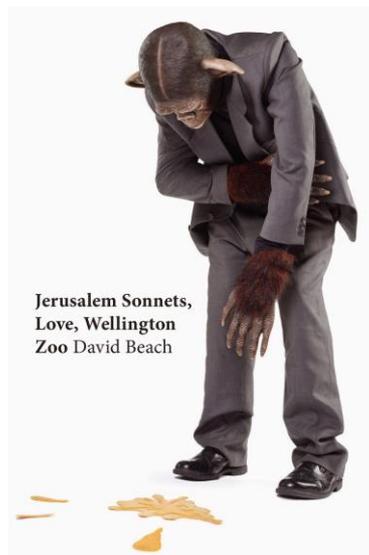
Reviewed by Barbara Bailey

David Beach was born in England in 1959 to New Zealand parents. His parents returned to New Zealand with David when he was five years old. In Wellington, he attended Onslow College and Victoria University.

From 1986 to March 2002, Beach lived in Sydney, where his poems were widely published.

He returned to New Zealand in 2002, during which time he published poems in *The Listener*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *JAAM* and *Takahē*.

Beach is the author of *Scenery and Agriculture* (2012), *The End of Atlantic City* (2008) and *Abandoned Novel* (2006). *Abandoned Novel* is his first book of poems, for which he won the biennial Prize in Modern Letters (2008).



Jerusalem Sonnets, Love, Wellington Zoo is a collection of 50 poems, each 14 lines long and all poems numbered.

These works are not sonnets-as-we-know-them. They have the right number of lines, three themes that vaguely explore universal elements in human life, but have no iambic pentameter, organised stanzas, set rhyme scheme, volta or poetic devices.

At school, I learned to love Shakespeare's Sonnet 18: 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate.' John Donne's "Death be not proud" caused homework headaches but generated a love of imagery and language: 'Death be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful...'

Unlike these, Beach's sonnets do not stir me. There are no three-stanza rhythms or rhyming couplets, and they do not flow. The fourteen unrhymed lines of his poems do not appear to rely on the form for effect.

His book jacket blurb refers to his approach as 'unsoulful'. These poems are matter-of-fact, flat and, for me, no spirits are lifted. Nor is one's heart filled with joy when reading this collection. Beach's poems mould observational phrases into a non-speculative sonnet form.

There is, however, humour tucked in among it all, as in 'The Lord doesn't expect lice-infected beard / to be put up with...' These first lines of "Jerusalem Sonnets 2" (p.8)

makes me smile and the rabbiting-on that follows evokes memories of being well-and-truly told off at school.

The Lord doesn't expect lice-infected beards to be put up with, and a good start is to shave off the beard. But Baxter not even considering losing the beard is the least of self-satire. One might point to the solitary, early morning devotions – which he tells the whole world about. This boastful piety is precisely the failing of the Pharisees and the bible's phrase for them – 'white sepulchres' – can be felt behind Baxter's grooming issue as, right at the work's commencement, he sabotages himself, puts the focus on the faults he displays rather than those he confesses.

Beach's four "Jerusalem Sonnets" are a reflection on James K. Baxter's *Jerusalem Sonnets*. In "Jerusalem Sonnets 2" (p.8), Baxter is criticised for his hygiene and his religious beliefs.

By extension, Beach's general reflections in his "Love Sonnets" are analytical — not passionate or celebratory. In his poem "Love 1" (p.11), he asks, 'is there such a thing as true love?' Yet Beach often writes affectionately about the zoo's inhabitants. In "Wellington Zoo 4" (p.18), regarding a white faced gibbon he writes, 'His days of hurling himself through the / jungle, if he had ever had them, were / gone...'

Fun scenarios weave into Beach's sonnets about the zoo creatures. In "Wellington Zoo 45", a *Happy Feet* fantasy is portrayed as follows:

The tracking device just fell off (of course it did), and Happy Feet made it back to his colony. There were problems though – he had decided he was back from the dead, which led to the other penguins mocking him for being unsure if he'd gone to hell (the heat) or heaven (the fish at the zoo). Eventually, in a theological funk, he headed South Pole-wards, this time not to return. But he left a mark on penguin culture, and ever after, as the birds stood nesting amidst the Antarctic blast, the call liable to go out – 'Hey, tell them to send some of those fish up here'.

The *Wellington Zoo* collection of poems has a lighter, though still flat narrative. In them, Beach describes animal habitats, and feeding-times feature frequently. Of otters, Beach writes

Asian small-clawed

otters had been given an enclosure
directly through the entrance: and one of
the reliably inquisitive creatures was
'at work', motionless on a branch above
a pool,

Most zoo inhabitants get a mention in these poems:
the cotton-topped tamarin, scratched up some
dust near the wire,

A spider monkey, nibbling on grass near
the channel which formed Monkey Island,

the shock of the huge head – too huge,
surely even to be a lion's, and still as
stone – looking out from its den roof.

The tiger didn't need a cage in order
to pace, the gate to its enclosure enough
to set off the to and fro:

In the "Wellington Zoo" poems, the menagerie is
closely observed, with scenes clearly drawn. Another
example is "Wellington Zoo 39" (p.53):

The ostrich, on the hunt for bugs, appeared
out to earn the epithet 'the poor
zoo's elephant', its neck a worthy
alternative marvel to the trunk, such
strength and flexibility shown as the
no-nonsense killer delivered rapid
action, bunker-busting pecks, the slaughter
upon the bug population so grievous
that for an adequate comparison one
might feel drawn to whales and their plankton
eating, even while coming to the view
that with the ground at the birds' feet a
perpetual smorgasbord the economic
case for ostriches was unassailable.

Chimpanzees appear more than other animals in this
collection, suggesting that humans are kin to them and
dwell in otherworldly cages. This idea finds echoes on the
book's cover, with its image of Ronnie van Hout's *Sick
Chimp* (2002), the monkey character alluding to the
evolution theory.

Give this collection a go. It is different and one often
finds surprises, with poems that do generate chuckles.

Some Things to Place in a Coffin.

Bill Manhire (Wellington: Victoria
University Press, 2017).

ISBN: 9781776561056. RRP: \$25. Paperback. 95 pages.

Reviewed by Jeremy Roberts

When I read Bill Manhire, I often think of the old (now
defunct) idea of a poet being possessed by a kind of
madness or fever, using the famous 'disarrangement of
the senses' (yes – Rimbaud probably does have a lot to
answer for) to create original work. This is because
Manhire is so wonderfully, creatively 'cuckoo'. For the
reader, the interior monologue runs: Where did *that* idea
come from? How did he get from *that* line to this one?

Ian Wedde once described Manhire's method as
'administering a series of mild shocks to the imagination'.
This method is alive and well in *Some Things to Place in
a Coffin*. Manhire remains quite a prankster, too. You can
trust Manhire to do the unexpected.

The very first section of poems is titled *How Memory
Works*, and includes the following annotation:

Come over here

we say to the days that disappear

No, over here

Straight away, the reader is in Manhire's stock-standard
universe of unease. In the personification poem
"Waiting", America and China wait for outcomes, as time
flicks by. The names immediately suggest rivalry,
industry, imperialism, war. Ultimately, 'smoke rises
slowly into the air. It is tired of waiting'. An enemy
comes 'limping out of a place that will not heal' in "The
Enemy". "Poem in an Orchard" speaks of 'this deep-in-
the-earth despair'. In "Impersonating Mao", unhappy
Chen Yan dwells on the past, 'stares at invisible things'.

Manhire tackles "The Beautiful World", with 14 stand-
alone, past-tense scenarios & aphorisms. There is
provocation straight away, in #1:

You cannot reach the beautiful world

It is everywhere & nowhere

It thinks that we do not know, but we do

Beauty is far more elusive than is believed and, usually,
we 'cannot reach it'. Often, it is not in the form we
expect. A factory worker tells us in #6:

The metal made an angry sound

each time you looked at it

But you had to look at it

In #10, there is a startling, original idea of 'cold' coming
out of the earth, affecting people terribly, and it is even 'in
the wings of angels'. In #14, two lines out of three are
written, but crossed out.

Known unto God is a section of poems commissioned
for the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. I don't
imagine too many Kiwi poets would dare to use humour,
or employ such a light (but humane) touch, when

referencing the horrors of war while honouring the dead, so serious are we now about how we pay tribute to the deceased of WW1. Manhire pulls it off.

The dead speak in these little poems – telling us what happened in battle, what life was like before the war, what ‘life’ is like now. One voice says:

My last letter home
turned out entirely pointless.
I wrote whizz-bang
a dozen times
to try and say the noises

The last thing heard by another ‘was all the guns going, you know, blankety-blankety-blank’. One soldier tells us:

(They) brought me home –
well, all of the visible bits of me.
Now people arrive at dawn and sing
And I have a new word: skateboarding

...referring to the youth of today making (peace-time) use of concrete at the local memorial. Manhire brings the dead back to life, by giving them opinions and personality, thereby avoiding limitations of the bleak ‘doomed soul’ approach. And so, they are with us — alive in memoriam. This is the genius of Manhire, let loose.

The middle section of the book has a further collection of meat-and-potatoes Manhire and, in every example, there is reason to pause, re-read, ponder, chuckle, relate to one’s own experience.

In “What Will Last”, Manhire addresses an interesting question, which seems more prescient the further we get away from the twentieth century. There’s an implied joke too, since Manhire currently seems assured of a place in future minds. He writes, ‘I don’t think the things we think will last will last, do you?’

The title poem of the book is written for his close friend Ralph Hotere. Significantly, there are no Māori words, apart from the name of a dog. The ‘things’ are mostly objects, with associations to Hotere, but there are also mannerisms – ‘A slowness. A suddenness. A concentrating grunt’.

In all these poems, what Baxter once referred to as a ‘landslide in the brain’ is consistently present. Sleep is ‘made of asterisks and cattle’. Then a rare and intriguing simile: ‘poetry falls from the crucifixion like a crumb’.

The last section of the book is called *Falseweed* — partly a word-play world set among a natural environment of fields, trees, and water, involving characters called *leafcandle*, *Wintertwig*, *anchorwhite*. There are journeys and departures, and many simple emotions. The opening lines are notable: ‘Poor Tanglebell, trying so hard to ring’. There are also sections that read like clear human memory, for example: ‘I saw how breeze in the chaingrass made the small chains sing’. Another line tells us: ‘When

I was a child I thought as a child’. There are some very delicate lines, too: ‘oh pencilheart /oh smudge of lead’. You are invited to make of *Falseweed* what you will.

Many might think of Manhire as the epitome of academic poetry in this country but, ironically, he consistently uses remarkably plain, uncomplicated language — mostly devoid of metaphor, simile, and adjectives, to achieve his goals. There are sentences in fact, that you might hear in everyday life, such as: ‘In her dream she lived in a high apartment’, ‘The schoolbus is driving through the night’, and ‘The day is pleasant’. The trick — the gift he possesses — to suddenly ‘pull the floor away’ from the reader, is there on every page.

Some Things to Place in a Coffin is a richly rewarding book. It is funny, too, as the blurb says — reminding me at times of quirky David Lynch. Manhire has sent up yet another brilliant flare over the literary landscape of the ‘Dark, Shaky Isles’.

For Someone I Love – A Collection of Writing by Arapera Blank. Arapera Blank.

(Auckland: Anton Blank Ltd, 2015). ISBN 978-0-473-29918-7. RRP: \$40. Hardback. 158 pages.

Reviewed by Anne Curran



The book leads in with the poetry of Arapera Blank and, interspersed between poems, the eye-catching photographs taken by her Swiss immigrant husband Pius Blank. Her poetry is an entrancing collection of words and art that captivates me from start to finish with its craft, emotive depths, and topic choice. I have to agree with the sentiment contained in a quotation from the

Foreword: ‘Looking at the writing and the pictures, there’s a romance and exuberance to the whole package; it’s very optimistic and joyful’ (p.8). The book cover itself showcases a magnificent photo of the couple.

The poetry begins by celebrating her love for her husband, Pius. One of these poems, “For Pius”, weaves together strands of love, landscape, and spirituality to capture, quite simply, the blessedness of love in anyone’s life. The final verse in her poem (my favourite verse) makes clear the link in her thinking between faith, love and landscape.

Blue sky soft
manuka hugging
eroding hills
kowhai gold
waiata kokako

penetrating aged bones
Grant your whanau peace.

(“For Pius”, p.15)

A poem further along in the collection, “Ko Wai tenei?”, explores the question of identity, of ‘who am I?’, with directness, humour and passion. This poet is a woman who writes that she has thought long and hard about her purpose in life, as defined by the self and by others, and her conclusion at its possibilities is filled with optimism and sassiness.

And do you know?
I am the opposite
To what is said!
and all that
I am,
An Aristocrat,
A romantic,
An independent, industrious,
Woman, a Māori
That’s me!

(“Ko wai tenei?” p.21)

Further interesting poems in this collection explore issues related to essence of self and to the writer’s place in the world, and sometimes raise more questions, with that wry sense of amusement.

Ah but if those literary critics
Approved of Mills and Boon,
This cursed exam would be a breeze!

(“Suffering a literary examination”, p.52)

I also enjoyed the second section titled *Fiction*. Its five short stories tell of important life experiences for the author, like going off to University, starting school, and entertaining guests at the family home. These stories explore themes of identity related to family, to education, and to Māoritanga; they delight the reader with their authenticity, warmth and humour. With a voice both confiding and relatable, the author shares what she knows and doesn’t know, and what she is called upon to learn, in settings where the rules and values are new to her.

The first wonderful short fiction in this section, “Yielding to the New”, describes Marama’s coming-of-age when she leaves home to go to University. At first, she is made to feel naïve and ignorant by the University teachings, even when it comes to her own culture. She suffers homesickness. Some of the ideas she picks up challenge her traditional roots: ‘What did it matter if girls got babies before they were married? What did it matter if you didn’t go to church on Sundays?’ (p.74) She is called on to reconcile her new thinking with a return to her traditional home community.

Another notable piece in this collection is the delightfully amusing account of welcoming Pākehā visitors to the family home. The father and mother have to compromise quite different ideas about what should

matter when inviting guests into their home: ‘I felt sad at my mother’s lamentations. I hadn’t realised that she felt so deeply about how the house looked.’ (p.78) The story details the preparations made by this family in honour of their guests’ enjoyment, topics of dinner table conversation, and those manners observed by the children for their visitors’ benefit.

Arapera Blank’s *Essays* completes the book. These five essays provide informative, historical, cultural and authorial perspectives on a variety of topics, from turning the humble kumara crop to international travelogues by the author, from the role and status of Māori women to the education of Māori girls. Throughout, the author questions whether perspectives are changing and how they are doing so. There is considerable reading in this final section: some of the essays are short, some long, some entertaining, some dry, but all of them structured and finely crafted to make easy reading. You could put them down and pick them up again at leisure.

I recommend that you read this book for its freshness and vitality of perspectives, and for its original and entertaining insight into aspects of the author’s world, her journey and that of her family and forebears.

Fully Clothed and So Forgetful.

Hannah Mettner. (Wellington: VUW, 2017).
ISBN 9781776561049. RRP \$25. Paperback. 91 pages.

Reviewed by Paula Harris

Late last year, I was a student in Victoria University’s Reading and Writing Poetry, under the adorable and slightly chaotic hand of Anna Jackson. I didn’t make it to every lecture, due to living two hours north of Wellington and having to do that whole, y’know, work thing. But every Monday, I got to spend an entire day of tutorials, workshopping and lectures.

For our final lecture, Anna arranged a poetry reading with a delicious range of guest poets, including Hannah Mettner. She read (amongst other poems) the spectacularly wonderful “Schrödinger’s pink corduroy miniskirt”. Who is this woman? I wondered. And how does she know about my not-pink-corduroy-miniskirt-but-my-Schrödinger’s-green-dress-and-my-Schrödinger’s-red-high-heels and all the other Schrödinger wardrobe and life moments?

Happily, wonderfully, *Fully Clothed and So Forgetful* includes this poem. There are also others I had previously read but never managed to get filed together in my brain, with Hannah’s name on the front of the folder, such as “The proof of a lady”, “How we fucked up” and “Things you could do with time travel” (although I must admit I prefer the original title, “Things you could do with time travel and a brown paper bag”; it added something to the poem that now... isn’t).

There are other gems to be found in here. I love the poems that are inventive and catch me off-guard, such as “Timeline of things you missed out on in the seventies”, which includes a timeline running down the pages. And “The war got good ratings”, worthy of mention for the

title alone, which includes nothing but wonderful moments, such as:

If you concentrate really really hard on something it is basically praying. I have watched the pastor so hard he became a crucifix. This is why there are billboards where you are likely to get stuck in traffic.

There are new favourites, like “Queen bed”, which is the kind of delicious mix of quirky odd fantasy with underlying reality that makes me smile for a very long time:

And to put me to sleep would be a bard. Yes, a bard because bards are the best! He would put his hand on my ankle and tell me long, smooth stories about sex until his fingers were where my thighs met and I had stopped thinking about the states of the road, or the bus drivers’ union or parental involvement in schools.

There are moments when the images are so beautifully penned that I wish she hadn’t written them so that I could write them myself.

He’s plucking out weeds
like little bouquets of
wrong. He presents them

to God. My father wakes up
early in the morning
to get to God first.

(“Father in the garden”)

All of “The love poem” is just a delight to experience, over and over. It’s the one that stays with me, even when the book is closed.

There are other moments when the poems lose me. “Baking a maybe” made my heart ache, until I got to the third section. And then I wondered if it really needed the third section, which took me off into another direction and I wasn’t really able to see where we went. Similarly, “Ways we love” just didn’t gel for me; there are parts I really like (the first stanza is rather spectacular) but then the rest butted against each other. And while that may well be part of it — that we love in ways that butt against ourselves — it still never found a place to settle in my brain. I just wanted to move on.

Fortunately, moving on will bring you to moments such as “Obscured by cloud”, which finishes with

...And I had my eyes closed
and you thought I was leaving, or dying

but I was just concentrating on feeling something
that wasn’t about us.

Hannah’s words do make me feel. They make me frown in puzzlement in the moments that don’t quite work for me, but they also make you laugh out loud. They make you want to be loved and to love. They make you quietly say ‘oh’ to yourself. They make you remember the awkward moments of your younger self. They make you want a queen bed.

A world without maps. Jane Simpson.

(Brisbane: Interactive Press, 2016). ISBN 9781925231373. RRP: \$27. Paperback. 61 pages.

Reviewed by Fiona Farrell

The reference subject list on the title page verso of Jane Simpson’s latest collection, *A world without maps*, mentions ‘Autobiographical poetry/Grief-Poetry/United Arab Emirates-Poetry’. A no-doubt efficient summation, but one that gives little hint of this publication’s scope.

In 43 poems, divided into three sections, Simpson guides the reader on several intimate yet wide-ranging journeys, first hinted at in the cover photograph of a row of young women, their long hair loose and dishevelled by a dusty wind. From an initial glance, it is a disturbing image, though it is in fact a row of young Emirati women preparing to dance the khaliji, that frenzied, hair-tossing dance of Bedouin women, when restraint and inhibition are flung aside.

The first third of this collection, *Desert logic*, contains poems prompted by the author’s time teaching at a girls’ school in Dubai, travelling the region bordering the Arabian Gulf. For the author, this is a journey into the unknown. Her destination unrecorded on Google Earth, she sets out, the sensation of confusion and dislocation perfectly captured in the collection’s opening poem, “A world without maps”: ‘for those who don’t read maps / no maps exist’.

That sense of confusion, of entering strange worlds and the sustained attempt to locate one’s self within them becomes a metaphor unifying, not just this section and its exploration of the strangeness of another culture, but the entire collection. In poem after poem, the author creates maps to guide her through the territory of grief following her mother’s death and the deaths of friends, as well as the fractured social and political landscape in which she finds herself living.

The second poem in *Desert logic* takes its start from the difficulty of speaking with a taxi driver, upon arrival in Dubai:

We keep missing
each other
Kiwi mixed
with Buraimi
broken English

Again, this sets in motion a recurrent theme within the collection: the attempt to find language, not just for intercultural communication, but to define complex feelings of loss, love, and the vivid awareness of beauty in

transient existence. Words open small windows that widen into moments of perception, even as a glimpse of the desert widens to an awareness of the immensity of time:

the millennia melt
dishes point to the sky
a purple smudge...
scientists study on the bridge
for crocodiles
when the Himalayas
were young

A row of girls dancing broadens similarly into realising another version of the role of women:

Girls unspring buns
let tresses fall
move as hair airborne
flies from side to side
as if in defiance
the Principal looks on
in her eagle face,
aristocratic, before
the dervishes

Poems set in New Zealand offer other versions of femininity. In “The Prof’s wife”, a thumbnail sketch of a kind of woman is deftly worked: ‘Her armoury was wood and steel, clanking / in tired drawers, full of crumbs.’ And here is a poem about recipes:

My grandmother lives
In my kitchen cupboard
In pressed pages. Granny
Irene, fresh air and her
Froebel training, raw not refined...

The work is delicate, poised, meditative, the voice that of a woman of gentle faith and social conviction. The final poem concerns the writer’s home city, Christchurch, and its loss and destruction.

the city’s old body has gone
young couples gently
touch, peace and justice
rise, kiss.

How appropriate then that, as another reviewer, Bernardette Hall, has so perceptively written, *A world without maps* is ‘the work of a peacemaker’, one that ‘concludes with a kiss.’

Members’ Poems



Leaving for the lighthouse

A puzzling geography, medieval,
the earth a shrinking island surrounded
by dreams, gardens with golden poisons,
monsters and dangerous nonsense. Miles
of yesterdays locked under marmalade
cupboards in the house of useless cards.
You’re thinking of the lighthouse.

Before eyes can savour new horizons
memory sends narrow flashes like bullets;
this is how it’s done. You could escape
Mrs Kibblewhite, greaseproof sandwiches,
the cat and mouse grammar of neighbours,
relationships of inanity. The known world.
You’re picturing the lighthouse.

Rubble and glass cover the rug in half-dark.
Boards replace windows, dust eddies and settles.
Whole cities overturned. Outside the zone,
traffic in gridlock. If you leave now you can steer
by the stars, get there before all the fountains
go dry. For a curious moment you’re brave.
You’re leaving for the lighthouse.

—Mercedes Webb-Pullman

The painted lady

My delicate china lady
dressed in white
a flouncy dress
and decorative hat
stands with poise
at the foot of my bed

you guard my repose
you light up the passage

The hall doorway closed
to idle grown-up play
so I do not feel scared when

stairs creak
with small footsteps
apples drop onto stones
skeletons spiral from my closet

but watch for the cheerful wink
of your unblinking lamp

—Anne Curran

I do not feel scared

“The painted lady” *by was previously published in Valley Micropress (July 2017).*

Safe Area (an excerpt)

I
A deafening crash and the twisting of metal indelibly pressed in her mind
Nothing, just darkness, she then comes `round, sees a face, gentle and kind
It's the face of a fireman, she knows that he cares, but she drifts into darkness again
As she dreams of his face, and she knows that she's safe, despite all her anguish and pain

Spends months on her back in a hospital bed, quadriplegic, she's damaged her spine
But that fireman, Fred, had been right by her bed, she knew with his help she'd be fine
Her life, it had changed, she could no longer walk, to a wheelchair she now was constrained
But she picked herself up, went right back to work (though at present we'll leave her unnamed)

Fred and this girl soon fell in love, they went off to face life as a team
They tied the knot tight, they each took full part, this allowed them to follow their dream
Their love really blossomed, and they knew that in time, a family would be on the way
They each kept their jobs, with their dream in their minds, so looking forward to that day

Fred as a fireman, was a genuine guy, a guy you just had to admire
They both worked their jobs, she stuck in an office, while Fred was out fighting fires
(I think it's now time I told you her name, and it suited her perfectly well
Her name was Faith — just what do I mean? Well, that's what I'm going to tell)

To have faith in something, you have to have trust, to know it is steadfast and whole
Faith trusted Fred and it wasn't misplaced: trustworthy in heart, mind, and soul
She trusted in God and had faith in His Son, knowing bad things would one day get better
She trusted New Zealand `cause we lead the way. (We do things right down to the letter

Regulations and Acts cover safety and health, and best practice in evacuation)
Everyone out, `cept Faith and a mate, they stay put in this safety location
Right here in the stairwell, nothing can burn, they'll be safe there until their relief
And with Fred on the force, that wouldn't take long, their wait there should only be brief

(They put faith in a system, but one out of date, a completely unacceptable situation
It was legally right but morally wrong, the very height of discrimination
Nobody had thought what was really involved, if something had gone wrong on that day
They'd not stopped to look, they'd not stopped to listen, unaware of a much safer way)

—Allan Armstrong

» *Read the rest of the poem at:* poetrysociety.org.nz/2017/08/08/safe-area/

Of This Land

Here, where I was born, a fragile darkness consumed the wooded hills
and mountain tussocks clung to the edges of a rain-soaked world.

Rivers twisted in the landscape's womb as trees
bore down with all their strength. Human shadows traversed
the blue-black silence, the unsleeping nights.

I followed their footprints

and burst into wheat fields, thick with copper-plated sunshine.

I heard the shrugging sighs of draught horses as they turned the sacred soil,
felt the hunger of slashing scythes. I saw bronzed daughters
gather the harvest, fill wine cups in the shade of trees awash with wild honey.

I hid when

conquerors and emperors, battle angry and triumphant, raised their swords
and polished shields in those same fields. They marched to the rhythm
of foreign tongues, history revealed in unfurled maps and raised flags.

Down at the harbour,

I saw ships unload at wharves where sailors staggered ashore
and fell into the arms of waiting whores. In tides of laughter
they discovered the points and pains of pleasure.

Between forgotten wars,

cities claimed the marshlands, homes lit up in wonderment,
shooting electricity around the world, unbearably bright, as the homeless
lost their voices in cardboard shelters and concrete car parks cleaved the fields.

But then,

the changing winds and hurried storms pounded. Rising seas swallowed the cities
and the earth grew indigo cold as the last orange of the sun was crushed.

I tucked my memories away in the mercy of darkness

here, where I was born.

—KV Martins

Author's Note: The phrase 'as the last orange of the sun was crushed' is from CK Stead's poem "Pictures in a Gallery Undersea" (1959) which, in part, inspired this poem.



Brief

Brief is an independent print journal, founded in 1995. It appears biannually and publishes poetry, prose, essays... and things that are difficult to categorise. We are always looking for interesting, experimental, adventurous, or challenging new writing, from both established and emerging writers.

Mimicry

Now open for submissions.

Check out the YouTube video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjCBVeU_fIY for more information.

Neon Literary Magazine Is Now Open To Submissions

After a longer-than-planned hiatus, submissions are now once again open for future issues of *Neon Literary Magazine*. We're seeking the best fiction, poetry, artwork and graphic short stories we can find. Have something you think might be at home in the magazine? Feel free to send it along – full guidelines can be found at www.neonmagazine.co.uk/guidelines

The Aesthetica Creative Writing Award 2017

Open for entries. Presenting an opportunity for emerging and established writers and poets to showcase their work to new international audiences and further their involvement in the literary world.

Now in its 11th year, the award is an internationally renowned prize presented by *Aesthetica Magazine* and judged by literary experts, including Arifa Akbar, book reviewer for Monocle Radio and BBC Radio 5 Live and former Literary Editor at The Independent.

Prizes include:

£1,000 prize money Poetry Winner

£1,000 prize money Short Fiction Winner

Publication in the *Aesthetica Creative Writing Anthology* for 60 shortlisted writers

Consultation with Redhammer Management (Short Fiction Winner)

Full Membership to The Poetry Society (Poetry Winner)

Selection of books courtesy of Bloodaxe and Vintage

One-year subscription to *Granta*

Short Fiction entries should be no more than 2,000 words. Poetry entries should be no more than 40 lines. Works previously published elsewhere are accepted.

Deadline for submissions is 31 August 2017. To enter, visit www.aestheticamagazine.com/cwa

The Poetry Kit Summer Competition 2017

This year's competition is for poetry on any subject.

There are no style or length restrictions but it should be stressed that a short poem is just as likely to be selected as a longer one. Sole Judge for the competition: Lesley Burt.

1st prize is £100.

Selected poems will be published in a special edition of CITN. Entry is by email to comps@poetrykit.org after an appropriate fee is paid by Pay Pal to the account of info@poetrykit.org

All entries must be received before midnight, 23rd October 2017. Entries received after this time will be discarded. All entries are judged anonymously, so please do not put any identifying features on the poems.

Entry fees are as follows:

1 poem £3.50 / 3 Poems £8.00 / 5 poems £10

For further details and to enter online, see www.poetrykit.org/comp-spring.htm

SPM Publications Poetry Book Competition 2017

Closing Date: 30-September-2017

Details: The third SPM Publications Poetry Book Competition is now accepting entries for full length poetry collections in English Language, in any style, on any subject. For the first stage of the competition, entrants are required to submit 20 pages of previously unpublished poetry, which must form part of the eventual full collection by 30 September 2017. Collections submitted in the first stage should be submitted under pen names.

Judge: Roger Elkin, author of *Marking Time* and *Fixing Things*.

Prizes: Three poetry collections will receive initial 2-year publishing contracts. Cash prizes of £300 (First), £200 (Second) and £100 (Third). Each prizewinner will also receive 20 copies of the published book.

Entry Fees: £25.00 per collection.

Contact: Enter online or download entry form at <http://www.spmpublications.com/competitions/2017.html>

Send cheques/postal orders payable to SPM Publications Ltd to SPM Publications Ltd, Sentinel Poetry Movement, Unit 136, 113-115 George Lane, London E18 1AB, United Kingdom

Tom Howard/Margaret Reid Poetry Contest

Enter the 15th annual Tom Howard/Margaret Reid Poetry Contest. Submit published or unpublished work. \$4,000 in prizes.

Please submit during April 15-September 30, 2017. We will award the Tom Howard Prize of \$1,500 for a poem in any style or genre, and the Margaret Reid Prize of \$1,500 for a poem that rhymes or has a traditional style. Ten Honorable Mentions will receive \$100 each (any style). The top 12 entries will be published online.

Length limit: 250 lines per poem. No restrictions on age or country. Please click the Submittable button below for full details. The results of the 15th contest will be announced on April 15, 2018. Fee: \$12 per poem.

Visit winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-margaret-reid-poetry-contest

Four Line Poem Poetry Contest

Write a four-line poem that has a specific syllable count. The first line has 1 syllable, the second line has 5 syllables, the third line has 5 syllables, and the last line has 9 syllables. The subject can be anything.

The winner takes away a \$100 cash prize. All writers will receive feedback for their submission.

Deadline: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 at 11:59 p.m. EST.

www.fanstory.com/contestdetails.jsp?id=104087&at=246

Antonym Poetry Contest

Write a poem with the following format. A four line poem. The first line is only one word. Second and third line can be formatted as you wish. The last line is the antonym of the word on the first line. Words that are opposite or nearly opposite in meaning are called antonyms. Examples are big and small, or long and short.

www.fanstory.com/contestdetails.jsp?id=104101&at=246

3-Line Poem Poetry Contest

Write a three-lined poem. We are looking for an unrhymed poem of 17 or 19 syllables. It has the following syllable counts: 5/7/5 or 5/7/7.

Example:

By milky moonlight (5 syllables)
your silky skin upon mine (7 syllables)
ignites a great desire.(7 syllables)

www.fanstory.com/contestdetails.jsp?id=104117&at=246

National Poetry Competition

The Poetry Society's annual National Poetry Competition is one of the most prestigious prizes in the world for previously unpublished single poems and has a first prize of £5,000.

We are delighted to announce that the 2017 competition is now open for entries. The judges are Hannah Lowe, Andrew McMillan and Pascale Petit.

Enter the National Poetry Competition

First prize: £5,000

Second prize: £2,000

Third prize: £1,000

Seven commendations: £200 each

Winning poems are published on The Poetry Society

website, and the top three in the spring 2018 issue of *The Poetry Review*. Winners are invited to read at events and festivals all around the country, including Ledbury Poetry Festival in July. Up to 150 longlisted entrants are offered discount on selected activities from The Poetry Society, and one of our competition partners the Poetry School.

Visit poetrysociety.org.uk/competitions/national-poetry-competition/

NZ Events



Haiku Group Update

by Bevan Greenslade

Windrift Haiku Group met on 15 June 2017. John Ross devised the following challenge topics (*in absentia*): *Riding a Dragon*, *Learning Your Way Around*, and *Air Travel's Unpredictability*, with any one of the usual forms (haiku, tanka, renga, or haibun) invited for each of the topics. The following is a selection of the contributions.

Riding the Dragon was interpreted in different ways: dragon-fly, a Chinese-style dragon, a demon (without allusion to Chinese culture).

Karen Butterworth's satirical haibun recounted the on-line debate with computer dictation software, concluding with:

deaf couple's quarrel
she said I know
he heard *no*

Penny Pruden often closely observes nature in her garden:

doing all the usual things -
trembling on a sun-drenched leaf
the largest-ever dragonfly

This evoked praise for the contrasting balance of a quotidian start, with the eye-catching wonder of the dragonfly. It even waited for Penny to get her camera to capture its tremble.

Contributing poet Jenny Pyatt caught a beach scene:
surfing the waves
inflatable dragon
jettisons rider

Workshopped suggestions included deleting line one 'the waves', and adding 'an' to line two. Although the group thought the rider was on a simple plastic device, the expression 'jettisons' evoked a jet-ski — a nice irony.

Learning Your Way Around's theme of re-adjusting to the shifted familiar, this topic evoked complaints of difficulty but produced interesting, varied responses.

Jenny Pyatt distilled one experience:

new supermarket
produce
misplaced

Penny Pruden remembered her previous house and wondered if she would ever dream similarly of her present home:

a dream – as always
in my old house -
or finding my way
to a destination
I never knew

Julie Adamson evoked the exciting strangeness of travel 'away'; but some felt the tanka seemed 'wordy' — until they analysed the sound bites and the carefully traditional stress counts, concluding it satisfied the poet's aim:

explored by street map
unfamiliar city
reveals secrets
the challenge of fast traffic
looking left before crossing

Bevan Greenslade offered a terse three-liner, but most thought it too abstract, more epigram than haiku:

my answer found
the question
had moved on

Air Travel's Unpredictability evoked irony and self-deprecating humour:

Ernie Berry wrote a guffaw at kid's humour, slipping in a bite of sad rejection:
spring break:

i take a plane home but
mum says take it back

Ernie Berry seemed at home in haiku's homeland. This reporter had afterthoughts that (a) 'fall' 's double meaning could be pointed up by moving 'train' to line three, and (b) 'snowland' may be the Japanese counterpart of the NZ village of 'Nowhere' – '(ti)s no-land':

fall
i take a bullet train
to snowland

Karen Butterworth also travelled by train; workshopping suggestions, in square brackets, were adopted by her:

[my] train picks up speed
plane in the sky slows [...] stalls [...]
then flies backwards

Jenny Pyatt picked up air travel; amongst the envious sighs, someone wondered if this was a tanka in hiding:

cancelled flight
assigned to the Hilton
bittersweet

Nola Borrell was more pedestrian:

crutches
her hat cartwheels
with the wind

P.S. All in the group welcomed the return of a fine line.



**NZ POETRY SOCIETY
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Members of the New Zealand Poetry Society are invited to attend
the 2017 NZ Poetry Society Annual General Meeting, which will be held at:
The Cityside Baptist Church
8 Mt Eden Road, Grafton, Auckland City

The meeting will be held from 1-3pm on Saturday, 9 September 2017
with a guest poet to read from 3pm.