

THEME: KEY

SUMMER 2019/20

a fine line

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE NEW ZEALAND POETRY SOCIETY

IN THIS EDITION

ARTICLES BY C. TSE AND N.B. WAKAN

REVIEWS BY T. HAMILL, V. PROCTOR, AND L. STREET

SUMMER FEATURED POET JENI CURTIS

REPORTS FROM EMMA SHI AND LAURICE GILBERT

POEMS BY L. COLLINS, L. HOLLOWAY, S. HOWARD,

L. JAQUES, MJ, B. TAIT, AND T. VELTMAN

Contents

Feature Article

Try, try, try: My path to publication

Chris Tse

Editorial Assistant Report

Summer Featured Poet

Jeni Curtis

Feature Article

Make Like a Poet: suggestions for those about to plunge into poetic life

Naomi Beth Wakan

Reviews

The Conch Trumpet by David Eggleton

Reviewed by
Thomas Hamill

Verses by Lola Ridge

Reviewed by
Lynne Street

number eight wire, edited by Sandra Simpson and Margaret Beverland

Reviewed by
Vanessa Proctor

Members' Poems



From the Editor

Ivy Alvarez

A woman in Los Angeles pays part of her DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) driver's licence renewal fee with a copy of her latest poetry collection. Proof that poetry lets us travel through the world and in one's imagination.

Bouquets from NZPS member Trish Veltman! 'I want to say how much I am enjoying each issue of a fine line. It's a great selection of work — potent and exciting voices. I particularly enjoyed Susan Wardell's "My therapist is blind" in the last issue. Great stuff. I'll definitely be renewing my membership.'

Deep gratitude to Windrift Haiku group for a generous donation focused on encouraging haiku writing. We welcome and appreciate such concrete support, so we can support New Zealand poetry in turn. We also acknowledge the long association between NZPS and Windrift Haiku and, as they wind up the group this year, wish all its members well.

We are still looking for two NZPS officers: Secretary (ideally Wellington-based) and Treasurer. Email Katharine Allard for details: info@poetrysociety.org.nz

The theme for the Autumn edition is **Birds**. I would love to receive your poetry-related articles and news and, from our members, up to four poems (40 lines max), sent by **10 January 2020**. First, read our updated guidelines here: poetrysociety.org.nz/poems-reviews/a-fine-line-quarterly-magazine, then send to editor@poetrysociety.org.nz

For this Summer edition, Chris Tse writes about his path to publication, while Naomi Beth Wakan considers what it takes to become a poet. Read a report from our Editorial Assistant Emma Shi, reflecting on her year with the magazine, as well as perceptive reviews from Thomas Hamill, Vanessa Proctor, and Lynne Street. And finally, with this season's theme of Key, one of our Members' Poems may unlock the secret door of knowledge and possibility for you.

I am pleased to share the work of our Summer Featured Poet, Jeni Curtis, whose poems hold a deep universe within their quiet moments.

Thanks for reading.

Want to advertise with us?

We offer half and full-page ads.

\$35 for a half page ad, **\$75** for a full page ad

Please send bookings and enquiries to Katharine Allard, info@poetrysociety.org.nz

a fine line

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

ISSN 1177-6544 (print)
ISSN 1178-3931 (digital)

SUMMER 2019



New Zealand Poetry Society
Te Hunga Tito Ruri o Aotearoa

Charity Number: CC20250

Patrons

Dame Fiona Kidman, Vincent O'Sullivan

President

Shane Hollands

Vice President

Sue Le Mesurier

New Zealand Poetry Society
PO Box 5283
Wellington 6140

info@poetrysociety.org.nz
www.poetrysociety.org.nz

FACEBOOK NewZealandPoetrySociety
INSTAGRAM @NZPoetrySociety
TWITTER @NZPS

a fine line staff

Managing Editor: Ivy Alvarez
Editorial Assistant: Emma Shi
Cover Design: E Wen Wong

Quotations of the Season

Be honest to the page.

— *Randy Ribay*

Words have a love for each other, a desire that culminates in poetry.

— *Cecilia Vicuña*

Feature Article

Try, try, try: My path to publication

Chris Tse

One of the most important things I've learnt as a writer is to accept that rejection and perseverance go hand in hand. Publication is something many of us aspire to, but no one can ever predict when the pendulum of publication is going to swing in their favour. It's the nature of the game. When I talk to my non-writer friends about the writing and submission process, some of them are surprised that I'd continuously put myself through what can feel like a neverending cycle of 'write, submit, get rejected'. It's a somewhat masochistic way to spend your time, but when you have a breakthrough – an acceptance letter! – it's all so worth it.

Getting a poem or manuscript accepted by a journal or a publisher is always a thrill. It can give you a sense of accomplishment and validation for those hours spent toiling in front of a computer screen or scribbling over pages of drafts.

Receiving a rejection letter is never a pleasant feeling, but it's helpful to put things into perspective.

- Sometimes you're just one of dozens, perhaps even hundreds, of writers vying for a spot in a journal or for a publisher's attention. In some cases, journals have a set limit of how many people they can accept, whether it's determined by the budget they have for paying contributors or the number of pages available to them. Publishers can only accept so many books each year, and so they have to be selective.
- Every editor has their own taste in poetry. For this reason, it's inevitable they will make some subjective decisions in choosing what to select. One editor might not 'click' with your submission, but the next one you send it to might think it's the best poetry they've ever read.
- There are so many other journals out there you can send your work to! I keep a list of journals I enjoy and track their submission deadlines. We're not as spoiled for choice when it comes to publishers in New Zealand, but the number of poetry publishers is growing.

It took me four years of submitting to journals before I finally got my first acceptance letter. Each rejection over those four years was deflating in its own way. However, the only thing I could do was to persevere by trying my luck with other journals, and to continue writing more poems for other submissions.

My first acceptance gave me a huge boost in confidence, but I also continued to receive rejections from editors. I still do, but now I'm a bit more philosophical about it.

There are many reasons why people seek publication, but it's not the be-all and end-all of being able to call yourself a writer. I know some poets who don't seek traditional publication. Some don't see having a book to their name as something they need, to be considered successful, while others are happy to just perform their work live or find other ways to share their work, for example, through social media or on a blog. It's useful to be clear with yourself about what your goals and ambitions are for your own poetry, and to be realistic about how you might go ahead about achieving them.

I went into the Masters in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters with a two-year plan: finish a manuscript, graduate, get a job, revise aforementioned manuscript, submit it to a publisher, celebrate the publication of my first book. It was a solid plan, but oh, how naïve I was. I was super-confident I'd have a book published soon after completing my MA. This was because I'd seen other graduates getting published not long after they'd finished the program. The truth is, there are many writers who have graduated from the IIML, who have not gone on to publish a book, and others (like myself) who took some time getting their first book out into the world.

Starting full-time work after studying was a major adjustment to my writing process. It impacted the amount of time I could dedicate to working on my manuscript and putting submissions together. It was frustrating because I had a clear idea of what I wanted to achieve, but we all know that time is a precious commodity we can't just get off a shelf.

I first approached my publisher, Auckland University Press (AUP), with a manuscript in 2008, three years after finishing the MA. It took a few months for them to give me an answer, and it wasn't what I was hoping for. However, I was fortunate that, even though AUP didn't say yes, they left the door open for me to revise my manuscript and resubmit it. Anna Hodge, who was the editor there at the time, gave me some useful feedback to consider. I resubmitted a year later, and again, it wasn't a definite yes, but this time they offered me a spot in a proposed *AUP New Poets 4* with two other poets. I had to think carefully about this because I'd had my heart set on having my own book. Eventually, I realised this was an offer I couldn't refuse.

AUP New Poets 4 appeared almost two years later in 2011. That's just over five years after I finished my MA and three years after I first contacted AUP with a manuscript. A lot of that time was spent in correspondence with AUP, but that time also allowed me to continue refining my craft and developing my voice as a writer. I've learnt to be very patient when it comes to the publication process, especially when proposals have to be written and approved, and release schedules have to be carefully planned to ensure that every book is given the chance to succeed.

I've since published two full collections with the AUP team, and I'm currently working with them on an anthology of LGBTQIA+ writers. I'm very fortunate to have formed such a good working relationship with them. But it has taken many years and lots of back and forth between myself and AUP, and a development of trust and mutual understanding, to get to this point.

My personal experiences in getting published aren't unique, nor should they be seen as surefire examples of how to succeed. There's a lot of practical advice available out there about how to approach and submit to journals and publishers, but it's important to note that there is no secret trick to getting published. If I were to leave you with some advice, it would be:

- Familiarise yourself with the journal or publisher you're submitting to. Read what they've published to get a feel of what they might like, and follow their submission guidelines. As someone who has had to sort through a lot of submissions recently, making things easy for editors goes a long way. It won't guarantee publication, but it shows that you've taken time to put a thoughtful submission together.

There is no secret trick to getting published

- Consider any feedback you might get from editors and publishers. You don't have to take it all on board, but you should keep an open mind, since they are the publishing experts after all. Sometimes you can also use this feedback to gauge whether or not a particular journal or publishing house is the right place for you – do they actually 'get' your work?
- Writing is a solitary act where you have complete control over what you produce, but submitting your work for publication means giving up some of that control to others (unless you go the self-publishing route, which is a whole other article). The best publishers will work closely with you to create a book you can both be proud of. Ask the other authors they've published about their experience. Talk to any prospective publishers about their expectations of you and your manuscript (and vice-versa), so there are no surprises.

In the words of the late, great Aaliyah, if at first you don't succeed, dust yourself off, and try again.

• *Chris Tse features at the 2020 Same Same But Different Literary Festival, held in February.*
samesamebutdifferent.co.nz

Editorial Assistant Report

Emma Shi

One year ago, I started working as an editorial assistant for *a fine line*. Since then, the little stream that represented all I knew about editing has expanded into a river. I have much more knowledge about what is needed to get a magazine ready for publication. I now know that editing isn't just about making sure that everybody's spelling and grammar is in check. It also involves ensuring a clean and legible layout so that readers can have the most comfortable reading experience. This includes moving pieces to see where they best fit in a layout, as well as formatting poems so that their original line breaks are not lost.

I'm now completely responsible for the reviews column of the magazine, and I love working in this space. Taking care of the whole process — from picking up review books from our PO Box to finalising a review in a new edition — is extremely satisfying. I love being able to update reviewers on our progress as we put together a new issue of *a fine line*, and in this way, form connections over the poetry we love. It's a role that I am proud to be in, a role that I am confident in, and therefore a role of great purpose.

This role is also wonderful because I'm able to work with the lovely New Zealand Poetry Society team. Our editor, Ivy Alvarez, has a knowledge of editing that I envision as an ocean spreading endlessly out into the horizon. I have never felt lost with Ivy guiding me. I also appreciate how I have other eyes to look over the magazine before it goes to publication, such as our Administration Manager Katharine Allard. The general support of the New Zealand Poetry Society committee has also made my time in this role a wonderful experience, since I know that we are all together promoting the magazine, the society, and New Zealand poetry in general.

It has been a wonderful year at *a fine line*, and I'm excited about continuing to improve the magazine with each issue. Thank you to all the reviewers who have contributed work since I started in this role, and thank you to those who I know are scrawling away new reviews for the next issue. I'm looking forward to bringing more of your work to publication as we share our mutual love of New Zealand poetry.

About Our Contributors

Linda Collins is a New Zealander living in Singapore, where Ethos Books has just published her memoir, *Loss Adjustment*, set there and in Oamaru. She also writes poems, set anywhere.

Jeni Curtis has had poetry published in various publications, including *takahē*, *NZPS anthologies*, *JAAM*, *Atlanta Review*, *The London Grip*, and *Poetry NZ Yearbook*. She is Chair and co-editor of poetry for *takahē*.

Thomas Hamill is an English Literature graduate of the University of Warwick in the UK, now living in Tāmaki Makaurau. He is inspired by nature in Aotearoa and loves exploring this theme in his own writing.

Lily Holloway is a 20-year-old student studying English and Ancient History. She won the 2019 Given Words competition and was shortlisted for the 2019 Monash Undergraduate Writing Prize.

Susan Howard lives in Matakana. She writes about what affects her and what she feels is important on the world stage. She is published in New Zealand and overseas.

Lincoln Jaques holds a Master of Creative Writing. His poetry and fiction have appeared most recently in *Mayhem*, *Fast Fibres*, *Poetry NZ Yearbook*, *Shot Glass Journal*, and *Fresh Ink*.

MJ lives in Marlborough and writes for pleasure — often in pyjamas, often with wine, but not usually both.

Vanessa Proctor, a former resident of New Zealand, is president of the Australia Haiku Society. An award-winning haiku poet, Vanessa lives in Sydney.

Emma Shi is the winner of the National Schools Poetry Award 2013 and the Poetry NZ Prize 2017. Her work also appears in *Best New Zealand Poems 2017*.

Lynne Street enjoys writing reviews of books that fascinate her, give her reading pleasure, and fit her eclectic interests. She has done this for New Zealand distributors and US romance publishers since 2014.

Belinda Tait lives in Palmerston North with her husband and pets. She likes to make words, and interesting dishes from other parts of the world. Words, and flavours, collide delightfully.

Chris Tse is the author of *How to be Dead in a Year of Snakes* and *HE'S SO MASC*, both published by Auckland University Press. He and Emma Barnes are currently editing an anthology of LGBTQIA+ Aotearoa New Zealand writers.

Trish Veltman is a poet, novelist and blogger living on the Kapiti Coast. She has had several poems published and is currently completing a poetry collection and a third novel.

Naomi Beth Wakan has written over fifty books. She is the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Nanaimo and the Inaugural Honorary Ambassador for the British Columbia Federation of Writers. www.naomiwakan.com

Summer Featured Poet: Jeni Curtis

reading the heart

to give your heart
not now not here

be the bride
ride the tears

take a bird
feathered with red

red breast
lay it bare

not on her
sleeve dare

to hide
behind the rib-

cage cage beast
and tear

the tears
of salt so rare

to give your heart
not now not here

farewell to the red

when the sun shines through
you fire into life
life blood the red of rose
hips scarlet through stained-
glass windows

you make the young man
at the supermarket speak
boldly because he says I look
the type you light the way
in dye-ing you bring back
youth belie the grey
a crown of flames

I alone touch you flex
your curls with my fingers
bind you up with the morning
let you loose at night my sight
my delight in the mirror
a snaky Medusa not to
be snared

paregoric

drops on the tongue
sweet cherries

your first kiss lingers
fingers curled in

delight amorousness
of drowsy bees when

smoke calms them
honey syrup in the comb

gold dust gilding
an angel's wing sing

of summer days long
grass and the first sweet

drops of rain
the release of geosmin

into the air primal
satisfaction

who dares smell
the petrichor the memory

of storm and stirring
and does this drop

round on my tongue
stop the pain stop

the yearning tell me
she'll be right

it might

late night shopping 1955

there we were my father and I
outside the post office
in the dark of a Friday evening
we had no car I perched legs straddled

on the carrier of his bike
it must have been winter to be dark
so early street lamps car lights
blurred against my teary eyes

the whiff of coal and wood smoke
what were we doing for me to have
this treat to be out at night
in the dark with my father

surely it was late night shopping
that took us to the main street
of this small town a birthday
present for my mother perhaps

uncertainty blurs the past as certain
as my tears blurred the outlines of the people
who rushed to help outlines
of thick winter coats hatted men
and women solid in lace-up shoes

I didn't need an ambulance it wasn't
that bad I was told a child's ankle
within cold metal spokes wheel turning
the skin scraped back a spattering of blood
close to the bone

now the post office building no longer exists
the scar scarcely shows
a silvered remnant of another era

Feature Article

Make Like a Poet: suggestions for those about to plunge into the poetic life

Naomi Beth Wakan

At 87, and after writing poetry intensely for over 25 years, I am often requested to give advice to budding poets. When asked, usually all I can come up with is read, read, read and write, write, write. Hardly fresh counsel. Feeling guilty at being so seemingly unhelpful, recently, I gave the matter some thought, and this is what I came up with to go on with.

Firstly, I would advise you to make like a poet. Yes, I know poets come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, but there are some basic things most poets do. For example, they usually have announced, at least to themselves, that they are going to focus on poetry as their creative outlet for the next few months or years. They have given validity to their

writing by filing their poems carefully and have been sure to back them up. They appear at open stage poetry readings reasonably, and cleanly, dressed with their poems printed out ready to read (not written on the back of an envelope and stuffed into the back pocket of their grubby jeans). They give their poems and their audience due respect. They read their poetry slowly and clearly in public without first apologising for its quality, and, if they happen to stumble over a word, they never wince obviously, but just continue as though nothing had happened, because nothing really has happened. Well, that's enough to go on for a beginning.

Now, for the actual writing of poetry, we need astonishment and the unexpected. This doesn't mean writing it sideways on the page or using an unusual font. It means connecting images and ideas that have never been connected before (at least, not by you). You should have surprise and wonder in each poem. That is, you should be surprised, and you should be filled with wonder at how you have managed to make the ordinary everyday life around you so startlingly interesting. By honouring the everyday, you link its particulars to universal concerns and, in the process, realise your joys and sorrows are no different from those of the rest of humankind's.

Your poems should connect the inner you with the outer you, and the best way to do that is to get out of the way. Go prepare a deep asparagus bed, or start building a stone wall. When you are preoccupied with mundane physical tasks, that's when the poems will start seeping through.

You are taking on the serious task of telling things that are there, but which others can't see.

One does not write
because the goldfish play
at the bottom of the waterfall,
but because not everyone
can see them

When I started my life as a poet, I read other poets, loads of other poets, always searching out a voice that was close to what I thought mine might be. When I found a couple, I made them my surrogate parents for my new life as a poet.

Mom and Dad
Oh! if only Billy

**You are taking on the serious task
of telling things that are there, but
which others can't see**

had been my father
and Wisława, my mother,
how my poetry would have shone
and my small hand been encouraged
to move over the page.
Standing barefoot on
the lawn with Billy,
in the dew-filled morning,
how my little voice
would have lisped out
rhymes about the budding cherry tree,
and, in the evening,
Wisława would have filled
my small head with legends
from the polka past
and ideas that went beyond
right and wrong. I suspect,
however, the meals would have
been a little slap-dash,
and when I might have
wanted Billy, he would not
have been there...
even if he was.
("Mom and Dad")

The more I wrote, the less I read Billy Collins and Wisława Szymborska. As I grew more confident, I placed their books gently in my bookcase, on the shelf reserved for reading when I am really ancient.

Oddly enough, often the very first poem you ever write may have the 'real' you in it. Then somehow it disappears, and may not surface again until you have explored some rules of poetry forms and written a load more poems. It is as if, in that first poem, the inside you is giving you permission to open up. Keep in mind that you may think it is you moulding the poems, but actually, it is the poems that are making you. That shaping is urgent, for by letting the poems through, you are restoring a certain balance, a certain healing to your being. Poems are written to tell you what you didn't know — or, at least only had a vague awareness of — as well as tell you things you urgently need to know. And, as a declared poet, at last you have a means to discover what they are.

Don't fuss your poems. Don't demand they come when they don't want to, and don't edit them to death so they bear little resemblance to the first exuberant words that sprang onto the page. Best put a poem away in a drawer for a few months and, only then, see how it might be improved. Your readers will bring themselves to your poetry, so you don't have to spell things out for them. On the other hand, readers usually like to know who is doing what to whom and when and where, so if you are too abstruse, your readership will shrink.

Don't rush to publish, to set up a website, to start a blog, to brand yourself, or any of the kind of things writers do when they need to earn a living. Poetry is not a lucrative career. Best find a pleasant, undemanding job that leaves you loads of time for daydreaming or, alternatively, take a job full of risks and dangers, which will confront you daily with major moments of high emotion. Either way, be warned, poetry will be taking over most of your waking life and a lot of your sleeping one, too.

Last words? I'd better slip getting used to rejection in here and, well, actually, *read, read, read and write, write, write* are as useful advice as can be given. All the rest is my meandering on the page.

Reviews

The Conch Trumpet

David Eggleton (Dunedin:
Otago University Press, 2015)

ISBN: 9781877578939. RRP: \$25. 124pp.

Reviewed by Thomas Hamill

As I march around the house, loudly spouting verse from David Eggleton's *The Conch Trumpet*, I wonder at what stage this will become wearisome for my suffering housemates. Not that long apparently, as despite my protestations, I am soon sent to a quiet corner of our small house, designated very loosely as the Music Room. I am totally unrepentant. Since I have been offered the chance to review this work by *a fine line*, I have decided that, to do it justice, I should follow in the footsteps of Eggleton. Eggleton himself is a well-known performance poet, and I have decided to read as much of his work aloud as I am able. Initially it pays dividends, and I am soon drawn into

Eggleton's sonic world of onomatopoeia and lyricism.

Never is this more obvious than in "Sound and Fury", where there is a real immediacy to phrases like 'the blether of sheep, the blither of wind, / road gangs scraping shovels in two-four time'. The gentle sibilance in 'scraping shovels' is a timely counter to the noisy sheep and wind. Phrases such as these leap from the page when spoken.

The early sections of the book continue to reward my initial approach. It is easy to picture Eggleton himself reading aloud in a Dunedin pub, entrancing his listeners with a powerful rendition of "Fiord Haka":

Rūamoko slaps thighs, thumps
Torso, and groans heavily,
Busting moves to rattle gravity.

Or the even more astonishing "Whakapapa of Rangi the Melody-Maker", in which suggestive internal rhymes sing out and grip a reader with their beauty:

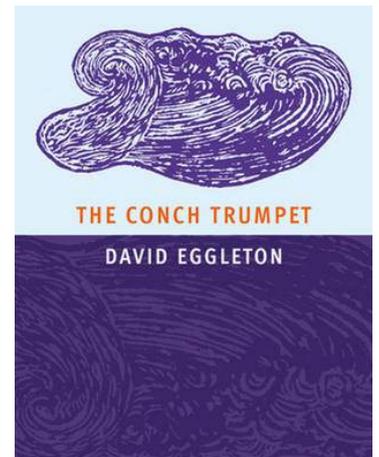
A pūtōrino chrysalis sings to katydids,
Uenuku casts rainbows for kōkopu,
a ponga forest scars with flame's moko.

But eventually, I stopped reading aloud and realised I was finding myself more and more quietened and chastened by *The Conch Trumpet*. There is a preaching quality and an archaic tone behind many of the poems. This is almost a warning to the reader about venerating the past. I realised in my early assertion — that I could present Eggleton's works as well as Eggleton himself — I was the brash "Colonial Pidgin", searching for a beauty in "Erewhon" that I could loudly and unjustly proclaim as my own. I had ignored the gentle politicism Eggleton imbues in *The Conch Trumpet*, something that reveals itself to a reader on their second and third reading. This is the real strength of this work, its reward of patience and reflection.

The book itself is broken into five sections, and it initially appears to be a journey through a magical Aotearoa. On my first reading, this feels true of the first four sections. The final section, "Fire", is a cautionary warning about the encroachment of modernity and industrialism. In the poem "Omarama: Place of Moonlight", in the third section "Waitaha", we are entranced by 'gold pollen flares in a black beech forest' and how 'ochre pigment nets the soaring pouākai'. Whereas in "Fire", 'We're vajazzled, bedazzled' in "Your Call May Be Recorded" and forced to reconcile the fact that 'the statue of liberty is in a body bag', in "Where Gods Live".

But as I reread *The Conch Trumpet*, I realised the same warnings actually permeate throughout the book. There is a loss of innocence in all five sections. The final section, "Fire", is therefore just the logical endpoint for a journey we have been inexorably on the whole time.

On my first reading, it is wondrously easy to get lost in poems such as "River", where Eggleton's mastery of painting Aotearoa is laid bare:



Begin, spring,
On steep range.
Unfurl fern-scroll,
in light sing,
glance off things,
shimmer by swimmers,
swirl green as willows,
stirring tips in summer;
surface under bridges,
while land turns,
to autumn

Eggleton's
sonic world
of onomatopoeia
and lyricism

But perversely, it is because of the distraction of such beauty that it is easy to miss the 'curses that conterminously reign' ("On Recrudescence of Waterfalls After All-Night Rain") throughout the book. I begin to feel Eggleton's anxiety that his own words are 'mined as popcorn additive for *Lord of The Rings*' because of the beautiful land he describes.

Here then is the book's greatest challenge. At some points, Eggleton overloads the reader with a relentless barrage of obsequious adjectives. These often mask the meaning of his poems. Without the time to truly delve deep into the hidden meanings of each piece (as I have so enjoyed), it would be easy to feel overwhelmed and miss your own delight in the clearer metaphors he presents. *The Conch Trumpet*'s greatest strength is also its Achilles heel.

That said, I am staunchly attached to *The Conch Trumpet*. It is easy to see why it won the Poetry Award at the 2016 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards and why Eggleton himself was the recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in poetry in the same year. There is pure majesty in his writing and a real 'wind-swept ... accelerando' ("Between Two Harbours") of social commentary, all mixed with breathtaking imagery. If you find yourself, like I was, admonished and banished to a quiet corner of the house, you could do a lot worse than to take *The Conch Trumpet* with you and begin your own journey searching for truths in Eggleton's multifaceted Aotearoa wonderland.

To review books for *a fine line*,
please contact Emma Shi, reviews@poetrysociety.org.nz

Verses

Lola Ridge (Connecticut:
Quale Press, 2019)

ISBN 9781935835240. RRP: \$18. 176pp.

Reviewed by Lynne Street

Lola Ridge left Ireland with her mother, Emma Ridge (née Reilly) in 1877. Lola (also known as Rosalie or Rose Ridge) was then aged three. After Emma married Donald McFarlane in Hokitika, Rose became Rosalie MacFarlane.

The poems included in this collection were written by Ridge when she lived in New Zealand and Australia, and subsequently submitted to *The Sydney Bulletin* as a manuscript. Some of her verses were first published individually between 1901 and 1905 in *The Bulletin* before she and her son emigrated to the US in 1907.

The 63-page Introduction is written by Michele Leggott, who herself is an accomplished poet, with an academic background of poetry. She provides a thorough discussion of Ridge's use of imagery, symbolism, and metaphor. Leggott adds to Ridge's verse by supplying her findings on Ridge's development as a poet of significance to both Australia and New Zealand.

Read closely before delving into Ridge's verses. Leggott's Introduction provides insights to Ridge's background — her family origins, the places she lived, the impact of these aspects on her style and themes. Leggott also details the history of Ridge's writing and her involvement in the early stages of female political and social activism.

Leggott accompanies her responses to the verses with samples of Ridge's work. In the book's final pages, the notes detail the sources of Ridge's verses, including amendments made in earlier publications. The notes also explain the Māori vocabulary used in the New Zealand-themed poems.

Ridge's verses are definitely in the style of a female writer of her time. Her later verses delve into the lives of people who lived outside of, or beneath, generally acceptable society. An icon to social and political activists, and an activist herself, she entered the near-underworld that was beyond the norm for women of her social level. Her verses represent different stages in her life: her return to Sydney in Australia, her time in New Zealand's south-west coastal bush during the gold diggings, and her travels in the US, before settling in New York. Ridge died in Brooklyn, in 1941, aged 67, of pulmonary tuberculosis.

Ridge's work shows she is powerful writer. Her pieces are presented in three sections: *Voices of the Bush*, *Songs of the Shuicers*, and *Humorous Verse*. The last section is, in my opinion, poorly titled, as only one poem is truly humorous. The rest are best described as whimsical, and could have been better placed within the first two collections.

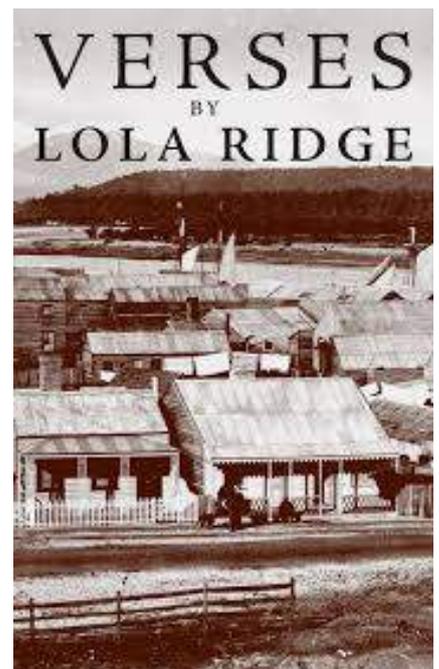
Phrases from her verses jump at the reader, filled with maternal and sexual metaphor. Ridge's vivid imagery is also easily recognised in New Zealand, where most of her work was created.

The verses that are a standout for me include "Lake Kanieri", first published in the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* in November 1902. It opens with:

Blue veined & dimpling, dappled in the sun
Lies Lake Kanieri, like a tired child
Wide-eyed, close clinging to the spacious skirts
Of old Tuhua, the big, brawny nurse
On whose broad lap I lie. All else is still.

In the second stanza, Ridge writes:

Ye old Stoic Hills!
Yield up your secrets. On your furrowed fronts
Are scars of fierce upheavals; in your grave,
Deep breasts what dreams are shut? Ye seem to stand
Like pale, impassive monks, whose chill looks hide
Forbidden memories of clinging lips,
Of passion conquered & of pain repressed
Within their breasts congealed.



I appreciate the internal rhyme and alliteration in this piece, two tools that Ridge wields in much of her work. Her choice of words drives the reader to utter them in a particular rhyming pattern, rather than as usually spoken.

“The Bush”, published in *The Bulletin* in September 1904, is full of references to the femininity of the bush and the masculinity of the sun:

And weary women who have seen love droop
In lust & laughter, till their bruised hearts yearn
And ye, her nursling, who would turn the key
Her shut heart closes on its hidden things,
Go learn & listen at her mother knee
The half-articulate, deep song she sings.

In “The Legend of the Cross” — published in the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* in April 1903 — Ridge makes the star who visits masculine, while the earth who gives birth is feminine:

The Earth, a dusky maiden,
Stirred in her vestal dreams,
Her deep eyes slumber laden
Dazed in his burning beams;
Close in his arms he wound her,
And with her tangled hair,
The forests braided round her,
She screened her bosom bare.

And here, Dusk is feminine, as she comes to take the children:

With holy dew to wet them,
And priestly Dark to shrive,
High o’er the South she set them,
The bright-eyed children Five.
And from a rocky highland,
Earth watched, till faint & far
Up in the distant sky-land
They opened star by star.
And night by night they grew there,
Till o’er the south Sea track
A blaze of light they threw there,
That reached the line & back;
And from lone bush-bound stations
To wild grey-seas a-toss,
Men hail them from the Nations—
The Guide Lights of the Cross!

All in all, *Verses* by Lola Ridge has just become a preferred collection of New Zealand poetry for me. May it become a standard text in literature in our secondary schools and beyond.

number eight wire

Edited by Sandra Simpson and
Margaret Beverland (Tauranga:
Piwakawaka Press, 2019).

ISBN 9780473464776. RRP: \$20. 150 pp.

Reviewed by Vanessa Proctor

number eight wire is the long-awaited fourth New Zealand haiku anthology. Long-awaited because the last anthology, the excellent *The Taste of Nashi*, was published a decade ago. Its title *number eight wire* refers to a haiku by Karen Peterson Butterworth about the Kiwi trait of innovation and resourcefulness — the ability to mend anything with number eight wire. It's a fitting one in that it holds together a strong selection of 330 haiku from 70 poets that are, as the editors state in the introduction, '100% pure Aotearoa', yet is also universal.

In this refreshing collection, there are gems on every page. Perhaps readers who are not familiar with New

Zealand will need to look words up, but that adds to the unique quality of poetry set in a particular region. The following haiku could only be set in New Zealand. The first is by Richard von Sturmer:

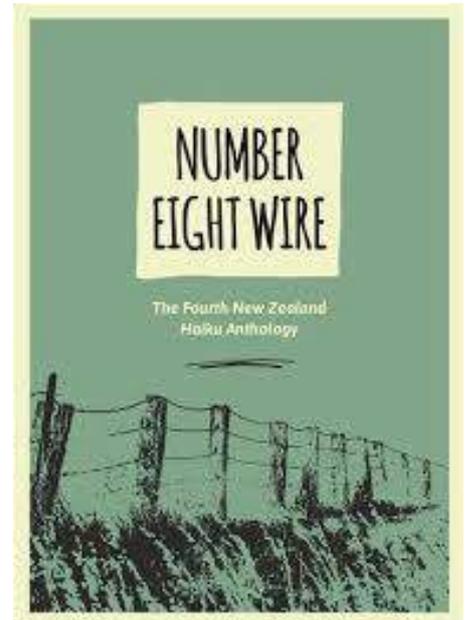
under grey clouds
a tui
uncorks his song

Here is another by Neil Whitehead:

on Aoraki
snow still lies
from Kupe's time

And one by Nola Borrell:

autumn dark under our boots kohekohe stars



This anthology is substantial at 150 pages, and beautifully produced with quality cream paper and generally three haiku on a page, spaced out so that each poem has room to breathe. Divided into seasons, which is traditional, each section is introduced with the reproduction of a New Zealand stamp. This adds colour and interest to the book.

Poems have been carefully selected to produce a meaningful flow throughout the anthology, creating a cohesive and assured collection. While many of the haiku feature the natural world — ever present in New Zealand — there are also many accomplished senryu. The wonderfully quirky New Zealand sense of humour surfaces often in this form. Here is a piece by Catherine Bullock:

long wait backstage —
the evil giant reads
a self-improvement book

And this next senryu is by Anne Hollier Ruddy:

surprising me
with plastic windmills —
two nuns

The haiku scene in New Zealand has been vibrant for decades. The form and variety of subject matter in

number eight wire is evidence of this confidence. There are familiar names, some poets who are sadly no longer with us, and a number of new poets who have come to haiku more recently. This is most encouraging for the future of haiku in New Zealand, confirming that New Zealand haiku is going from strength to strength.

As a reviewer, I read through the anthology and then immediately turned back to the beginning to read it again, such is the quality of the work. This must-have anthology sets the bar high. It shows how regional influences on haiku can add life, colour, and a freshness to the form, creating something really special. Here is a final haiku by John O'Connor:

mountain stream —
gathering dawn
to itself

• *For information on how to order number eight wire, see breathhaiku.wordpress.com or email nzhaiku@gmail.com*

The Poetry Advisory Service (PAS) provides writers of poetry with a written critique from an experienced poet on a sample of their work. This is a support service for any poets who wish to develop their work. You do not have to be a member of NZPS.

What you can expect

Focused and constructive feedback from an individual member of a panel of experienced and published NZ poets selected for their proven teaching skills.

This is an opportunity to get professional and personal comment on your writing. You will receive a written critique, including a response to particular questions.

What you need to do

- Choose up to 100 lines of poetry (500 words max.) for consideration.
- Identify areas for specific feedback, e.g. choice of subject/ format/ use of words/ clarity/ imagery/ rhythm/ tone/ impact, and so on.
- Request an application form from treasurer@poetrysociety.org.nz
- Enclose your cheque. The charge is \$75 for NZPS members and \$85 for non-members.

You can also pay through internet banking.

ANZ Bank account name: NZ Poetry Society Inc

Account number: 060501-0823371-10

Please include the word **PAS** and **your name** in the reference field, so our Treasurer knows what the payment is for and can advise the PAS coordinator.

Send your typed submissions plus application form and cheque (made out to NZ Poetry Society) to:

Poetry Advisory Service NZPS
PO Box 5283 Wellington 6140

Please keep a copy of your poems, as we do not keep them after the service has been provided.

Our response

We aim to send you a critique of your work within 4-6 weeks of receipt. We cannot guarantee that the critique will be full of praise and, inevitably, the response will be subjective.

Please direct all correspondence and queries about the PAS, including post-review enquiries, to the PAS Coordinator at the above address. No adviser will enter into direct correspondence.

Members'

Poems

Unlocked

Today, I saw again the darkened bedroom, you,
sallow and shrunken into the pillows, and us, just
standing there, by your bed. Then, heavy velvet

curtains split the hall-way before you reached the
bathroom where the basin broke, but in this house,
with the key still in my hand, I could walk directly

through into the kitchen where the cats purred
my legs and six tins of fancy cat food were stacked
neatly on the bench. We used to sit at the long

table eating porridge from those green-rimmed
plates, egged on to get to the bottom first to see
if the painted pink peonies were still there, and

watched by the fig tree glaring at us through the
window. You had a way of staring us down behind
your rimless glasses, remember, but I can still see the

writing desk, its doors locked by intricate brass keys,
hiding our Christmas presents, and the look on your
face when you handed them out to us, one by one.

Just before the front door, at the last room, what I
saw was your lounge, the fat stuffed settees with
antimacassar-covered arms, and the sweetness of Mina

Foley swelling the record player, that we had to keep
winding up. Outside again there were no railings on the
veranda where you rode away from us on the wild horses.

— *Susan Howard*

Notice Placed on a University Campus

We are mesmerised.
We are transfixed.
We are shouting.
We are waiting
for
tomorrow's
ghosts.

They put up a sign
its words twisted
with the winding river.
A seagull licked at
its edges.

We are imprisoned.

We make fists.

We close
the shutters
on
all
the
windows.

We wait for the white ships of endless winter.

Yet any moment now
the key
will turn
in the deadlock
the sun will shrink
to fit through
the smallest hole
that gives us the most light.

— *Lincoln Jaques*

Somebody Loves Here

Fetch the key from my pocket.
Assert it into the lock.
A shove, and the door widens open.

Warmth, coming running.
Little skitter of claws.
Nub of a tail a – stirring

the batter for pancakes.
Buttery ghost of a smell in the air
a sign that somebody loves here

behind the curtains

Ostensibly, An Adult

When you turn 21
they give you a big glass key,
ostensibly,
to say that you're an Adult
and you can drink responsibly now,
raise a mortgage
and pay a kid now,
exorbitantly, as cattle,
all milky and pent
with the years
seasoning over their heads,
in the fields
withering sparser and brindle,
the brack, stoppy mottle
of dogs' hair.

— *Belinda Tait*

Orphan

This place is so big it doesn't diminish with age
- shrinks me to the smallness of six
think I can outstare the sun

Eyes bleed a kaleidoscope
my fingers sweat
rainbows

This place is so big it understands savannah
explains it in words of one syllable
hot - dry - wide -

I shed my family here once
- hidden in a tangle of blackberry
I tasted the syllables of orphan
until I heard my name
called by my mother's mouth

Now I know *refugee*

My tongue learned to ache
with the weight of not talking
My ears untangled speech of a new flavour
- syllables thin and tart as unripe blackberry

This place is so big, I hope there's space
for an adult orphan coming back
with a whisper of home
on her tongue
but no key in her pocket

— *Trish Veltman*

Pocket Contents

Jeaned. Black T-shirted.
Coiffured and moustached.
Pierced, inked, ear budded.
Cold brewed. Avo smashed.

Ringed fingers flicker.
Text sent. iPhone dark.
Sleek chrome-onyx fob.
Italian marque.

LimeLululemon.
Her sweat sweet Dior's
Decafsoylatte.
No pockets. Where's hers?

I stand. Out of place.
My pocket weighed down.
My grubby sweats sag.
A grey wrinkled frown.

A comforting mass.
Their jingling sings.
Intertwined jumble
on multiple rings.

I don't remember -
I reach for the door -
what most of my keys
open anymore.

— *MJ*

the bluebeard

shattered bloody mary statuettes
through the keyhole shining blue

magpie can taste the shattering on her tongue
crunching between back molars
chipping off enamel

magpie pries open shower drain and pulls out
lengths of foreign hair
collected

magpie finds drawers full of unleaveables
passports
rings
cellphones
eves pandoras psyches questionably departed

ribs squeak against each other when closed

it beckons from the end of a long hallway
a vein with no pumping no airflow

the porcelain key betrays shatters sending splinters into clenched bloodless hands when
forbidden opens to:

pulsating bloody clotted cream
spilling from ripped arm sockets
intestines tumbling and
lidless eyes

emaciated stomach breathing pustular cysts on the concrete floor
mathematical instruments as teeth

at the end of the room
is an office door
supermarket lighting
slicing
out
from the shades
it smells like chlorine and blood

— Lily Holloway

Elegy for Suresh

His leaving, a surprise. Suresh Kumar P. Menon was to be no more in my life, in this life. An email: He had made the decision to go. It was time. Parting would be absolutely amiable.

A lifetime ago, I was new in Singapore from New Zealand,
as was Suresh, from Kozhikode in Kerala, by way of Oxford.
Both of us seeking entry into stability, newspaper office employment.
I, mistaken for a Brit; he, for Puerto Rican.
There was no need for hellos, we connected with an eye-roll.

Access was granted, identity cards issued. Years passed,
in a country of no seasons. As the lifts rose and fell,
children were born or not born. Parents died or did not die.
Promoted or demoted. But always the glance, of always not belonging,

Glimpses of a different Suresh, recently.
Shedding office attire. At first ties, shirts and jackets,
then trousers.

Came a collarless shirt in soft cotton,
flowing over suit bottoms, dropped for an orange lungi,
tied at the waist like a dhoti.
Brogues became brown sandals, naked toes wriggling.
Longer hair covered by a thalakettu red headscarf.

Who was that distant figure amid morning commuters,
walking up the entrance to the office?
A labourer plodding to toil in the fields?
Then, a pair of round-lens spectacles in a light metal frame.
Gandhi, arriving to preach non-violent resistance.

Resistance formalised. He had resigned. He was resigned. The simple Calicut life called. His
desire, to spend time in the country amid chickens, goats and holy cows.

That final Friday, Suresh walking the floor, a ritual shaking of hands,
his red headscarf an affront to the grey gathering of twilight news.
He veered from me, perhaps fearing a nice-to-know-you,
spun by the Editor instead. Over the work-station dividers,
I could see half bodies, shoulder-slapping, fake-laughing.
I decided not to call out, not to run after.
A minute later, the exit doors exploded
to brightness, a head aflame.

— Linda Collins

The Lauris Edmond Plaque

Laurice Gilbert



It was a typical (warm, wet) Wellington spring day during the Verb Wellington Festival when the Lauris Edmond Memorial Plaque was unveiled at Lauris's former home. Readings by friends Diana Bridge (2010 recipient of the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Poetry), Professor Harry Ricketts, and Dame Fiona Kidman (co-Patron of the NZPS) were followed by extensive thanks to those who made the installation of the plaque possible.

Occasionally overcome with emotion, Lauris's daughter and literary executor Frances MC'd the event, thanking all who contributed (including the NZPS) and introducing the readers, as well as His Worship the Mayor of Wellington, Andy Foster. In particular, she expressed her gratitude to the house's owners, Sarah and Tom, for restoring the house and garden after many years of neglect, and to their current tenants, for allowing the event to take place in the house itself.

The official unveiling was declared from the living room, due to the weather conditions, and followed by champagne. Lauris was the Patron of the New Zealand Poetry Society at the time of her death in 2000 and our prestigious prize, the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Distinguished Contribution to Poetry in New Zealand (now co-sponsored by Victoria University Press and the Todd Foundation), was named in her honour, with the permission of Frances Edmond, as literary executor.

November 2019

New Zealand Poetry Society Subscription Renewal

(Your membership will run for one year from the date of payment.)

NAME: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

POSTAL ADDRESS:

POST CODE: _____ TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS

Please make cheques payable to **The New Zealand Poetry Society Inc.** and post to: Membership, NZPS, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6140; or pay electronically:

ANZ: 06-0501-0823371-10

Please use both your name and the word *membership* as reference.

- Basic membership: magazine emailed to you quarterly – \$30
- NEW!** Student membership – magazine emailed to you quarterly – \$15
- Joint membership (two members at same physical address, different emails) – \$45
- Postal sub (basic membership, plus a printed copy of the magazine mailed, within New Zealand only) – \$60
- Schools / Libraries (1 copy of the magazine mailed) – \$60
- Groups – see definition at poetrysociety.org.nz/members/joining-the-nzps/

Do you require a receipt? YES / NO

2019 ANTHOLOGY ORDER FORM

the perfect weight of blankets at night

Please send this completed form to:

Email: info@poetrysociety.org.nz

Please include screenshot of Internet banking transfer, Paypal payment or other transaction reference as proof of purchase

Post: New Zealand Poetry Society, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

To make payment:

- Internet banking to account number: 06-0501-082337110. Please put the name of the buyer (as you have entered it on the form) and the word 'anthology' in the reference fields
- PayPal payments are accepted via our email address: info@poetrysociety.org.nz
- Please make cheques payable to: New Zealand Poetry Society.
- We accept these foreign currencies (**cash only**): \$AUS, \$US, \$CA, €, £
- All prices below are in NZ dollars. Check www.xe.com for current exchange rate.



	Price	No. of copies	Total
Anthology Contributor / NZPS Member rate	\$25.00		
Standard rate	\$35.00		
Delivery is free within New Zealand for up to 2 copies			
PLUS postage for:			
Rural delivery (NZ)	\$3.70		
Overseas: Australia	\$10.00		
Overseas: Rest of the World	\$15.00		
Please contact us for the postage cost if ordering more than 2 copies within NZ or overseas.			
TOTALS			

NAME: _____

POSTAL ADDRESS: _____

POST CODE: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

NZPS does not sell or otherwise distribute your personal information. We will only contact you if there is a question about your order or for membership purposes.

NZPS website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz | NZPS email: info@poetrysociety.org.nz