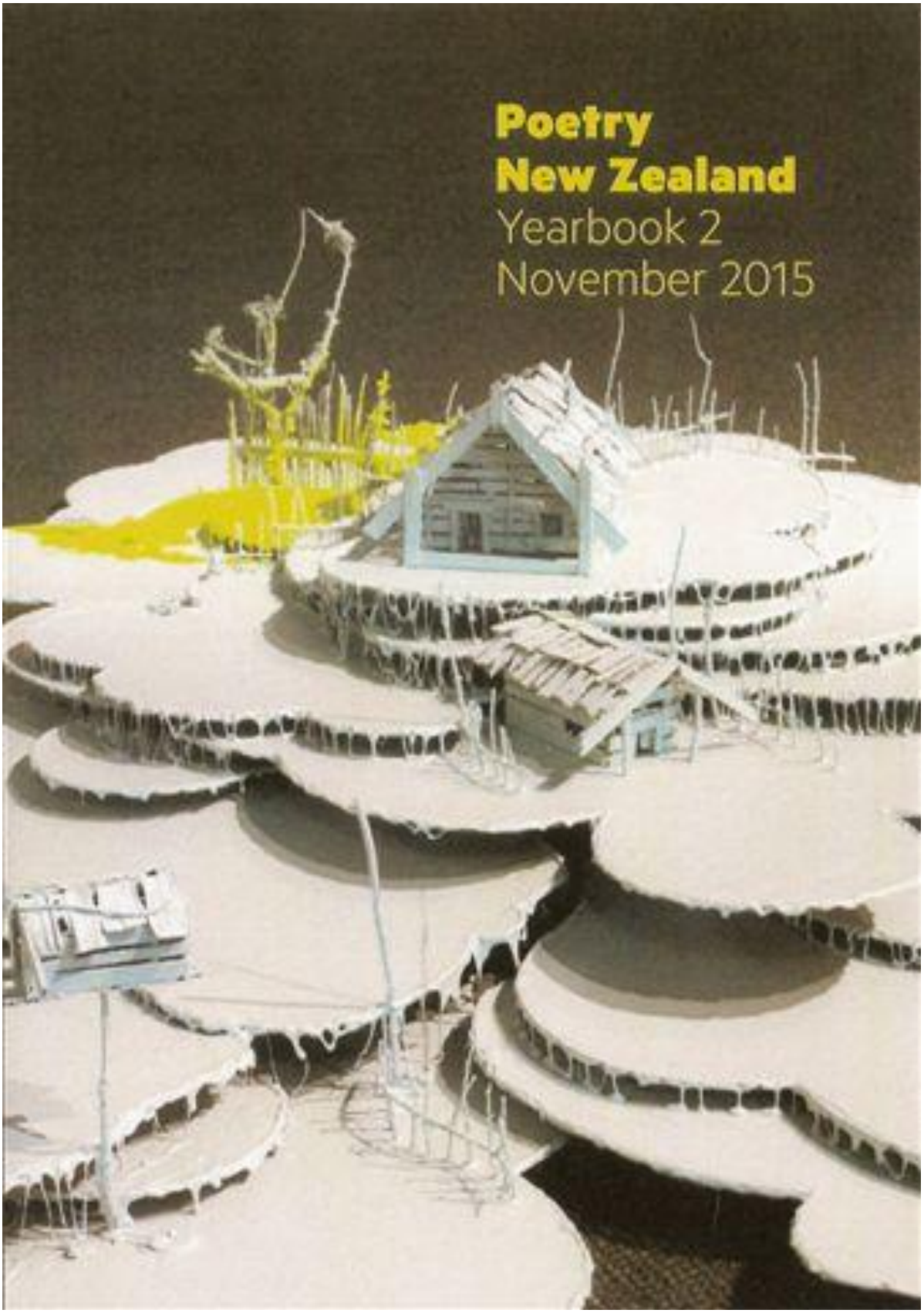
Poetry
New Zealand
Yearbook 2
November 2015

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Yearbook 2

[Issue #50]

(November 2015)

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[Issue #50] (November 2015)
One issue per year

Submissions: The submission dates for each issue are between May 1st and July 31st of each year. Submit ***either*** (preferably) by email, with your poems pasted in the body of the message or included as a MSWord file attachment; ***or*** by post, to the address below, with a stamped self-addressed envelope, and contact details in your covering letter.

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Poetry New Zealand
Yearbook 2

[Issue #50]

(November 2015)

Edited by
Jack Ross

Featuring the poetry of
Robert Sullivan

with essays by
John Geraets, Janet Newman & Alistair Paterson

& reviews by
Mary Cresswell, Hamish Dewe, Rachael Elliott, Johanna Emeney, Matthew Harris, Bronwyn Lloyd, Elizabeth Morton, Jack Ross & Richard Taylor

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Jack Ross

Editorial:
What is New Zealand Poetry?

One of the courses I teach – at Massey University's Auckland campus – is Travel Writing. This year more than half of the students in my class were born and brought up outside New Zealand. I know, because I asked them at our first meeting.

Amongst many other students from many places, there are three young Arabic women in the group. One's from Egypt, another from Syria, and the third from Saudi Arabia. They couldn't be more different.

My Egyptian student is a free-thinking thrillseeker, a wild child, capable of jumping in a cab and jetting off anywhere at the drop of a hat.

My Syrian student dresses and speaks like a pretty typical teenager. One of the class assignments is to write a piece about travelling on Auckland public transport, and hers was about bussing in to Auckland Uni with a more orthodox friend who nevertheless spends thirty minutes each morning styling her hijab to look as chic as possible.

My Saudi student is married, with two small children. She wears a hijab, and is clearly more conservative in her beliefs and attitudes than the other two. *Her* local travel adventure was to be handed a mobile phone by the bus-driver and told to explain to the person at the other end (a Chinese woman who thought she'd left something behind when she got off a few stops before) that he couldn't discuss it with her while he was driving.

Perhaps the question above should be, not so much "What is New Zealand Poetry?" as "What is New Zealand?" It's a pretty diverse place these days: not much like the little seaside suburb I grew up in.

So much the better. It's one of the perks of my job that I *do* get to meet and listen to such a cross-section of the young people of Aotearoa New Zealand, be they African, Asian, Arabic, American, European, Māori, Pākehā, Polynesian or any variant on the above.

•

So, after all that preamble, what *is* New Zealand poetry? It's probably something that an editor of *Poetry NZ* needs to have a stated position on,

given the journal's title (in each of its various permutations over the years). And yet it's surprisingly difficult to answer.

Does it mean poetry written in New Zealand, by no matter who, in whatever language? That would at least have the virtue of simplicity. But then what of poems written by New Zealand nationals (or long-term residents) abroad? Surely that, too, is New Zealand poetry?

In the most comprehensive attempt (to date) to debate the nature of our body poetic, Paula Green and Harry Ricketts' *99 Ways into New Zealand Poetry* (Auckland: Vintage, 2010), the authors say in their preface:

> *While this book celebrates what poetry can do, we are exploring this idea within the context of New Zealand poems across time, culture, age, gender, style and geographical location … We have only explored poems written in English as neither of us are experts in the other languages of New Zealand (in particular Māori).*

That was also the approach taken by the last major attempt to provide a single-volume coverage of the whole canon: Jenny Bornholdt, Gregory O'Brien, and Mark Williams' *Anthology of New Zealand Poetry in English* (Auckland: Oxford, 1997).

There's a certain undeniable convenience to confining oneself solely to the English language. As Governor William L. Harding of Iowa put it, in response to criticism of his WWI regulation banning church services in foreign languages: "There is no use in anyone wasting his time praying in other languages than English. God is listening only to the English tongue."[1]

I can't say that I feel particularly comfortable with the idea, though. As I understand it, our nation is based on a partnership between (on the one hand) the tangata whenua, the people of the land, and (on the other) any and all subsequent immigrants to the country. This agreement is embodied in that deceptively simple document known as the Treaty of Waitangi.

It would be nice if one could believe that the Māori and English texts of the Treaty say exactly the same thing. That is far from being the case, however, as William Colenso warned while it was being drafted.

Nor was it signed by everyone. There were significant hold-outs in various parts of the country: the Urewera, for instance, and much of the

[1] Quoted in Bill Bryson, *One Summer: America 1927* (London: Doubleday, 2013): 187.

South Island. They could justly claim that whoever the Treaty covered, it wasn't them.

Nevertheless, for all its faults and omissions and blind spots, the Treaty remains the foundation of our state, and we can't ignore the principles of bi-culturalism embodied in it.

So, while I welcome the concept of New Zealand *poetries* rather than New Zealand *poetry*: the rich gamut of cultures and languages which now exist in our islands expressing themselves in many languages and forms – in the original and in translation, in dual-text and oral form – I continue to feel that no definition of New Zealand poetry which attempts to sideline or depreciate poetry and song in Te Reo can be taken seriously.

It's the principal subject of poetic interest for audiences outside New Zealand, and so it should be: we're fooling ourselves if we think otherwise.

I was therefore fascinated to hear what Robert Sullivan, our feature poet, had to say on the subject (in the interview printed on pp. 25-40 of this issue). As a Pākehā New Zealander, I took particular note of his comments about "the need to represent one's own stories." He does, however, specify that:

> *when I was younger I used to think if you're not Māori you shouldn't be using Māori terms because you don't understand the significance, but I've changed my mind about that. I think it's better to promote the use of the language. But bringing it into poetry – well, readers of poetry can be quite pernickety. They'll look it up, and they'll actually deepen an understanding of Māori poetics.*

•

There were a great many submissions for this issue of *Poetry NZ Yearbook*. It took us a long time to read and consider them all, and while we included as many as we could of the excellent poems you sent in, there is, inevitably, a limit to this process.

As a result, and to shorten the length of time some contributors have had to wait for a decision, we've decided to confine submissions in future to a three-month period: from **May 1st** to **July 31st** of each year, in fact: beginning in 2016. This will enable us to have a clearer sense of the dimensions of each issue before making our final choices.

Another reason for this change is because I'm very happy to announce that *Poetry NZ* will in future be published by Massey University Press.

While this will not affect the editorial policy or present direction of the journal, it does have certain implications for our production schedule.

Poetry NZ Yearbook will, in future, appear towards the beginning rather than the end of the year, so the submissions collected in 2016 will actually appear in *PNZ Yearbook* 3 (February / March 2017). This does mean a longer interval between *Yearbook* 2 and *Yearbook* 3 than we would have wished for, but we hope that the establishment of the new ***Poetry NZ* Poetry Prize** (details of which will shortly be announced online: on the *PNZ* website and elsewhere) will provide enough stimulation to bridge the gap.

One of the first submissions I received for the present issue was from veteran actor / poet / Renaissance man Peter Bland, who wrote: "It occurred to me that I hadn't contributed to Poetry NZ (ex NZ Poetry Yearbook) since 1958!! So I thought it was high time I tried again." I have to say that it's remarks like that which really brighten up an editor's day: the continuous chain of poetry yearbooks and bi-annual issues from 1951 to 2015 (with occasional gaps, admittedly) becomes quite awe-inspiring to contemplate.

It is, however, with equal excitement that I welcome so many new voices, young and old, local and international, to this issue of *PNZ*.

•

As far as the poetics section goes, the essays and reviews, I thought I should explain here why some books have received full reviews and others only a brief notice. This is principally due to the date the books arrived. Titles which came in after our submissions deadline of 31st July have been "noticed" rather than reviewed simply because of the time required for any reviewer to read and absorb a book.

The distinction, I should stress, is never based on any pre-conceived opinion that one book is more important and worthy than another. I did my best to organise reviews of all the books received before that date.

I have, however, not commissioned complete reviews of separate issues of journals: these are clearly important publications in their own right, but it's doubtful whether they can be said – except in rare instances – to have the unity of purpose of a book of poetry. They do, however, certainly merit as full a notice as we can possibly give them.

– Dr Jack Ross, Massey University, 8-12 October 2015

Robert Sullivan

heads the School of Creative Writing at Manukau Institute of Technology. Before that, he was Associate Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He has published seven books of poetry to date, as well as two graphic novels. He also wrote the libretto for the oratorio *Orpheus in Rarohenga* by composer John Psathas, and has edited and co-edited a number of anthologies and special issues of Academic Journals. He recently completed a Ph.D. at the University of Auckland.

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1. Condom on The Iliad

I didn't see it land on the Fagles translation until later
by the bed. For hours, empires rose and fell
with my bad entendres. It was a waste of good latex,
like my first proper date –
we went to see *The Meaning of Life*
(the one with the lovely sperm song)
and even had a restaurant meal
but we were only sixteen,
and I wasn't on top of my game cause
I took this girl out despite Mum
telling me not to, so I couldn't get off the bus
to walk her home and give her a kiss
which is what I really wanted, and not talk
about the Python lyrics
because I'd be late home.

2. I am Michael Joseph Savage

and glad to have helped your Dad out
in his darkest hour, and your Mum too.
Whose darkest hour is it? Pops
needs constant hospital care. He knows enough
to say he doesn't want to be a burden
on his family and that he should
go into care, says Mum crying.
Thank you Michael Joseph.
We couldn't have afforded it
without you.

3. I am Colonel Wynyard

and can see my old house from Robert's flat.
It doesn't have a plaque from the Historic Places
so I'm slightly worried they might bowl it
just like they bowled Robert's old house
which lies beneath the new Med School
extension. My old house is perched
quite close to a motorway at the end
of Grafton Gully. Yet I know
Robert, my grandson going forward
six generations, gets a lot out of that house
as he looks from his flat balcony.

I do.

4. I am Pomare II

and not quite myself given
the French knitting that is DNA.
I gave our daughter's hand away
to Wynyard's son, George, believing
the colonel would keep us from further trouble.
He did. It's true. The pa of the signs of peace,
Puketohunoa, remains unburnt, unbombed.
My wife's Uncle has written
a stirring haka, "Ka Mate"
which will bind us.
I have died but I live.
That's whakapapa.

5. Daddy

almost has dementia. That's why
he's in hospital care about a 5 minute drive
from Mum. When I was little he'd drive us
to Cornwallis and we'd pick pipis but he'd carry me
from the surf up to the grass so my feet
wouldn't get sandy. We got caught
in the harbour once in the dinghy –
our motor gave out so he rowed us
for a couple of hours at least
back to the jetty. He got sunburnt.
Dad always got sunburnt cause
he was always a shade of pink.
His hands were blistered. I remember
him soaking in the bath after
in our flat in Grafton, but we
had been on an adventure.
Thanks, Dad.

6. Nana

kept monarch butterflies everywhere –
in her garden, in glass terrariums, as caterpillars,
chrysalises, and as bright birds of insectdom.
She bicycled throughout Otaki, looked after
her brother, my Uncle Bob, who my father
is named after. She was an avid lawn bowls
player. I remember Christmases where our Nana
and my aunts did the cooking. It was the only time
of the year we would say grace. I think
Nana had a cat but I can't remember.
I do remember her talking to me
about being Māori, which was quite
something because Nana's on the Pākehā
side of the family, but my Nana knew
she was Māori too because of her mother
and it helped me. Thanks, Nana.

I remember her laugh, beach time,
our big Conlon family, and the Otaki sunshine.

7. The surge black fissure

is when I know I've got there –
thanks Allen! I saw two ghosts
at my grandfather's funeral
hovering like black piano keys
in front of my grandfather's house.
I saw them. My grandparents
once billeted the artist Arnold Wilson
at their home in Karetu
and now he has gone too
into the fissure. I press
my fingers into the grass
on the hill where my family's pa
sits. I hear the creek
playing like Thelonius Monk.

8. Sensory Garden

Mum bought Dad a battery radio. He needs a TV though.
I remember him listening to the races every weekend,
but I didn't know he was a bookie.
I'm a book maker of sorts too.
His sort meant we'd go to the gallops and the trots –
our Ford Zephyr was called Galloping Gertie which I guessed
was a racehorse until I googled it and found a ragtime tune.
Our friends' horse was called Speedy Demo – named after
their Dad's wrecking business in Arch Hill.
Our dinghy's name was The Queen Mary. Dad always
had his eye on bigger things. His favourite shower song,

> "I would say such wonderful things to you.
> There would be such wonderful things to do
> if you were the only girl in the world
> and I were the only boy."

Now Dad's in a rest home in Upper Hutt.
It was good to talk to him this morning
even if it was only on the phone.
I'm writing this in a scent garden
sheltering from the rain.
It's spring but the flowers
aren't heady yet.
I'm gazing on the tiny leaves
of an olive tree.
Titoki Street is so calm,
not like my Grafton childhood
and our fears driven by money.
Yet Mum and Dad got married.
Like Kylie Minogue. Lucky.

9. Māra kai

Living on the other side of the Museum now
is the adult side. Grafton is where I was a child.
The things I know now I wish I knew then!
This sensory garden does invite the skin and ears.
I can hear the soft rain, cars swishing and thrumming,
the odd bird, splashes and drips, cool spring
on my soles even through my shoes,
the pressed warmth of the back of my left knee
on top of the right one, gentle movements
of the olive leaves, native and exotic bird calls –
some like ref whistles, others on slower patterns,
tyres like Velcro tears, birds like quiet
microwave ovens, muffled roaring vehicles,
circling wheels and spray.
I see the results of rain
by the splash of puddles, and see
the occasional drop from a leaf – that sort of rain –
the occasional cluck. The breeze
is like a big beer fridge.
The sunlight and the starlight know this.

10. King Tawhiao's Garden

The entrance to the king's food garden
was the old tree surrounded by carvings
on Pukekawa, opposite Auckland Museum,
where he defended the city
from the great tribes to the north.

I am but a dolphin diving in the backdrop
of this tree, swimming through the earth.

Jack Ross

An Interview with Robert Sullivan
[audio recording – 6 September, 2015]

- **Alistair Paterson told me he awarded you first prize in a nationwide secondary school poetry competition in the 1970s.**

Yeah, it was a long time ago, and Alistair's very fond of saying to me that he discovered me. I think I'd already been accepted by *Landfall* back then. But those young writer's prizes, they really encourage the young voice, and I don't think I would have been as confident about putting my stuff out there if I hadn't had that boost early on, so thanks Alistair!

- **So were you already sending out poems to magazines when you were at school?**

No, I just sat on my work. Actually most of my work went into writing letters. I had this penfriend, Dermot Delany, in Dublin, and we'd write all these rather intense things that teenagers talk about. It was good fun. Now I think that constant penmanship did help with my writing, funnily enough. I didn't really come from a very bookish household.

- **When did you start thinking of yourself as a poet, as opposed to just somebody who wrote poems as well as other things?**

I was never very confident, except that I had this primary school teacher, Mrs. Ngaea, and she had our class do an exercise about writing what we saw in the sky. So we all sat outside in a group on the grass, and I talked about being a boy hunting an alligator lying in the grass. And she made such a big song and dance about it that I really felt that I was a poet, from the age of ten. I was absolutely certain.

That was really my big Ah-ha moment, but then of course I didn't have the talent to back that up. It wasn't until I got to uni, my first year at uni, that it really started happening for me. I just started knocking on people's doors in the English Department. I was actually only eighteen, but I was quite serious. So I knocked on Albert Wendt's door, because

he had a visiting professorship that year. And Michele Leggott's, and Alex Calder's – anyone who'd see me, basically. I knocked on Ranginui Walker's door in Māori studies.

For quite a shy young man I had a purpose. I wanted to get the best information, I was quite driven. I was obsessed – I like to think it was the way Ezra Pound was obsessed. You can see it in his essays. That's one of the books that Alex Calder told me to read, the *Selected Essays*. I still rely on it a lot.

- **I've been reading some of the new poems that you've sent me, and it struck me that those, as well as a lot of your other poems I've read, are based on genealogy and whakapapa. Is that a matter of personal choice, or do you see that as an essential part of your job as a poet?**

I guess it's part of the tale of the tribe – coming from a collective background, even though I'm now in a terribly nuclear set-up. I'm a Westerner. I don't live in my Mum's village. And yet, that's where most of my thoughts go to and these ones I've just sent you, Jack, they're my Dad's side.

It's Father's Day today. My father's been quite ill. He's in a rest home. So it's got me thinking about the Pākehā side of my family a lot more: the Conlons, which is my Dad's surname. I guess I've always drawn on the idea of being Irish. I haven't actually paid attention to the detail of being Irish in New Zealand.

My wife, Anne Kennedy, she's always been completely Irish, one hundred percent Irish, and she really draws on that in her work. And I've really just made some little gestures, like the odd reference to Yeats and Heaney.

- **But you call yourself Irish in your bio-notes.**

Yeah, Galway Irish. I think I offended an Irishman, actually, overseas, while I was in the States. I put up a little poster and it said "Galway Irish" and I could have got away with that at home. I didn't quite understand; I still don't understand.

- **That you were making a claim that he thought you had no right to?**

Yeah. I've been to Galway Bay, and I've been to Roscommon, where my grandfather's from.

- **There are poems about Ireland in *Voice Carried My Family*, but I guess fewer poems from that side than from the other side. That's an equally important part of who you are?**

I think what it does … it's a bit like being a poet, you get to carry a licence and wave it around to spout forth on all sorts of topics with no expertise. I'm not into phoney wisdom, but that side of me, it's still a mystery. It's not as deep, I guess, because I'm in the homeland of my Mum's people. I'm not even in my Dad's Māori homeland, because he's part Māori. He's from the South Island. I just don't know enough about that side of the family, about his Māori roots.

- **That diaspora, that feeling of exile you get from Colonialism, is a problem for a lot of writers in the British post-colonial countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand …**

Yes, I read a book called *Zong*, by Glenys Phillips, and it's a kind of slave narrative, about a ship full of slave women, on their way to the Caribbean, which I guess was a staging post for the slave trade then. In storms, they'd just toss them overboard, and that book really consists of the sound of them sighing. There'll be long stretches made up of the letters S O. Sometimes S O S. Sometimes O S. It's dotted all around the pages, and sometimes that diasporic, that post-colonial experience just isn't utterable in ordinary language and so the S O or the S O S is perhaps all you can say that's sensible: sensibly.

- **I've been looking at the recent anthology of Māori Poetry in English you co-edited with Reina Whaitiri. In the introduction you say "the major criteria for inclusion in *Puna Wai Kōrero* was declaring tribal affiliation/s." That seemed a really interesting sentence to me, and I thought you might like to enlarge on what you meant by that.**

Now, hearing it read back to me, I think really the main thing is declaring that you're Māori. If a writer in some way expressed that they were Māori, we would have included them. It does sound as if having a tribal affiliation is another layer, but really we were just looking for a sense of identity as being a Māori writer. I'm aware of other writers who have Māori whakapapa who don't actually acknowledge it, or who aren't confident enough to assert that identity. So they don't. They're quite prominent writers, so I guess that filter also brings out a sense of being Māori as an identity within the poetry. Whether it's voiced or unvoiced, it will always be there to some extent. So that is a bias of the collection, I suppose.

- **It's often said that a large number of contemporary Māori no longer have a tribal affiliation, or no longer know their affiliation. So, in effect, they would almost have to research their genealogy in order to qualify?**

Yes. Though it never cropped up as an issue so far as I could tell. We put the call out through our networks: like Toi Māori Aotearoa. It's possible that someone might have missed out on a call because they felt they weren't affiliated with an iwi, but I don't think that actually occurred. Theoretically it could have done, I suppose.

- **For me that ties in with something I heard you say last year at a conference in Wellington. You gave a keynote speech, and afterwards one of the Australian delegates asked you to explain the "Parihaka story" (for want of a better term), and you replied that it wasn't your story to tell, because your affiliations are with Northland, and it's a Taranaki story which you didn't feel confident to expound. Is that a reasonably accurate account of what you said?**

I think so. I've always had this funny feeling – it's a feeling, rather than a theory – about the need to represent one's own stories. Like I have my own family story, my own ancestors. There's been a significant book of poetry, *Atua Wera*, by Kendrick Smithyman. That whole book is about one of my ancestors, and I felt quite perplexed. Because I loved Kendrick, but I also felt quite conflicted, as if someone had reached into my family

album and decided to tell that story before I could. So I try to practice what I preach in that regard.

- **And yet, if one were to continue that argument, it's a fact that you contributed a poem to the 2001 exhibition catalogue *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*. That's different from telling the story?**

Yeah, there I just relied on public accounts, historical accounts, whereas I felt that, because – as you know, Kendrick was a fantastic researcher. I used to use the university library back in the days when you had cards in the pockets at the backs of books, and you'd see the signature Kendrick Smithyman on almost all of the cards.

- **I believe there was once a bet in the Auckland University English Department: to win it you had to go into the library and find a book that Kendrick *hadn't* taken out.**

But I actually think that he had some archival material too. Some of the things he was saying in that collection were just too mysterious for words. And it's a great collection, and it did fire me up for some other work, anyway.

- ***Star Waka* was your response to it, to *Atua Wera*?**

Yes, it was.

- ***Star Waka* is a very personal collection. It's speculative at times, but it's always based in your life, your connections. So it was the *kind* of poetry it was that was your response to *Atua Wera*?**

I liked the structure of *Atua Wera*, the numbering sequence, it got me thinking how to reproduce something like that in *Star Waka*. You know, the astronomy, the mathematics, the sequencing in that book owes something to *Atua Wera*, actually: the very clever way Kendrick would dip between different numbered sequences, shift it around temporally. So that's what I tried to do in *Star Waka*. I borrowed that technique. That's the main connection, actually, and then me feeling fired up to tell my story. There are lots of influences on that poetry.

- **I share very strongly your sense that certain stories belong to you to tell, and certain others don't. I'm always quite surprised that some writers don't feel any embarrassment or difficulty in telling stories which it seems to me *aren't* theirs to tell. For instance, if I were to write a poem about a slave ship going from Liverpool to the West Indies, I could couch it as an historical narrative maybe, but I don't really feel that it's my story to tell unless I had a relative who was a slave captain. *Then* it could become my story: my shame to expiate.**

Yeah, when I was younger I used to think if you're not Māori you shouldn't be using Māori terms because you don't understand the significance, but I've changed my mind about that. I think it's better to promote the use of the language. But bringing it into poetry – well, readers of poetry can be quite pernickety. They'll look it up, and they'll actually deepen an understanding of Māori poetics.

We just had a High School competition, and this wonderful young poet, Emily Fan, she just won first prize, and she'd studied Māori, and she's not Māori, but she used this term *me te wai korari*, and I had to look it up, and it's about the sweetness of the flax flower, the nectar inside it, and I thought "what a strong image".

Because her poem is about the flattery of a too brief relationship – a suitor was flattering this young woman – her name was Hinemoa, in her poem, and you could see all of that just in that little flax flower image coming from the Māori, and flax is actually a symbol for the family in Māori poetics, and also the song of the bellbird is in a famous proverb to do with flax, so I could see lots and lots of things just in that *me te wai korari* term in an English-language poem by a non-Māori poet. These things are just beginning.

- **And yet, there is a kind of clichéd use of Māori which surely *isn't* that, *isn't* based on a close study of the language or deep knowledge of Māori tradition.**

Yeah, I actually don't go out of my way to read that material. I don't really know about that. You mean like in *Kowhai Gold*, that anthology?

- **Yeah, as far back as that, but also as far forward as, say, James K. Baxter, though of course you could argue that he did have**

quite a strong knowledge of Māori protocol and language. Nevertheless, he did seem to think that it was more or less his job to be the spokesperson.

Yeah, funnily enough. But I was too young when Baxter died. I was a toddler, so I really don't know enough about his kind of person. He had a Māori family. His wife was a prominent Māori writer, J. C. Sturm. I always wondered about that with Jacquie, though. Perhaps he did get in the way of her writing.

- **I guess the reason I'm interested in pursuing this idea is just because I wonder if we've reached a point where European, or European-descended poets have to learn to back off certain subjects? perhaps what we need is more Māori writers writing about New Zealand than European writers trying to imagine the Māori experience of New Zealand.**

Yes, we're in an interesting time because Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera are still flourishing. And in the States you've still got Native American writers like Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie, he's a younger one, and N. Scott Momaday.

I don't want to talk out of turn. But, you know, it's still very selective in the States. Sherman Alexie would be about it. There's Joy Harjo, in poetry, as well, so there's some other voices, but Sherman Alexie seems to have had the consecration. He's acceptable. Even though he writes about rather crazy things, rather desperately crazy things.

- **Yes, and he deliberately writes in a kind of pop culture context and he's done films as well, very successfully.**

Whereas here, Alan Duff's a bit younger than Witi and Patricia, but we haven't had … there are a number of novelists, and poets.

- **But there are complex figures like Taika Waititi.**

Yeah, he's great.

- **He is himself, he does his thing, he can't really be typed, but nevertheless he's a strongly Māori artist.**

Yes, he's a storyteller. I should remember that, too, that film is so important now, yeah, and there are some really big films in Māori and Pasifika as well.

- **I think you also said at one point that the idea of the *Puna Wai Kōrero* anthology was so there would cease to be three or four Māori poets that everyone could think of, but a lot more?**

Yes, it's against that kind of consecrating system: it works everywhere in the world, you know, there's this system of prizes, and publications and publishers and booksellers, and it all wheels in around itself and it's self-perpetuating. What it means is that it doesn't allow other voices to come into that wheel. I'm borrowing this idea from Bourdieu: what he calls "the field of cultural production." I've just finished my PhD. It's all done, and I'm going to graduate at the end of this month!

- **I gather it was a fairly long process?**

It was very long, surprisingly long. I should get an Academic book out of it, though, hopefully.

- **Will that be about Māori poetry?**

It's actually about Māori *and* Pasifika poetry, because I'm looking at the Moana as a metaphor for reading the poetics, and using a term like "field of cultural production" leads to more of a sense of that production, because, you know, it's not an *Aqua Nullius*, it's actually quite a storied ocean that we come from. The ocean is more like a highway than a barrier to cultures, so I just felt that using the rhythm of the tides to read Moana, Pacific, poets' work seemed quite apt because it's our conversational rhythm, it seems to come out of the culture more – at least in the English language poetry. The indigenous language poetry is more formal, quite ritualistic. I had a lot of fun, doing lots of close readings.

- **I was going to ask you at some point how you handle the connections between being a teacher, an Academic teacher, and a writer as well. I mean, you must spend an awful lot of**

time working on other people's writing as well as working within the Academic system. Is it an uncomfortable fit?

When I was a lot younger. But, you know, I've always been a fan of Ezra Pound and I always say "make it new" in every creative writing workshop that I run, every single class: and I also believe in his dictum that "only emotion endures." And it's really passion that I'm enabling. The passion should already be there, but you've got to make sure that it's got a life, to know how to grow it. Lots of other role models kick in: it's a bit like coaching. I really do think that being a teacher is very like being a coach. And if you know that the student's listening, they'll go far.

It's not because of what *you* say, your own success. I think your students should always be more successful than you if you really want them to flourish. It's not really *about* you as a teacher, and your ego, it's about showing them that the ego isn't a healthy place to be, about not being too ego-driven. I'm losing myself now in my thread, but I think it's very important to be a passionate writer, even if you're being terribly cynical in your poetic or your approach or kaupapa: the themes that you cover. It must fire you up.

As long as you show them that, and they see it, that's all they need. You don't need to tell them what to write or even how to write, because *they've* got their passion, they've got the rocket fuel.

- **In Russia they used to have this phrase: "the cult of personality." It always seemed to me that there's a sort of cult-of-personality teaching, where people aspire to be gurus, and to build themselves through the admiration of students. Many people see this as almost the ideal of teaching, whereas I tend to agree with you that it's really the negation of teaching. Unless you at least hope that your students surpass you, you're not really teaching at all. You have to try to enable what's already there, to come out.**

Yes, I think that's why Bill Manhire is so successful, actually. I don't know Bill very well, but it appears to me that he parks his ego, or he doesn't appear to have an ego as a teacher. And he brings it out through the workshop process.

- **Yes, and I think that while people may imitate Bill Manhire, or try to imitate him, I don't think that's ever been his aim.**

I don't know enough about his former students, but I haven't really detected anyone who actually captures what he does in his own poetry.

- **No, I think that in a sense the idea of a Manhire school is not so, because even if you could follow his teaching methods, he doesn't really have any followers in his poetics.**

He's a unique voice, yes.

- **What you were saying before about the field of cultural production, and the star system: the writer as brand, if you like, is also true of Academia. Yet you too could be said to be the beneficiary of that. After all, you *are* constructing a poetic career.**

Yeah, I've been a poet since I was quite young – a serious poet since I was 18.

- **And you now have a considerable body of work.**

Yeah, I've slowed down actually, partially because of the PhD, but I used to have this rule of thumb, I'd bring a book out every three years. I thought three years is enough time to let things gel. But just my own books: it's been five years since my last book. I bought two books out in 2010, so I'm allowing myself something there.

- **That career as a whole, obviously you can't foresee the end of it, but do you feel that you've gone places you wouldn't have foreseen in your early writing?**

Oh, God, yeah. When I first started writing poetry, I was just writing in my bedroom. I must say that apart from – well, I had a poster of Brooke Shields, but I'd also made up a poster of one of Bill Manhire's poems: "An Outline". I was just obsessed with poetry.

And I could never have imagined doing the things I've done: travelling, and meeting other poets, and, yeah, it's been a wild buzz actually. I could never have imagined.

You know, if you'd gone to a career-path High School counsellor and told them that you wanted to be a poet, I don't think that they would have encouraged that.

- **I suspect not! Sorry to keep harping on about the subject, but another thing you say in the introduction to *Puna Wai Kōrero* is: "In most previous anthologies of NZ poetry, Māori poets, while there, have been given only cursory acknowledgement." Why *is* that?**

Now another part of my PhD, also borrowed from Bourdieu, is this idea of "habitus" – you know, this idea that a person just focuses on their own world, basically: the world that they come from. So if the editors aren't Māori they won't be focusing on Māori poetry, I'm afraid. And if they're not Pasifika or they're not Asian New Zealanders, or they're not women, they'll tend to see what they want to see. And I think that's what's happened in the past with our big anthologies. There hasn't been a big one very recently: not for poetry. You know Curnow did that 1960 one, the Penguin, there are some Māori poets in there, in Te Reo.

- **And in the 1985 Penguin one, more comprehensively.**

Yes, that's better.

- **I don't think there were any poems in Te Reo in the 1997 Oxford one: the title specifies *New Zealand Poetry in English*.**

No, and that was partly the inspiration for this anthology. When Oxford was still here they asked me to put together one, but I sat on it for a long time. And I'm really pleased with the result. We've got about sixty Māori poets in this one volume. And actually there are more that I've discovered since we published this. I dearly hope that we do get this second chance.

You know, the story of Māori poetry in English and the story of Pasifika poetry in English is, I think, one that still needs to be told. In the Māori case it's bounded by being within New Zealand. We've got an Australian outlier now, and there's always been a London one. It's just as small as we want it to be or as big as we want it to be. I just don't like the historical belittlement of our literature.

- **English-speaking people have always been resistant to having to learn another language.**

True.

- **And continue to be. So can you foresee a renaissance of Māori poetry in Māori as well as in English?**

Oh, it's always been there. You just have to look at the National Kapa Haka competition, Te Matatini, there's lots of new compositions in that. They might call it dance, but the lyrics are all poetry. And it's flourishing. It's got its own spot on Māori television, and the crowds that they draw …

It's not just haka that are being performed, there are waiata, there are love songs, there are tangi. Although I don't want to wax too eloquent about the health of it. The health of the language itself is at risk. I've enough Māori to know that.

What bugs me is, you know, that there isn't bilingual signage everywhere. Because a Māori speaker like me, if I don't see bilingual signage I forget, quite rapidly, the few Māori terms I've got. So any fluency I've got just goes out the window.

- **In your anthology you also mention Apirana Ngata's classic compilation *Ngā Mōteatea: the Songs*, and while it's a magnificent book, what fascinates me about it is that while the publication was started in the 1950s, it was only finished ten years ago: with CDs, and complete translations, and all. It's almost like the national epic of New Zealand. Why did it take so long?**

You're right. It is a cultural treasure, and it should have had some serious funding earlier on to make it happen. Although the expertise was hard won. We've had some wonderful editors of those volumes, like Pei Te Hurinui Jones, Hirini Moko Reed, Jane McRae …

- **Is that expertise lessening, or is it growing?**

I think part of the problem is that I come out of an English Studies context and I'm not really an expert on the Māori studies context in that way. I went to a Māori Studies conference, a national and international conference. I didn't present a paper, I was just there, and actually there

were lots of panels on poetry. There was even a Hawaiian session, for instance.

I think, within that kind of Māori studies context, or Indigenous Studies context, poetry is part of the weave of knowledge. And so that holistic indigenous frame of reference does draw on poetry quite constantly, it's constantly renewing itself.

And because I just live in a Western, English-language context I know that I don't know enough about that. But I do like to think that having collections like *Puna Wai Kōrero* or *Ngā Mōteatea* does put fruit on that tree called biculturalism.

I'm a Northern Māori, though as you know with a bit of South Island Māori in me too, and our people were the first people in the treaty. We were the first signatories, and I like to think that that contributes to a kind of partnership that should flow into all areas of life, and actually poetics is one of those areas.

It's a way of thinking that we draw on on the great occasions: life and death and marriage: births, even. And if we don't, in a few years our poetics, with our tangata whenua kind of conscientising, will be lost, will become a reason to lose our soul. I know that the word "soul" is a dangerous term, but still …

- **So is poetry.**

Yeah, poetry *is* a dangerous term. There's a level of care, not just ideas, but it's the connection between ideas and the heart which is the poetic space.

- **Are there further things you'd like to put on record here?**

Oh, Jack, you know you haven't asked me about my political poetry.

- **Do you want to talk about your political poetry?**

I don't know.

- **Well, there's a quote here from *Voice Carried My Family*: "We see their racism everywhere / It lives on."**

That's from my poem about the foreshore and seabed controversy, that's where I got quite political. You know, I was living overseas when that

book, *Voice Carried My Family*, came out, and I was feeling terribly hurt – which is weird, eh – about the foreshore and seabed stuff, and I got very hurt. I think it was because I was reading the *Herald Online*.

- ***Never* read the *NZ Herald*!**

[Laughs] Well, it just seemed rather one-sided. I was getting quite cross, so I kind of – yeah, I don't know if my sense of New Zealand and my sense of this place got a bit warped, because I was overseas.

- **But to be *too* nuanced can be a mistake, as well: sometimes you need a bit of a manifesto …**

I do think that foreshore and seabed legislation was a big mistake.

- **It was a colossal political error. Though it remains mysterious to this day, because no-one can explain clearly what the previous law was and what the new one meant.**

Yeah, it was the sense that the rule of law could be changed. That's why I think we need some kind of supreme court with a bit of teeth. We really thought we had a deal.

- **And that was the Labour Party.**

And that particular Prime Minister, Helen Clark, which was a real surprise. She was a very good Prime Minister, except in that one area.

- **So do you think of a lot of your poetry as being politically motivated?**

It's always conscientised. I'm aware of it. but it popped up then. It was the foreshore and seabed that really hotted things up for me.

- **That's quite Irish, in a sense, because of the strong political tradition there: Yeats's "1916". It was always part of his poetry, but especially after the Easter Rising had occurred.**

Yeah, that's right. So I started to look around for other political poetries: there was one about the Peterloo massacre, there was a protest and a massacre in Manchester – was that Shelley?

- ***I met Murder on the way – / He had a mask like Castlereagh.***

Yes, and of course Swift and Pope. You know I started finding that these people who are quite political; they're in the canon. Not that I'm into canons, but I started thinking, why can't *I* write some political stuff?

- **Of course Pound wrote a lot of political poetry.**

Let's not go there. He's a worry!

- **He's certainly scared a lot of people off politics!**

That's true. I've tended to find it mostly in poets before the war, except for the Russians. So, yeah, I think we need to reserve that powerful voice – we've let it go for this quieter, more social, polite discourse we tend to have these days. In New Zealand poetry we risk losing that voice.

- **And even in an alleged classless society the poetic voice becomes very middle-class, complacent and privileged: the voice of economic advantage. And while we may have our right to speak, we don't have the right to be the only ones speaking.**

No, and there's a reactionary politics tucked in there.

I think I'd go further and say that the political dimension also brings in an emotional claim – it constitutes a holistic claim on our attention. I think that's why people are drawn to biographies even though we *know* we should be reading the text, that they're not really about the writer.

- **I used to apologise for reading biographies, but not any more.**

I read some of Andrew Motion's poetry and it helped to have read his memoir: quite a lot actually. It really opened an emotional door for me into his poetry, which I don't think I would have quite got otherwise.

And when Hone Tuwhare died, and I put together this "in memoriam" special issue of *Ka Mate Ka Ora*, Michelle Keown's piece talked about

Christopher Caudwell, and how Hone had read *Illusion and Reality* and that kind of blew my mind. I realised that he'd been reading very high theory quite early on in his poetic career, and he knew Marxist Modernist theory. In there, Caudwell talks about "affective significance". The idea that folks – just like with Bourdieu's "habitus" – attach emotions to the objects of everyday reality. And that's what writers do, they imbue objects with emotion.

Robert Sullivan
[Photograph: Bronwyn Lloyd]

James Ackhurst

A Rhinoceros

Master: Bring me my rhinoceros-horn fan
Student: Sorry, master; it is broken.
Master: Then bring me the rhinoceros.

About poetry, old Wystan, you were rarely wrong:
how it rarely strays into the nets
of zealous lepidopterists,
but sometimes settles in the palms
of those who let things happen.
Just think of Icarus.

You were standing there,
spouting a load of summery air
about artists and creativity
and sticking your dull pin through me;
and then outside, the smoke from your cigarette
fluttering off,
you spoke of being in the moment, hippy shit,
and how each one is transient.

I thought, *she doesn't know about MacNeice*
or how he snared bright critters at the Prep,
but she has a pretty face
and a rhinoceros behind her.
Tempus fugit.

I gave two dollars to a transient
who told a stream of dirty jokes
to my delight and your ambivalence.
What do you call two Irish gay blokes?

Patrick FitzMurphy and Murphy FitzPatrick,
and as I blinked around your pollen lipstick
I caught a transient in the corner of my eye
snatch out your wallet and then turn to fly;
I gave chase, grabbed him in my two hands,

and sure enough we found the leathery thing
cocooned in his dark pants;
unfolded it, to check its dormant bling.

And as in that adventure of my other life,
Lord Jim, the old German goes on about his lof,
and tells about the day he found upon his knees
a living emblem of all life's romance;
so did I, having slain my enemies,
lying on your bed espy
a crappy cardboard cut-out butterfly –
it had been hanging over us all night,
a clumsy paradigm of all arrested flight.

Gary Allen

The deposition

My father found the black dog in the desert
that was in forty-one
snuffling among the ruins and broken tombs of Kom el Shoqafa
and it sickened him
like a gorged tick on the body
or foul water at the bottom of a jerrycan.

The deepest well is the mind,
the Arab hashish seller mocked him,
In the desert, the Jackal is death –
but my father had seen too much too soon
and vowed never to have children.

Here, the slab stones lie in upon one another
as if the mind has too much space under the disillusion of the sun
the cemeteries have become rubbish tips
of cans and bones and carrion
of the half-mad and the simply lost:
when the troopship left Alexandria
he thought it was over, but it followed him
sucking the marrow from his joints for over fifty years
keeping a dogged distance

a life of game show re-runs
on busted portable televisions with wire hanger aerials
where the mind runs on auto like a humming fridge
smiling like Berryman forever falling backwards
into the coal yard beside the Mississippi
or Mayakovsky on the subway riding round and round
with a bottle of meth's and film scripts and persecution

until he was left illusory , shackled limbs under an orange sky
that hung above him, as he lay, all sharp angular bone
upon the sofa, already floating
through the dwarf pines and the yew trees
his voice remote, yet strangely sensitive
as he spoke into my ear, I never wanted you.

John Allison

Dead Reckoning

Fifteen. Just fifteen. Young to be
wielding that double-barrelled Remington
in the ox-bow marshes

with my soon-to-be-drowned
best friend. The morning sunlight gleamed
bright as brass and all the ducks

were flying high. Disappointed
we turned for home. Along the stop-bank
squatted on a bare willow

branch, a kingfisher
in blue iridescent glory, its black-beaded
eye transfixed on anything

moving in the slack backwater...
The shotgun came too casually, so quickly
up to my shoulder

and those lucent brilliancies
tumbled to the ground and lay quivering
in shattered light. Only I laughed.

And did not weep about it until
many years later, seeing youthful Parsifal
shoot down the swan.

I am become the Fisher King.
The hour is late, the wound aches, and still
my friend is looking at me.

Bill Angus

God knows what the dead bequeath

God knows what the dead bequeath:
An Irish girl's good looks
The tall Moch Môn's ginger gene
A conman's love of books
The honesty of a conman's son
A brave, determined life built
Through war, hard toil, disease
Wasting bitterness, and towards the end,
Blessed release.
A crowd-housed girl five times bereaved, now widowed,
The Angleseyman buried in iron-rich soil,
As her brothers, Frank, Joseph, Walter
Lay around Havringcourt since 1918
Her loss turned illness to gain
Through the deep agencies
Of her daughter's powerful smile, her voice, singing:
How marvellous, how wonderful
And my song shall ever be…
So you've got to get out and live life: it's there for the living;
You're a long time dead,
Oh yes, my lovely children's children's children,
You're a long time dead.

Ruth Arnison

Not talking

We are not talking about babies.
And because we are not, they are everywhere.

We avoid town, after an acquaintance touched
my still bumpy belly, and said *not long now*.

A friend calls to visit with her baby daughter.
Daughter, a word we no longer own.

Baby tears blur our vision as we gently
cradle her photos.

We register her birth, then ask for paperwork
to register a death. Her name, her name.

Nick Ascroft

Dumplings

Throw him out like dough on a flour-dusted table,

Put you wrists into it, your back–hh–sacrum, hips,
Get a knee up, weight your thick of your femur from
Up your upper leg to its lock: let him, in your knuckles

And short breaths, feel–ff–hh–ff–it, the dumpling
Furl of your pelvic girdle. Left to moisten, commingle,
They've been aching thirty minutes

Under a sultry towel, while you slit and drained
The bok choy (*paâk ts'oì*: white vegetable–ff–hh–
Gamine little vegetable) and indexed it in ground pork,

Just a zaftig waft of scent to salve: dry sherry and
Ginger, sweat-odouring scallions, and its oil's bitter sesame.
Throw him out like the dough of a dumpling skin,

Ease him onto his chest on a dusted table.
And engrossed in it, licking like a gecko, roll him.
The dowel works the handfuls of dough to skins

Of a half-moon, and furrows pleats of their outer arc.
Everything has waited to steam in clammy bamboo:
The soyabeans and wheat fermenting the salted months

To sauce; him, salty lipped, eyes like cold water and flour,
And a suppler dough in the lower boil;
And you–ff–parched–hh–ff–hand-feeding,

Arched–hh–one knee up on a kitchen chair.

Sandra Bell

The Miners

1.
My mother did not
go to school,
instead she nursed her stepfather,
the victim of a mine disaster.
Still dreaming of the quick fix,
he used to fling his arm and point –
There is gold in those hills!
These were our stock, the working class
of Ireland, Wales, England who flung themselves
in the rain, the cold,
to the other end of the world for
the dream, the glisten of gold
that would change their lives
forever.

2.
It has been days now.
The ominous tolling
of time on National Radio:
What will it tell
us today of the miners?
We indulge in magical thinking,
imagine them holed up somewhere
dark cold and wet,
emerging with black faces triumphant
and brave, joyously
tipping water on their faces from plastic bottles.

3.
I write a song for the miners
on accordion.
The chorus repeats
Bring them back bring them back bring them back

4.
Their relatives appear on television crying
"Let's go down now," the brave ones say, "there is a safe window."

5.
Another day of the most terrible waiting.

6.
They are putting a device down to measure the gas but it doesn't work.

7.
Australia sends a neutralising machine they poke into the entrance and blow. It doesn't work.

8.
There is another explosion.

9.
My Aunt recalls the day of the Glen Afton mine disaster.
A small child,
she watched as they bought the men out.
She knows the fate of the widows, who remarried, who remained alone.

10.
Bring them back bring them back

Juanita and the Girls' Home

The night before you died,
sitting by your bed,
I read the stories
you finally
wrote,
of the tale that
was never fully told
of your incarceration
in the girls' home.

Now,
what would be
considered normal
rebellion – wanting to leave school,
was then punishable
by lies and deceit,
as your parents drove
you to what they told you was
"a live-in job".

I wrote down the clues to the location
of your incarceration –
"The taxi drove thru Waikowhai" "At the end of Dom Rd Ext" "We turned into the grounds of the Home of the Good Shepherd" "It looked over the Manukau"....
And when I returned to the city,
I drove up Hillsborough and there it was,
in inner-city Auckland,
a pleasant-looking Spanish style villa,
its cruel and shameful
history forgotten, lost.

For a year you slept next to the dwarf,
intellectually challenged
and bad girls from down the line.
You all plotted escape.
Sometimes people just disappeared,
and you never got to say goodbye.

I remember you telling me that you had to bathe
in a long gown, and one day a nun burst in to the bathroom and you were naked – which was a sin.
"You wicked girl "she yelled.
You worked in the laundry 8 hours a day, with the nuns supervising your atonement …

I read
"The Good Shepherd is a cloistered order, following the rule of the 3rd order of Mt Carmel – prayer, penance and manual labour, poverty, chastity, obedience, conversion and instruction of the penitents … the Magdalene's"

No wonder you loved to have a great time,
you embraced life,
but with a carefulness,
a dignity, a wisdom,
your irrepressible spirit.
I remember us staying up
until dawn,
smoking and drinking,
laughing and dancing,
What a time we had,
what a time we had!

Tony Beyer

Field

i.m. John O'Connor 1949-2015

Hamlet was wrong of course
for which likeness to us
we admire and are
appalled by him

Pasternak was wrong too
when he wrote
that to live your life is not
as easy as crossing a field

there are home fields
naked with memory
it takes a lifetime to cross
if you have one

Memento

a breeze passes through the house
like a bus arriving at its terminus
all shudder and then still

I can hear the dog
scratching himself in the next room
and nearly the silent ant work in the walls

May is the death month for me
father and friends and too many
unanswered letters

I'm put in mind of Rembrandt's great painting
The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp
in which it appears that one

of the inquisitive white-ruffed burghers
has removed his dark clothes
and stretched himself supine on the table

to remind the others of what they will all become

Jane Blaikie

Exchange

Red sausage vinyl in the white Ford
hours on the back seat, my sister
banished me past mid-roll saying
'Men in white coats will take you away.'

Years later we met outside a locked ward –
our mother taken. Were we keen enough
to get her back? Yes, it seemed, as I echoed
my sister's lie, 'Our mother's a lot better.'

At a new rest home our mother said
'Someone's about at night, stealing.'
Herself. That time a broken hip kept her
from the bin, off to hospital care

One year my sister home from vet school
tried to walk our cat on a lead. She took me
to the school's laboratory – pound dogs
in cages, to be operated on til death

When our mother lay dying, an orange
fungus grew on her tongue and my sister
flew to Samoa, returning in time to make
a frame of pictures for the service

In a black and white skirt, my sister
greeted guests. She said we weren't
to cry. It seemed a fair exchange for the
price she'd had to pay in being good

Joy Blair

Seeing the Wood for the Trees

mallets thwack
croquet
a well-clipped lawn

willow rebounds
cricket on the green
playing the game

rifle butts\
sear
untried palms

trunks blacken
contort
truncate

flagpoles salute half-mastly
crutches parade
limbs reassemble

the wood
shrouded in tears
gives up its dead

Peter Bland

Tell Me More

Around a hearth
or village square
someone somewhere
is telling a story
about gods and kings,
but there has to be
a human journey
full of fears
and tears of grief
before the beggar
ascends his throne
or the servant girl
can bed her Prince.
Scheherezade knew
that her nightly stories
were merely glimpses
of a magic script
that goes on forever
writing itself. The real
plot is about redemption,
from evil spell
to transforming kiss,
a tale that's always
beyond belief
until it gathers us up.

The Unicorns are Back

galloping in packs
down lonely valleys
to the open sea
where mermaids
are gathering
on the rocks again,
singing sweetly
for the first time
in years. And dragons
are flying over
mountain tops,
melting the snow
with their breath's
bright steam, while
centaurs have been heard
in the forests, sometimes
neighing, sometimes
swapping gossip,
and shepherds are finding
whole flocks of lost
sheep. Creatures we
only read about are returning
to try and find
the quiet places
they loved long ago
and once called home.

Liz Breslin

Adlestrop

Where? Never heard of it.
Hold on, I'll Google it. OK.
Ad a strop. Like, had a mood,
geddit? Showing results for

Adlestrop, Titlestrop, Edestrop,
whatever. There. It's off the A44.
All these old as station signs
on Images. But wait. Don't

take a train – three changes
and a hike, says Maps – you're
just about quicker to walk. Hey,
they do locals tours. How's that

for a game of all aboard? Tell you
what: street view. Look – it's like
you're there. About the only one.
Now you don't even have to go.

Iain Britton

Fontainebleau – NZ

'I'm going to Fontainebleau … and I'll be back here Tuesday night or Wednesday morning' … Journal entry (14 October), published in The Journal of Katherine Mansfield (1927)

Katya is waiting
she sketches new tricks /
a glass font
for goldfish

for coral polyps
for dipping
the afterthoughts
of children

she pours in more water
acknowledges my birthdate
braille-taps numbers /
spells Fontainebleau

vividly in colours
spells Te Wairoa
a festival of light
and sound / jostles

for clear perspectives
of the lake / she
spins her parasol
and thinks of LM's

letter from France /
which she reads /

———————————————

which i read from Te Wairoa

tangelos talk
into their orange-ribbed
sacks / the sun
pulls up hills

macrocarpa
a buried village
from the ashes /
we pick mushrooms

wild mushrooms
we pick at their hoods
their fungal hoods /
we stand in whiteness

amongst the vents
of a newly-
scalped horizon

we explore the eruptive fields
of Raumoko /
two phantoms sharing
simplicities

---

i sleep in her bed
of charred enclosures

Jennifer Compton

Giving Up on the Quarrel

During the goodbye kiss
– he stoops a little, I tilt up my face –

ecstatic divinations
of solitary pleasures.

His – Telly loud!
Mine – Many coffees without remark.

Or – Walking through the house without tripping over Jennifer.
Or – No cooking with his intransigent fetishes staying my hand.

"Please put the chair back when you get up from the table. Please."
"The study about eggs and bad cholesterol was refuted years ago."

But do we bother any longer to give voice?
No, we mostly don't.

These complaints are like a river
that has vanished underground.

When it thunders either of us might say –
"The Gods are angry."

Our minds fly back to that first time he said it
and I thought it was quite apropos and fun.

Until it wasn't, then I said my piece, he gave it away.
Now when it thunders, both of us might smile.

Or neither of us. And say nothing. Or say it.
Just for the hell of it. Just because it teases.

Ruth Corkill

Autumn in Highgate

She is distracted by something moving
Beyond the hip-high fence and leaves
slick with stale rain, clinging to trouser legs,
soggy underfoot. She isn't watching.
She hasn't been watching each bulky,
Squeaking rubber soled foot hold on the brightly
Glazed blue and green bars. She is too far
To hear him calling from the platform
Mum mum Look! Mum look! Mum!

Sue Cowan

dear teacher

growl
scowl
slash with xxx

keep trying
try harder

heart cowls
spirit sinks
I'm no good
I HATE school

failure
fanning the
flames
of the
soul cindering
furnace
of
failure

Mary Cresswell

Bridges at Königsberg

Coldwater chaos drags other sounds with it
the whine of rockets, screams of pain

Gas attack bomb blast cyclone whirlwind
all the king's lindens give up the ghost

I shiver and wait for a possible dawn

The spring leaves are sticky with yesterday's blood
echoes fall empty around their black stems

Wolf-yellow eyes freeze me to silence
smouldering streets leave me no place to hide

I see your face in the map of Mars

The Road Goes West

to go to California in the brand-new car a 49 Ford in style
to go in the backseat with my brother and sister for days and days
and days *he kicked me did did not* I spy with my little eye
something beginning with I spy with my little eye
to go across the Mississippi River everybody singing *So wide you can't see over it*
to go down to Route 66 Tucumcari desert Albuquerque desert
Holbrook desert Winslow desert Kingman desert Hassayampa
desert tepid drinks and Gila Monsters in the Roadside Zoo for
5¢ desert
to go across desert then the lake begins
to go to the edge, looking at water that used to be a canyon
to wonder what lived there then to wonder what lives there now
to go walking down inside the dam down metal ladders toward the
oily smell at the middle of the earth
to see huge turbines pulsing fierce and hard and scarey
to go topside
to go across desert
to stake out a campsite on the flat red sand
to go to the car for a bit of shade
to go gentle around brand-new trees, not as thick as my wrist, not as
tall as my dad
to drag out sleeping bags, tin plates, tin cups, coffee pot, cookpot,
spoons
to stand back while they light the fire
to eat Girl Scout stew for the ten millionth time
to listen to the sounds of nature: *are there mountain lions? do coyotes like children? when do rattlesnakes sleep?*
to go to sleep under stars that don't know Chicago
to watch the moon scoop across the sky
to hear something
to wake up to see two scorpions
on the foot of my sleeping bag
dancing close
in the cold dry light

Jeni Curtis

The Cherry Tree

1.
My granddad drove the bulldozer
at the Nelson tip. Strings of
seagulls followed him, a modern
Pied Piper in dirty dungarees, metal
clasps blinking in the sun. At the edge
of the landfill, the sea still lapped, mud-flat
tidal. With string we'd fish for elusive
spotties, lucky if we caught
just one to take home
for the cat. Today it is a place of houses,
parks, green trees and a marae.

2.
My granddad's life can be told in
terms of disappearing houses. There was
the council place by the gasworks. At Christmas
we would squeal and chase in
the small gritty strip of garden imbued with
the smell of coal gas, while
the grownups inside gossiped and
played cards. Today the house and gas
tanks are gone. There is a car yard full
of flashy convertibles.

3.
My granddad survived the Great War,
granted a rehab farm; no magpies here
only the bony ground and no cash, next to the
Karamea river. When the Murchison earthquake
struck, they slept out in the paddock
for safety. Later, long after they had walked
away, my father said, "that is where I was
born." The wooden frame staggered to hold
the roof, battered steps led to a non-
existent verandah, and hay straggled from
bales, to spread across the uneven floor.

4·

South of Murchison, the highway sweeps
across Newton Flat, and dips to where
the Newton River rushes over rocks to
meet the Buller. Here there once were homes,
a school house, a pub, accommodation for
passing travellers on their way to Westport.
My granddad worked on the roads, filling
in potholes, diverting dust, helping those
in Model Ts stuck in the mud. The wild
tribe of his sons, barefooted, in flour sack
shirts and grubby overalls, ran free,
caught crayfish in the river, cooked in
the billy on hastily assembled fires, shot their
first deer, and pigeons to make pies. On our
way to Greymouth, we would pick
cherries from the tree next
to the tumbling brick chimney.
The sticky sweet juice stained our lips,
fingers, clothes. I tried to imagine my
grandmother making jam, my child-
father drunk on stolen cherry brandy.
Today all is broom, bramble and bush,
but in spring, above the scrub, pale
petals bloom.

Jonathan Cweorth

Voyager Two, 1977

[interstellar space probe
launched into the outer Solar System
carrying samples of human culture
and civilization]

We walk like pilgrims
through a strange desert;
despairing of our old gods
we offer to the dazzling night
the gifts of Earth:
copper, uranium, gold.

We take a crash course
in fifty languages
(Hittite, Persian, Urdu, Thai)
but all we learn how to say
is help us, we need you,
is anyone there?

We seal Chuck Berry
into an airtight jar
hurl him into the abyss.
He disappears from view
singing maybe someday
your name will be in lights.

We build a ship from
matchsticks and glue
wind its gramophone taut
launch it on a black river:
Beethoven is playing
to the stone-deaf stars.

Belinda Diepenheim

Gravitas

Dave said I needed healing and I believed him,
believed him all the way up the steps of the church,
touching those curlicued banisters while Dave pointed
out the marbled fascia, *good enough for Michelangelo.*
I liked the holy water, I liked the wafers that tasted
of deserts, I touched the blue robe of Mary but got told off,
and don't sing either.

I drank my tea instead.

I've had another email from Dave
who doesn't understand words,
or facial nuance, or even the voices
rise, fall, descent into the lower
register of vocal fry, its gravitas,
that expectation of respect.

I clicked onto him after the Rhododendrons,
packed dense, planted up with small
shrubs, leaf edges yellow,
some silvered by thrips,
black frass stuck to the undersides,
exposed to every element.

I will reply before lunch,
I will not ring, I am
remembering that *attachments*
are disorders like a glottal *uh* hyphen *oh*,
the caesura before a tea break.

Eric Dodson

Legal High

At Legal High the pupil's eyes dilate
they laugh and show a condensed toxic stain
girls giggle as they bake with lemon grass
whip bubble berry for a jungle juice,
cadets pot shot with AK 47's
imagine they're the means to vaporise.
School clinic's Doctor Feelgood cures them all
and even if some outbreak causes haze,
a quick fix in a jiffy will resolve.
Teachers discuss subjects to fuel the mind
with substance, like anarchy, white rhino.
Students after school try social tonics,
seek something more to stimulate the brain,
then graduate to heaven with cocaine.

Dough-boys

White ghosts
inhabiting a stew pot

a kind of glue
instinctively instant

a doggerel thing
I longed for mother's dumplings,

all the same I sorted,
heaped them to one side

then cut my lip
on a sharpened knife.

How old uncle Hipirini
laughed and laughed

saying 'The Pakeha
put my knife in his mouth, ha ha

has he no table manners?'

J. T. Drazin

A Chance Meeting

It was a chance meeting
when I ran into him. Literally.
On the railway bridge, I
was between trains you see
and late. Stations at dusk
are melancholy places,
hung with memories.
The thought of coffee
in a paper cup does not
console. The lights had
bleached his face, so he
looked pale, my one-time lover
and a little dangerous.
“Well well” he said “What
Serendipity!” I dropped my
bag upon his foot and
saw him wince. “No need
For sarcasm” I said.
A voice began to snarl
and blare. “The next train
due at platform ten
will be the last today.
“Must go” I said reflecting
as I ran, that we had always
travelled different ways.

Doc Drumheller

Half-Price Proverbs

Beware of geeks bearing gifts of the gab
beauty is in the eye of the shareholder.

A selfie paints a thousand Facebook likes
crows of a feather murder together.

The highway to hell is paved with promises
Beijing wasn't built inside a daydream.

If you pay politicians, you get donkeys
lie down in the beehive, wake up with the wasps.

Apple flavoured multivitamins a day
keep the homeopathic remedies away.

A quail in the pan is worth two on TV
too many cooking shows spoil the consommé.

It ain't over till the fat chef explodes
putting the shopping cart before the trunk.

David Eggleton

Methusalem

Shame, a flame-red flush,
the scowling darkness hisses –
thunder rumble and bolts thrown
to the electric attraction of opposites,
their mutual sickness,
holding a relationship together
with resonant frequencies.
He said, she said, they said, on the salty wind –
salt mines of the crystal field,
text blinking on the blue wand
that the eye scans.
July's vibrating electro-magnetic field,
oscillating in step, humming in sympathy,
shadowy frequencies joining in,
with infra-dig, ultra-violet, X-ray ring
tones to set up a stone blackout.

In damped underawnings,
invisible colours revealed,
that ricochet to the blueing of distant hills,
thick vapours on the Waitakeres,
blue butterfly wings almost,
as scales that shimmer sea-green,
and shift on the wing,
gold, sapphire, emerald show-offs,
wing-wavers,
grinding and scattering in mounds, dunes, heaps,
fills, pulled from earth,
discovered, uncovered, chameleon.

We sink into Auckland and live here,
its resonances,
its lane-bending dreams, grey and colourless,
then blooming with colour,
compounds of lead springing forth
as white-lead weatherboard, red-lead iron,

painting refrangible bullseye Auckland.
Auckland, oh yes, its arbitrary
subdivisions
of the sunlit spectrum –
its harmonies of roof-tops,
its bignesses, its hulking monster stingray,
its flounder stuck to mud beds,
its blue deepening to purple,
its indigo and violet bruises,
its blood-letting,
its streets that smack you
in the face with their indifference,
its crowds that sing to many different
notes and chords, its roadhogs.

A clear noise of vehicles and call signs,
mobiles and radios,
sunlight silent in the echo
of post-festival euphorias,
multi-pitched Babel cosmos
of compressed continents through voices
urgent to be heard,
and sunlight falling silent as smog particles
drifting into canyons,
beauteous curves of smoothed-out gullies
running seaward.
The frozen berries sing, and the black bitumen
splits to reveal gravel baby teeth,
the rule of thumb guided along the dotted line,
where they split the atom and peered inside,
logos, eros, budding forth.

The tents of green are gathered here,
in muddied brilliance
of rainbow refractions inside droplets.
The huddles in a darkened care
home are ancient McCahon hills
under brown and black blankets,
and there's white from Moana's necklace
and white from Rangi's cloak,

and there's red from pohutakawa
and red from bark and soil –
rust-red, burgundy, russet on the rainbow spectrum,
hazel, chestnut, the ardour of ochre,
and an oily pond, wine-dark, in a glass.

Those moist, cool greens on an Auckland
winter suburban morning,
amid gemstone tail-lights –
the malls that suck up moisture,
and spring it in rainbow-coloured arcs
through a plastic straw
between strawberry slush of lips.
Plastic is a shattering of the unity
of sulphur, mercury, chlorophyll, blood,
into separate lotions, elixirs, potions, cordials,
into liniment's spirit blackout in the July city.
Plastic was the future,
in orange, pink, yellow, ultramarine,
in ivory, copper, cinnamon, maroon,
in bright, dark, heavy, light blue,
in fifteen blues,
and so the colour field grew.

Now's the muddied brilliance
of flesh, drapery, water, shelter,
in this fool's paradise of prismatic arcs,
this July city –
clouds a purple-dyed wool piled on benches,
and streaked crimson and vermilion,
smeary as dashed dregs of coffee,
as clotted blood darkly reflected.
The storm closing in, like a border patrol,
with heads of dark rose, foams of dark grape,
a blue-dark pompadour,
fists tattooed by a bruise-dark manifesto.

The blood is sewn together
to float as a fine rain
against high windows and spires,

and above Karangahape,
so see you on the other side
of the underpass, the passing over,
above Karangahape –
its greenish tinge of billboards,
its blue boundaries dissolving.
The blue riders on the storm,
plunging and rearing in foams and sea-salt,
in table-top clutter, in bundles of vegetables,
that are rain-soaked greener-black,
blackened wet by the storm –
its indigomania, its sapphire-flash,
its blitz of threads carrying across
azure the blue of the underworld,
the mauve movements of cloudbanks.

Colours running into rainbow darks,
into silver tarnishes and blurs,
into neon's noodle swirls,
into woodgrain vinyl, and painted dirt.
Soakage overwriting blades of grass
with new particulars, with each thing numbered,
with mashings of leaves and barks –
druggists sifting for drugs with a sieve
to strain into reservoirs,
to press out the juices, to knead
the pulp of all the parks,
in midnight shades with vivid blue flashes,
strident hues bleached by headlamps,
a rich umber of landslips for the new day –
and the July city at midnight wobbling
its hundreds and thousands of dots,
like the glow of a bush fire far away.

Rachael Elliott

1992

In 1992
bommy knockers
falling from the tree
above the monkey bars
My mother and my brother
came to pick me up from school
and my brother
age three
slipped from my mother's hand
and ran out in front of a bus.

There is a photograph of him
a week earlier
eating pasta
with his fingers.
One lash
crosses the others
to lean against his eyeball
and my mother's arm
wraps around his waist
so he will not fall.

That day
I'd drawn a pink and red hibiscus
with pastels at the small blue
table
at the back of my classroom.
My fingers
palm and elbows,
oily,
painted the inside
of my mother's fists
as the smoke from the tyres
blew across the playground behind us.

The week before
we put our fox terrier puppy
in the yellow laundry basket
and bounced her on the trampoline.
My bowl cut flicks about my ears
and his milk belly
pushes out over his blue shorts
the puppy a small black and white blur
hidden behind the basket's net.

This was back when
the gate had a tongue
to press against you
secrets warm
inside your palm

The trees tunnelled into each other
dark leaves
nostril flared
soaking up the light

and my sister wasn't born yet.

one half
a goat's hoof
seeped open to the snow

one half
an iron gate
edged in ice
opened to the road

his face is in the asphalt now
running below
the tar that sticks
you to the road.

small holes
snick his ears
and trap him there
hoops missing

someone has painted a line across him
placed a cone on his chest
blue tarpaulin

his yellow backpack
split
spiderman lunch box
split
his hand
split
from yours

A bus can hide a house
if you look at the right angle
and when it's straight up
the grate over the engine
VW logo silver and black
tyre so tall
even if you reached
on tippy toes
you couldn't touch the top
a bus can envelop a child but
he didn't get hit.

he didn't get hit.

Next week he's joining the police force.

I still don't know how.

Michael Farrell

By the Wind

Lying in Bed, quelling Fears of Sleep and Death

happiness comes from a god-related thought, an-
other's now yours, or seeing the self flying out
a gym window. in being a mass, in turning off
consciousness while the body carries on like a
market town. then we wake and marry a man with
tb, it's neither forced nor voluntary, but rather
we are blown there. relax, remember all the things
you're joined to. being oedipus, a bird, a vacuum
cleaner. respond by writing poems. finding those
that aren't. to be numerous is to be well. there's
something supernatural in the dead's observations
organs are differently developed animals to nails
organs sleep; nails may be dormant at very low
temperatures. when the heart loves another's eyes
they all prove divine. the menagerie: what a beast
a dog, say a chihuahua cross or some kind of terrier
can't stop talking to the guinea pig about the day
while the guinea pig stays focused on tomorrow
their energy comes through the stars and the gum
leaves and the last litres of water the multinational
squeezes from that dirty old sponge the earth. which
holds up the building and the room and the bed and
keeps vigil like a revealed god. each thought a
lighter flick. imagine hamlet with hosts of black
cockatoos fizzing in his cochleas. in his posthu-
mous choreas. land and language, heart and mind
the poems we are. look at this old body, pet, act-
ivity there's no way to write it, only rewrite it
all unconsciously or part, sacrificially. remember
the cape and the deer we carried around in our
letters, journals, now sloughed off. the lightness
of travel, the momentary pleasure now banging
like iron. becoming immune is not a metaphor
horse, monkey, bat, or four-leaf gopher blanket.

Sue Fitchett

the blink of an eye

Our morning is tethered to many small things;
some have more weight than others:

bread for birds flung from branches
rags & dusters wing the punch-tender sky.

A slim book offers poems that stick
in the gut, needles & lilies.

There's white everywhere:

rolls I bake for lunch
sea foam
within magazine pages

words swim for their lives.

My life might depend on this hummingbird
tongue at my rain jacket's zip end
the light is damp, my hand slips
no mouth seems so minute, so like a mirage

frangible, splintering.

The phone's leaden volley

an armed intruder, master thief steals all
our morning ties, your brother
falls in a park
grass rises to hold him
his eyes
two flesh-bound stars
blink out.

Cyclone Lusi passes over our city.
I open the front door meet her lash

see a tree broken.

Anna Forsyth

Hungry Jack's Sated Poet

At Hungry Jack's
Thomas is reading poetry about basilicas
with his free hand he is devouring
a large hash brown cheeseburger
combo.

He wants to find the most impenetrable poems
and decipher them
using Google
but he is distracted by the Chinese girl
and her fur-topped boots.

Beyond her, through the window
is a hive of students
hump-packed
the traffic drones.

The caramel sundae is cold
the topping sparse
he scrapes endlessly at the plastic
ignoring golden trails
down his coat front.

A man with fistfuls of fries
obstructs his window vista
so he turns his attention to matters at hand
the last syrupy drops of coke on his tongue
a liquid poem.

Kim Fulton

Paris, 2013

Nobody on that Paris street
had the heart to tell him
he was one hundred years too late.

So he continued to grasp
the gate to Gertrude Stein's
Left Bank apartment,

with the hope his pressing questions
would be answered.

That's how the image of that hooded
man seemed to me then,

or does now.

(It's hard to distinguish then
from now sometimes)

His knuckles white,

thinking of the way a flying arrow
occupies a given space
at any given instant

though time passes heartlessly.

Rhian Gallagher

Learning to Read

Your friends go forward
writing stories. Sunlight
sails through the chalk dust.
This is your timeless time. The alphabet
lives on the blackboard's brow
– each letter has a big brother
or a big sister.

Miss Breen can see
there's some far place in you.
Fantail stutters from the window tree.
You stand beside the island of her desk.
Your friends are busy;
even the tadpoles are working themselves
out and into frogs.

You can't tell what you see
– the words are shapes
and the schoolroom's paused.
Bright crayoned houses
pinned to the wall; the piano that waits
to be woken with a touch.
All of the doors that will open.

Her finger steers
crossing the page – you tilt
your voice in reply; through your held back days
you are her echo.
The smell of Miss Breen. The story
is everything.

The Year Between

It was the year between before and after,
God slept in the roots of the plane trees,
the horizon was talked of
but you couldn't find it.
Your country was going away.

There were the last of the waves –
your mother's hand, your father's hand
where all the events were recorded
like music written in the wind.

It was the year of yourself walking into yourself
and walking back out again.
A chestnut shone, an autumn leaf
and how their deaths retrieved you
bent to a grave as if looking into a mirror.

John Geraets

five beauties

There is nothing which floats into the world from nowhere
(Whitehead)*

For Whitehead knowledge is something that occurs dependent on other things. Its quality is that it exists only in a conjectured state – arising from the flow of experience, in fact it is not experience. Events are what underpin knowledge, and they do exist, albeit again without actual duration.[2]

It's like the thought of flight for the bird, which occurs almost unconsciously, and is something else even before the thought is recognised – it is flight, and flight is knowledge, to places unknown from places unknown. Beauty is how one feels about things.[3]

Like sparrows, the effects on us are endless; the poor birds do not even know what arrives in their minds or in their bodies; much less do we, who make knowledge into our own nest. The sparrow uses its wings to flick dust upon its feathers. And both wings are needed to synchronise in flight. These things are taken to constitute existence: but dust, feathers, wings, thought, to what do they add up?[4]

Occasions beget events beget individuals [enduring objects 91 enduring entity 107]. But that is a linguistic and cognitive nicety – even the bird and the body of John, which satisfy the notion, would not want to be defined by it. Neither of us wants to be identified in that way, although we allow ourselves to be wrapped round again and again, thinking of ourselves as entire, even when in fact we are individuals begotten by events begotten by occasions. And no single

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**Footnotes are statements found in Steven Shaviro's* Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics (2009)*; quotations from Whitehead are embedded.*

2 'The given always exceeds our representations of it.'

3 'Every "present" moment forcibly "inherits," and thereby repeats, what came before.'

4 '"Thus the cause passes on its feeling to be reproduced by the new subject as its own, and yet as inseparable from the cause…the cause is objectively in the constitution of the effect" or "How the past perishes is how the future becomes."'

occasion comes anywhere near being me or a sparrow. Like a ratchet, each occasion slips back to a starting position.[5]

Funny that we celebrate change, and again change, in some way considering that it ensures our existence, whereas, even linguistically, change means it cannot be what was, something's always something else. I feel for the sparrow and the sparrow feels for something else too. But the feeling must await the sparrow, which has not the patience to explore the feeling. Whitehead says that the certainty with which we assume correspondence between subject and predicate is misplaced, because there is no centre to the circle. Better say that the sparrow is predicated on me as another predicate–nothing can bring us closer together despite the sorrow registered by each.[6]

5 'For Whitehead, events do not "happen to" things: rather, events themselves *are* the only things. An event is not "one of [the thing's] predicates," but the very thing itself.'

6 'Every prehension, every causal connection, involves a "valuation" on the part of the receiving entity: a valuation that does not just take the transmitted data as given, but "values [them] up or down."'

[Maiandra GD]

contingent

**7 The 'object of desire' is not something that the subject lacks; to the contrary, it is what the subject imagines and creates. S 8 produces the real ie mobilises force towards production

12 The subject does not outlive the feelings that animate it at any given moment [*'no subject experiences twice']

Occasion/s [instance of 'becoming', without change, except as 'datum' for next occasion]→event→entity→nexus→society [with continuity or identity='enduring object']

19 'The fundamental meaning of the notion of 'change' is the difference between actual occasions comprised in some determinate event.'

23 *There is therefore no stable and essential distinction, for w, between mind and matter, or between subject and object.... This means that empiricism is ultimately correct: all our knowledge comes from experience, and there is nothing outside experience, or beyond it.

**25 For w, events do not 'happen to' things: rather, events themselves *are* the only things. An event is not 'one of [the thing's] predicates,' but the very thing itself. [ie aggregates] [result or outcome of all events (posits?) god, not as cause]

26 w's god operates 'a shift of meaning which converts the opposition into a contrast.' There can be no formal, permanent distinction between the observing self (the self as transcendental subject, or subject of enunciation) and the self being observed (the self as object in the world, or subject of the statement).

32 In analysing events, he does not assume any priority of the subject, but rather traces its genesis alongside that of the world in which it finds itself. And he delineates the conditions of real experience, which determine concrete processes of emergence,

rather than proposing apodictic [certain] conditions for all possible experience.

37 Universals, or 'things that are eternal,' can and must be abstracted from 'things which are temporal.' [ie eternal objects (concept not requiring temporality) = how actual entities relate]

**40 'It is not 'substance' which is permanent, but 'form."

*42 Each actual entity creates itself, in a process of decision, by making a *selection* among the potentialities offered to it by eternal objects.

** 47 'the basis of experience is emotional'

**49 The given always exceeds our representations of it.

***55 In w's account, every prehension 'consists of three factors: (a) the 'subject' which is prehending, namely, the actual entity in which that prehension is a concrete element; (b) the 'datum' which is prehended; (c) the 'subjective form' which is *how* that subject prehends that datum.

**58 'Whatever moods, affections, and passions I have are in very truth constituted by, and made up of, those bodily changes which we ordinarily call their expression or consequence.'

*59 If time and space are the forms, respectively, of inner and outer intuition, then feeling is their common generative matrix. It is *by* the receptive act of feeling that I locate things in space and in time. In other words, feeling is the process by which all entities get spatialized and temporalized. [To feel something is to be affected by that something. And the *way* that the feeling entity is affected, or changed, is the very content of what it feels. Everything that happens in the universe is thus in some sense an episode of feeling: even the 'actual occasions in so-called 'empty space."

**60 Every 'present' moment forcibly 'inherits,' and thereby repeats, what came before. 'The notion of 'simple location' is a fallacy because it 'is inconsistent with any admission of 'repetition,'' or of a time that intrinsically refers to another time. 61 'How the past perishes is how the future becomes.' 63 'Every new process of

becoming 'involves *repetition* transformed into *novel immediacy.*' [Order self-organises or emerges–rather than being discovered. Receptivity includes our sense of 'supplementary feeling']

* 74 Each actual occasion selects among the data that it encounters, and thereby creates itself, establishing its own immanent criteria for a 'preestablished harmony' of experience. Concresencence 'of each individual actual entity is internally determined and is internally free.' For w, this unity has to be produced afresh at every moment–since the subject itself must be produced afresh at each moment.

75 there is no permanent unity, but only a continual transition to unity.

*86 'Thus the cause passes on its feeling to be reproduced by the new subject as its own, and yet as inseparable from the cause...the cause is objectively in the constitution of the effect.' 're-enaction [repetition] is not perfect...factor added to recurrence can be designated [time]

*87 'Time is cumulative as well as reproductive, and the cumulation of the many is not their reproduction as many. The effect is subtly different from the cause whose impulsion it inherits, precisely to the extent that the effect prehends (or recognizes) the cause as an additional factor in the universe.

**87 Every prehension, every causal connection, involves a 'valuation' on the part of the receiving entity: a valuation that does not just take the transmitted data as given, but 'values [them] up or down.'

88 W insists that every entity is 'essentially dipolar, with its physical and mental poles; and even the physical world cannot be properly understood without reference to its other side, which is the complex of mental operations.' [decision shifts efficient cause to final, teleological cause. Appetition is drive to difference, continuity, survival etc]

92 w maintains 'the doctrine that an organism is 'alive' when in some measure its reactions are inexplicable by *any* tradition of pure physical inheritance.' [*'there is always a remainder for the decision of the subject-superject']

106 ‘the puzzling fact that there is an actual course of events which is itself a limited fact, in that metaphysically speaking it might have been otherwise.’

48 from K originate constructivism in individual relationship with reality…’Given always esceeds…’ [49]

Time is only time to me.

86-7 the cause is objectively in the constitution of the effect; ‘Ren-enaction is not perfect’ ie nothing can actually recur

94 decision precedes cognition

Process & reality

12 Language is thoroughly indeterminate, by reason of the fact that every occurrence presupposes some systematic type of environment.

149 The four stages constitutive of an actual entity…can be named, datum, process, satisfaction, decision.

153 Understanding is a special form of feeling.

155 The philosophies of substance presuppose a subject which then encounters a datum, and then reacts to the datum. The philosophy of organism presupposes a datum which is met with feelings, and progressively attains the unity of a subject [or ‘superject’].

Xxxxxxxxxxx

Knowledge is an abstraction that we take account of in another way. It is like the flight of the bird, so glorious, lost on landing.

Knowledge bathes the clutches. Alfred North Whitehead, about whom I know little outside the reading *Process and Reality* (1929) and the quite remarkable commentary by Steven Shapiro. No biography, no wonder, all intermediacy nothing to do with knowing, itself afterevent.

, affective rather than cognitive.

An event is the tiniest thing. Impossible to fit anything whole into it–though possibly you can take somebody out of it. Because events, says Whitehead, and what a master he is, are the smallest identifiable occurrences that are to be experienced–and, as they occur, the concurrences (concrescence) they occur as can be represented as individuals, which are the only linearities. Perhaps this is the missing middle–a nothing that accounts for the something that is not really there anyway. If you can count, it's third one, Plato's *kora.* Beauty is affective.

Beauty is affective rather than cognitive (vide truth, moral judgement inapplicant)

Event not state, a process, not need-based, thus utopic

Experience is emotional, subjective

Beauty is empty but an experience rather. Content fits in later. Simply, we are endlessly affected, like sparrows, and we like to say no again and again, like sparrows like sparrows. Chrrp, chrrp. We like to call this or that 'true', which it is maybe, and they are barely interested. I do not know whether experience clings to me or I extend into it: a wing on other side of a body defined by another

effect. Certainly having a name is part of it. Like a nakau palm, hundreds of them above and below and even on the limestone cliffs of Punekaeki. They hold bowls aloft among the surrounding shrubbery, like beggars guaranteed fresh air.

As pure, contentless communicability, beauty is also a pure effect, divorced from its rational and material causes.

Helps produce the subject: 'the subject is not so much acted upon as it is incited to re-create itself.'

'no thinker thinks twice...no subject experiences twice'

Situation is contemplative, 'a kind of auto-affecting short circuit' that suspends subjectivity, always non-programmatic ie singular in the absolute, exemplary

W: affect precedes cognition & has wider scope

W: Becoming [event/s] is the deepest dimension of being

To summarise, an occasion is the process by which anything becomes, and an event-applying to a nexus or a society-is an extensive set, or a temporal series, of such occasions. This contrast between individual becomings, and the progressive summation of such becomings, is crucial to Whitehead.

Occasion ends on occurrence, change occurs in a 'route of inheritance', change is mark of event not a continuity but a 'becoming of continuity', at each point novel and a concrescence

Thought & thing not dual in terms of 'stuff', yet distinct

W rejects subj-predicate thought which assumes a substance exhibiting qualities: no stable, essential distinction m/matter, subj/pred

All is empirical, experiential

Two statements: An occasion ends as it occurs and is the base of experience. Change occurs as the 'route of inheritance'. Any given exceeds all representations of it. That's *three*.

When I experience anything, anyone, I cannot but be experiencing them as other than in extension to how I experience myself: I can only experience myself and I experience others within what is possible within myself, even if I think of this as a projection or extension of myself, which it also is?

Events are prehensions of other events ie relation between occasions

Philoph often pre-assumes what it wishes to put in doubt

Only immanence is experienced eternal objects appear to indicate potentials for entities, based on qualities or relations–indicate the adverbial how rather substantive. Eo can be recognised w/o reference to actual entity eg colour, gravity but are only encountered by particular actual occasions (secondary material qualities within Buddhist thought?) are neither causally determined nor causal ie potentials, passive, indifferent

Actual entities self-create in selection of potentialities, each event/choice a momently-fixed self-determination

6] I thank space and time for the sparrow that I see more often on the ground than in the air. I want to know what it is that I admire: 'escutcheon' is a spelling. Like all spells, it brings me back to space and time, lovely yolks that they are, meaning the central yellow of things circled, and yokes, meaning they are not the work or production at all, rather the rule by which I produce all that I see, hear, feel, smell, taste and think.

Whitehead acknowledges Kant's 'conception of an act of experience as a constructive functioning'. From Kant also, there is acknowledgement that time and space are constructs, a-categorical & non-conceptual (ie intuitional-??): 'space & time are immanent conditions of sensible intuition: they indicate the ways in which we receive the 'data' that objects provide to us, rather than being logical categories to which the objects providing such data are themselves compelled to conform'.

[time in internal part of process enabling identification of externality, matter?]

Given exceeds representations of it

Prehension includes subject, datum, reception: the 'how' (response) in receipt constitutes 'decision'

Feeling precedes identification and cognition [structuring]: by means of it entities get spacialised and temporalized/ to establish spacetime requires repetition and therefore change. 'how the past perishes is how the future becomes'

7] Morality means how one responds. That is decision and it is terribly informed an irrevocable–until very soon, because decisions tumble over one another terribly quickly. Time sits inside all of this. The 'feeling' provides the clue and way to 'unmaze'.

'this repetition is the key to the future as well as to the past, for every new process of becoming 'involves repetition transformed into novel immediacy". This avoids the historical tendency-problem-to assume to to-be-known-or-decided-or-responded-to as somehow already available, which it isn't

Response is not spontaneous but integral with feeling/affect. Order is also kind of spontaneous because it is aesthetic in nature: it sustains a sense of interest. Beauty arises in 'mutual adaptation': affect/response

& hence contributes to intensity hence satisfaction in 'complexity of order', which incorporates contraries w 'temporalises k's transcendental unity of apperception [subjectivity is consequential]'

8] Repetition with a difference. Every moment exceeds what was. The big mistake we make is to think we respond to the known when the known is exactly what it is not! The decision is what we are.

9] The effect already contains the cause. So to identify causes is a futile activity, we merely feed our prejudices, because the sense of time we need to separate them quickly contaminates them [?]. Again, difference seems necessary yet it also is a distortion: now varies. So that, when I say that the effect contains its cause, that needs to be modified because in becoming an effect that effect has exceeded its causes.

For an entity 'the cause [what is prehended] is objectively in the constitution of the effect [feeling/affect/decision]'. Time is the measure of their separation even though it is not actual, yet some kind or arising measure of difference, cumulative, irreversible: 'the cumulation of the many is not their reproduction as many'

Decision, novelty in-built in biological function, decision gives rise to cognition, freedom, responsibility, always a remainder which supercedes efficient/inherited causes, future is real but not actual

10] Never. [Ouch.]

Susan Green

Pukekaroro

Your mood changes
like his, becomes unpredictable
sunny, easy, then
a dark forbidding presence.

Clouds encroach.
Mustn't climb, mustn't approach.

I live in two shadows.
Explore great heights, see
a view of the world
with his baby in my belly.

I cower in the dark
mist in front of my eyes.

The mountain witnesses my rising.
Today I hold up an axe
and say, "Stop."

Siobhan Harvey

Serving Notice upon the Prime Minister

An amendment to 1986 Residential Tenancies Act

Relating to a state house (definition: *a house owned by the State*) **located at 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington**

Section 51 Termination by notice

(1) Subject to **Sections 52**, **53**, **53A**, **59** and **59A**, the minimum period of notice required to be given by we, the majority to terminate the tenancy of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington shall be as follows:

(a) where we, the majority, owners of all state houses require all state houses as the principal place of residence for we, the majority or any members of our whanau, 42 days:
(b) where we, the majority use state houses, or have acquired state houses, for occupation by our neighbours, that fact being clearly stated in the tenancy agreement of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington, 42 days:
(c) where we, the majority give vacant possession of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington to a new tenant, 42 days.

(2) Subject to **Sections 52, 53, 53A**, **59** and **59A**, where we the majority have given an effective notice to terminate the tenancy of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington, we, the majority may at any time before the expiry of the notice enforce immediate termination of that tenancy where actions undertaken by the Prime Minister, or that party's agents are shown to have misled or affected unjustly the interests of we, the majority.

(3) Subject to **Sections 52**, **53**, **53A**, **59** and **59A**, where we, the majority have given an effective notice to terminate the tenancy of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington, the Prime Minister, or that party's agents are obliged to notice that they are on notice.

(4) Subject to **Sections 52**, **53**, **53A**, **59** and **59A**, every notice to terminate the tenancy of 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington shall –

(a) be in writing, in voice, in debate, in marching, in banner waving, in hikoi, in referendum, in voting and/or in blood; and
(b) identify the Prime Minister and that party's agents to which it relates; and
(c) specify the date by which the Prime Minister and that party's agents are to vacate 260 Tinakori Road, Wellington; and
(d) be signed in writing, in voice, in debate, in marching, in banner waving, in hikoi, in referendum, in voting and/ or in blood by we, the majority.

Spaceboy Relative to His Solar Powered Home

I always wanted you to go into space, man – Babylon Zoo

The walls respire like the skin of an inflated balloon

The hallway reminds him of a corpse, ice-blue body prostrate

The kitchen is a huge heart beating with his parents' terrible storms

The staircase is a dusty magic carpet made of minor planets

His bedroom is a breathing space for his imagination

His desk is full of cavities into which his codes and pictograms spill

His bookshelf is the fiercest star, its brilliant volumes of light

His bed is a violent, suffocating dream

Here is the nightmare: his feet turned to red dust

Here is the daydream: his hands lit like rings of frost

Here is his head, a huge swirl of indigo

And his body? A ventilation machine, a dark matter, an undiscovered galaxy

Felicity Heaven

My Love

Your soft red hair short cropped natural beauty
Musk scent surrounds your slight body
You wonder around me like an extension of me
Smelling what I smell feeling what I feel
You see what you want to see
Loving me from a distance so close
I feel your caress gentle and rough

For years we have sat there side by side
Your unconditional love forceful
Like a gummy bear in a test tube of molten potassium chlorate
Unforgiving and powerful a force not to be destroyed
Like a science experiment where will this take us is unknown

Sue Heggie

Anzac Day in Greytown

Bagpipes in the morning air drew me to the action.
I stepped out to the main street for a recce.
But the crowd was dispersing, just a boy scout and a
St John's boy sizing each other up.
The shut shops turned their backs and lost interest.

The pipers gathered inside the RSA for tea and biscuits.
The police car lights shut down.
A hungry kid whined, the drummer stuffed his kit in the boot of the Toyota,
A pink baby in a pushchair slept on.
Nothing to see here now, move along, service over,
All quiet on the western front.

I took the long route back tracking an old man being pushed along in his chair,
His head lolling forward, a blood red poppy pinned askew on his jersey,
A blanket draped over his legs.

We skirted the kindy, the primary school and the La De Dah beauty salon.
The carer turned and wheeled him to his barracks and alone I
Rounded the corner towards home, a civilian with toasted Easter buns in her sights.

But in no man's land a grim clothes line loaded with grey bibs,
Saggy underpants and mud brown towels swung at me
Right hooking in the small town breeze.
The stink of urine and hot tea and the rattle of pills hit me
And took me down.

Oh how weary, forgetting, condemning.

Alice Hooton

Hallucinations of the blind

Amputees in the waiting room
in the mind's eye what I can see

straight out of Breughel
tiny men and women

on the surgery windowsill dance
morph as birds fly

clouds stumble
hills roll

a French Cathedral
floats on a blood red lake

they never speak you tell professor Akthar
the amputees the little people

angelic choir
boys ascending a builder's ladder.

September 1939
the German Army marched into Warsaw

church without a steeple
a bombed out school

who will care for the
children hungry children

you ask the young
Polish medical student

a man with a prosthetic leg
follows us home

others join him
erect a tent in the living room

sit smoking
you abhor smoking.

salad toss fish fry rock cod
caught at dawn off brown's bay reef

a flock of red capped finch
nest in your bed.

today is Monday the royal baby is a boy.
John Key is Prime Minister of New Zealand

Autumn Falling

I dreamt of you, I dream of you still your long black hair. Your skin, a touch my Grandmother would have said of the tar brush.

You were a student, my student in answer to an advertisement I put in the local paper. Tuition learn to play the violin. M. De Lyle Fine Arts Degree. Phone

A day like today grey skies, Autumn falling. You watched me slice cake small squares set out on a floral platter.

He sees me as a mother, I tell myself. He's only a few years older than your son for God's sake. Grey skies, your hands on my waist, I lit a fire in the bedroom.

You lied to me. I know now I was not the first. The touch of you, the taste of you. I was insatiable you were tireless. Lazy summer days watching through open windows sunlight filter the leafy congress of trees.

You loved the Victorian ambience, the quiet orderliness of my house. You never spoke of family, your Mother.

My Mother went white at forty. Fine lines around her mouth a history of absence, grief. I dye my hair Auburn. Pencil lips Hot Pink. Liven with a hint of blusher the paleness of my cheeks.

Sometimes I think I am cursed, this house is cursed. A Great Aunt astray in her mind, leapt from the second storied veranda, the family Pit Bull found licking up her blood.

I discovered enemies, lost friends, relations. My son when he came upon us in the conservatory, with news he'd won a scholarship to Yale.

You are tired of me. I am tiring my love, and if I am honest. There is a man an English Professor. My needs such as they are he is happy to gratify. We have interests in common, the cultivation of old world Hollyhocks, colonial Roses.

You have met a woman, you tell me as much. Marta, someone or other, a German Oboe player, at a conference in Prague.

I have accustomed myself to living alone, the walls embrace me. On days when mist obscures that soupcon of ocean trapped between Kandallah hills. I no longer pine for the rap-rap rap at my door. A kind of Morse code you affected.

Today will be the last time. I feel it, my bones feel it.

Double breasted, gray. The effect of making you look stout, middle aged, bespoken. I never saw you in a suit.

Gail Ingram

Over Breakfast

Her cardigan's open. The knitted bow across the buttons
doesn't meet, he's sharing a joke with her,
their heads lean in.

It's breakfast.

I have *The Economist* open. John Bayley gone
to meet Iris, this week. Another man obituarised,
I note over my tea. That's roughly six

to one woman, dead. Not long ago
my Press-editor cousin stayed.
He said, while he sipped, *Isn't it just*
an accurate reflection of his-
tory. I hissed, *Isn't it just*
the twenty-first century? Still,

I have a soft-spot for writers. She had Alzheimers,
it says, he was dotty and left scraps of dinner in his pockets,
unwashed plates on the kitchen table amidst Jane
Austen & Pym. An Oxford Don you see – all pomp
and crassness. I'm thinking

of UC, where thirty years ago, I learned
what a helicopter was; a friend
of a friend, another John, *not my*
friend – who smelled of first ships
& first 11, propellered
beer vomit over Dame Ngaio Marsh
STUDAS walls.

When Iris scrabbled and cried
at the door to be let out, John held her.

For who would lose
Though full of pain, he wrote, *this intellectual being,*
These thoughts that wander through eternity?
I told my daughter yesterday

not all students care
for the middle-class ticket. She couldn't speak
in the soft chair in front of the UC counsellor
this millennium's new words:

co-curricula, the business of volunteering
alongside her course, *grade-point average*,
a measure of her worth. In COSC 202

(that's computer science to us on the street) they run ads
for girls: dress code pink. Welcome a new
sore thumb. Or an old one. I found

something had changed
as I sat

reading his words, shovelling muesli: *It has become difficult*
to imagine literature without love.

I wanted to salute – like him –

the unhinged brain
of ordinary readers
of poetry.

Sophia Johnson

Driftwood

None of my friends have grown up
some of them died on the beach
rushing under the phosphorous waves
to join the stars underwater

And those that remain
play pick up sticks
with the skinny white drift wood

They buried their wedding rings
in the sand that night
with the embers
so that the beach did not go up in flames

Leonard Lambert

Darwin's Dice

for Steven Pinker

"Darwin's dice have rolled unhappily for the planet."
E. O. Wilson

A golden sentence from the man of ants:
the wrong animal got the Brain,
a creature too large to be numerous –
we are too many and too mean.

I remember watching from afar
the last tree for miles around
come down north of Gisborne,
the gathered monkeys all clapped and cheered,
you could see it in the air above them.

And the Mexican who filled his belly
with the last of that particular parrot;
the seafaring apes who gobbled islands,
that wondrous one-off fauna …

And yet of course
only a wrong animal could be writing this,
who knows the house can never lose,
but rolls and rolls a counter-game, calling
on his better angels, other rules.

Jon Lepp

When approaching a farmer's door:

1. Smile a full I'm not going to kill you and your family smile.
2. Introduce yourself and tell the farmer you are Canadian (this implies that you mean no harm, that you are a jolly and kindhearted simpleton).
3. Reassure the farmer that you are definitely not American and laughingly describe the differences between Americans and Canadians by using stereotypes. Then contrast this national binary with that of the Kiwi's and Australians.
4. Give a brief summary of what you are doing in the farmer's homeland.
5. Smile again (show all of your teeth).
6. Once you have spewed out your recycled introductory vomit, then proceed to ask them how they are doing.
7. Chuckle at whatever response they give.
8. Once the farmer knows that you mean well, tell him or her how far you cycled today, emphasize the magnitude of the rolling hills of New Zealand, how different it is from your home.
9. Notice their nods of approval.
10. After all of these initial tasks have been completed, ask to camp on their lawn, drink their water, shit in their toilets.
11. Voila! You can rest easy tonight.

Simon Lewis

Big Noters

tend to live in the sky.
One calls himself El Void,
another spins on his heels
while feeding the cat.
I had to knock some sense
into the oldest.

This guy in the room
says he's god,
I'm not arguing.
one more looked at me
like I was a xmas tree.

Lennon sang
the devil's
a concept –
but there sure
are some wild
guys about.

A Sense of Place

I'm restrained
between library shelves
lest the books tumble
among hushed voices

Instead of church
I visit the library
borrow some gentle reading
and skim the shelves

Tired readers are dozing
at the newspaper desk
I go about my tasks
in a quiet corner, half-aware

Olivia Macassey

Burnt Umber

for Brett Cross

When your letter arrived I was reading about a
man who had to burn all his writing in the
stove the night they came for him I think of you
exploring in the peat bog roped to your love
the two of you up to your ankles and then mid
thigh there were those days I saw smoke as we
crossed the plain the colour of burnt umber
like the earth on fire I had forgotten the arrests
the beatings your letter from the smouldering
landscape I had also submerged they say the
whole area used to be underwater and will
picture the two of you soaked but exhilarated
you crossed it the ashes in the grate the bitter
grain in him now charred fragments of before
saw those dark rents in the ground your hand
gripping her hand your letter I wish I could
write his pages out of the flames swarms of
field crickets with their rich shining bodies and
slip the blood back into his veins against the
wall the night they came –
                before the flood
and the soil still alight the bright yellow ochre
of cattle or sun he had nothing left and there is
nothing left with him but how the birds fly up
in handfuls of scorched black from the old lines,
and now I begin to write back.

Do Not Trust These People:

Men who have buried four or more wives.
Shoplifters who compare prices before deciding.
Those who wear jeans very tight on their thighs.
Game fishermen. Therapists wearing disguises.
Women who sport false nipples;
small dogs
    who sidle up
    to you sideways
with their eyes fixed on your vulnerable ankles.

Tax officials who phone up for a "friendly chat."
Anyone born in the Year of the Zebra.
Those who keep giant slugs as pets.
People who wear socks with sandals
without being tourists. Everyone with stripy hair.
Those who sell condoms and phones in the street,
morticians who offer you something to eat,
butchers who leer "I bet *you* like some *meat*!"

Children with freckles, adults with glasses,
those who write speeches or take evening classes,
impatient suitors who don't have the time,
people whose poetry slips into rhyme –

oh, and strangers, of course. Strangers.

Carolyn McCurdie

Dance in the Local Hall

The music begins. She waits to see who will ask
her to dance. No one comes.

The floor is waxed. Tread with care, she thinks,
or spin. When the music stops, she tries a spin in the gap between
dances,
a slide too wild, and to avoid falling, somersaults with snowy
flowered
petticoats. They stare. She laughs, curtsies, and wonders:
what's the opposite of clapping?

She watches the door for the quiet boy
with the unpronounceable name, the name like code.
He might have been a resistance fighter, she thinks,
or a spy. She would like to ask.

From high on the wall the Queen
stares down her nose through the streamers and fern fronds.
The boy doesn't come.

When she goes outside, the ones denied entry because
of beer on their breath have driven away, to race
against roads that go nowhere. Frosted paddocks glide to horizons
out of step with the drumming, drumming bauble-bright hall.

The carpark is silent. At its edge the old fir trees seem lost
in their own darkness, as if they fell, tattered, abandoned
by a long arctic migration. Were the wolves starving?
she wonders. Was there blood on the snow?

The cars are huddled into themselves
like roosting birds.
Between the Ford and the Humber she finds
a silver cigarette lighter. There's a scratch mark on the base.
Something runic, she thinks.

She imagines what a fire might look like
as it hunts along the roofline. Hungry.

Andrew McIntyre

The Black Hole

The solid black glass of the Black Hole
at midnight,
my only fear, eels.
The stars were insects fallen
on the breathless surface.

I wanted to smash it all.
One death was all I had needed
to be sick of Death, but two, then three,
then another. It seemed the older
one got, the closer Death pressed
his wormy lips.
I took it personally.
I wanted to smash it all.

So I dove in in my jeans.

I gasped as chill ink
struck the air from my lungs.
I calmed and paddled, smearing the milky way.
My hand axed the surface,
oblitering a section of the universe.
I was a virile corpse, hovering in a void,
vowing death to Death.

I skulled to the far side, and hauled
myself up onto the limestone brow
of a rock tapering to the blunt horn
of an ancient behometh, and looked
back at what I had achieved, which was
nothing. Death still lived. And not only that:
a breeze picked up as if to rub salt:

You are going to freeze to me,
Death whispered.

Dawn McMillan

Sometimes when the rain stops

Rain against the glass
in headlight sheets of silver

I breathe your damp jacket

Feel the weight of space between us

You'll be back when I'm older
you say

Well I'm older now
So much older
and I haven't seen you yet

Sometimes when the rain stops
it hurts

Mr MacIntyre

Cheers Mr MacIntyre
You'll be gone now
or at least one hundred and probably
not saying much that would scare anyone
like you scared me in the fourth form saying
every minute that I sat there doing nothing was
one minute closer to the grave

Awesome discipline Mr Macintyre
I wasn't the only one who raced away
at a trembling rate of rote learning
geography
math
neither of which really mattered because
our geography's blown off the map
and there's the calculator now

Cheers Mr MacIntyre
Your one minute closer to the grave is why
I race to capture every sixty seconds
like it's going to run out at any minute
which of course it will
at one minute or another

Guess you've run out Mr MacIntyre
Guess you knew the truth

Mary Macpherson

Charge

Write a poem about battery anxiety, says X. There's a list of stuff
he wants poems about – hard, bright ideas – but mostly, Y forgets
to write the ideas down. Now she has to write a silver iPad poem,
also incorporating a snug plastic-encased Android phone, a bristling
electric shaver, another phone, several nuggety camera batteries,
plus cords. What will the poem look like? Suck suck – electricity.
Can I call when I've left the snaking power at home? R is busy
writing about scarce rare earth minerals. S goes backwards
and unplugs everything. X tells him it's bad for the batteries. S laughs,
until he calls the repairman. Y says this is S being S – what she's after
is the mad rush to get everything charged for night and day
and having that pulsing in your brain – except, she can't imagine
caring enough. She twitches about what it costs, and what would happen
if some devices had a vacation? (Could she persuade X to charge
the iPad every second day?) X says the poem has gone off the rails.
He wants silver devotion and panic about tangled chargers, dark
at the bottom of the suitcase (what goes with what?) and supposing
you left the phone charger behind, and couldn't call, even
if you were angry.

Vana Manasiadis

from Quantum Physics Tells Us Separation Is Only An Illusion

The representation of coexistence is impossible in Time alone; it depends, for its completion, upon the representation of Space; because, in mere Time, all things follow one another, and in mere Space all things are side by side; it is accordingly only by the combination of Time and Space that the representation of coexistence arises.
– Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1813).

1. *The sharing of atoms is the nature of things*

†**Loves Labours Lost** (William Shakespeare, first quarto 1598)
reading then naming happened in the library (Armado: Of what
Complexion? Boy: Of the sea). Deconstruction reposition
the dictionary and mischief *Complectare, complexio*: you are *embrace*
then *combination* *a constitution in balance* – perfect melancholy
choler brain and heart – before the reckoning For example
the messenger will announce death at the end of the play
for example the elements might draft new compounds
for example the Rankine Brown building teemed historical:
dark furniture dust suspended but hark the time-bomb of shivering air

---

Dear Complexion Boy†, Yes, you were radiant, but you weren't the only one. There were, I'll admit, other loves, other tunnels. It's true, that when I walked down the Dixon Street steps, the city lights nearing, the library books bearing me down, I'd hear the poles clang and say: this is my sound, the sound that represents. So I'd reach for the handrail, (ears ringing, snake-like hair stinging), and stand against the gale-force of that place. But four humours used to form our architectures, four elements the Universe, so now I know that the air could only be felt because the earth was: green darkness, wet undergrowth, the

†Crossing the Tararuas (*Wairarapa Times*, 13 February 1909)
Two settlers carried a swag a map of the district and a camera
after completing their climb they descended
arranged to signal by lighting a fire by hoisting
a white sheet When darkness set in long rows of street lamps
could be traced in the western towns A glorious sunrise
such as a man sees but once A swim such as mortal man
had never before attempted An ocean of glory the gilded peaks
the mighty Ruamahanga river Tuesday morning broke
with a heavy nor'-wester raging and a thick driving fog
Messrs Adkin and Lancaster decided not to climb the Peak
[They] took no less than fifty photographs wonderfully clear
and good Of course it is only experienced men familiar
with bush country who can safely cross

---

tramps into Tararua† bush with Danny. He didn't sit with us on the study floor, didn't waste time reading rays, or marking marginalia, though things with him weren't simple. What was it about our combination? We followed routes that could just as easily have led over cliffs as to huts Cone or Kime, we dragged rivers behind us along the flats, we almost always lost the tracks: red arrows in the trees, other fellows to ask the way. Close and tight. Everything would get pulled in black-hole like, and the kamahi canopies would scratch the tops of our heads before Danny would leap into action at last, resolved to

Waiohine River Valley (George Leslie Atkin, 1909, Photograph)
or perhaps the White Mountains overlapping
or perhaps the Nida Plateau smooth without the snow-chains
or perhaps Anogia peak village of wildmen (statue of a gunman)
or perhaps Acharnai habitat of wolves and *were-creatures:* *maero*:
who can reassemble return to bush bare the long nails
(waits) between mortal visits by collecting strange sticks
kindling shards of language: Styx the Acheron Not lethe though –
you don't like to lose things

---

forge forward. Was he a lizard, or a fish? Tauwharenikau, Waiohine,† Otaki; *time to bush-bash*, he'd say in the leaving light, slithering downwards towards the banks. He was a geographer and looked for channels; he collected mud samples and analysed their contents. He didn't need a map – like I need now – to navigate the spacetime. The nowtime. Because let's face it: you are still seated by the light shining, the poles on the steps are still trilling, Danny is still digging. And when I look back, and there, (here), I see our synchronous cosmologies, the points of our conjunction, (the tunnels overlapping as if warrens). I see the molecules we formed while believing were single.

Owen Marshall

White Dog

In the final winter light I see a white dog
running on the hill beside the fence line.
Such even gait, such conviction of purpose
and direction, without creating sound at all.

Almost luminous, he goes up and over
taking the last colour of the day to some
far, cold country, and leaving me alone
in contemplation of my own indecision.

Release

Not one cloud afloat on all the fathomless blue
That makes an ocean of this headland view.
Shall I take one deep breath, release the handbrake
Of gravity, fall upwards, soundlessly in to endless
Depths of sky. In the slow and silent tumble
Of a space man, I will see my trousers billow
My glasses drift away, all responsibility and pain
Diminish with the world below, I will rejoice
In endless distance, trust myself to the austere beauty
Of emptiness. A home coming child might look up
See me rising in slow, contented disarray, and smile.

Margaret Moores

She was not pregnant

"And the Glory of the Lord" is the first chorus of Handel's Messiah. At choir practice I sometimes stand beside a tenor who once taught me English. This was after Kennedy but before the moon landings when everyone had a transistor radio. I had piano lessons on Tuesday lunchtimes in the hall behind the Catholic Church on the Main Road. I rode my bicycle. Grease all over my school socks. The first page of the "Raindrop Prelude" will always smell of warm tomato sandwiches and dust. If I had begun a sentence with 'And,' the tenor would have circled it in red. He used to pace around the room in iambic pentameters; sometimes he mixed it up with a brief spasm of anapaest. We do not discuss those days. There was a green dress with a sash but it became too tight under the arms. It seemed that the older you became, the harder it was to please everyone. I did not always do as I was told. Chilblains in winter and then in summer all the skin peeled off our backs as if we were emerging from a chrysalis. The boy who I had a crush on when I was sixteen had a tiny scar shaped like a quaver on his cheekbone. He was sleeping with the girl who gave dance lessons in the hall on Saturday mornings. They got married as soon as he turned eighteen. She was not pregnant. When I visited them after their wedding, the dance teacher set up her ironing board and pressed his shirts, weeping silently, while we spoke about school. I walk home rehearsing my part; the soft hiss of the iron scalding the back of my throat.

Lambton Quay

Must I dress like that in Lambton Quay? I had one pair of jeans and wore my hair long. The buildings were covered with scaffolding and the workmen whistled and called. In my mother's day, nice girls wore skirts with stockings. I didn't care that I couldn't cook. If I covered my breasts with my folded arms, the wind whipped my hair into my mouth. I carried all my belongings in a box from the Railway Station, stopping every few yards to rest my arms. A boy used to visit me on his motorbike. He wanted sex, but I pretended to be uninterested. I should have been less surprised when he stopped calling. The taste of bourbon; an unshaven face. Tongue. It was some time before I could make use of this. At night, my reflection floated, disembodied, in the dark window above my desk as I watched the steps that led to the Rose Gardens. We used to talk about music although I had no record player. There is no reason to think of these, or any other incidents. In the clinic last week, the young doctor offered to show me my cervix on her screen. She asked if I was still sexually active. What is the correct answer? I looked away while she talked to the nurse. We all have experiences that we do not like to share. I used to paint my toenails red to match my sandals. Two people kissing under an apple tree might be lovers. If you look closely at the screen you will see the abnormality.

Martha Morseth

Consider the metaphor

a Hopper painting
one source of light
on a girl in a red dress
with a white collar
sitting on a worn blue carpet

around her on the floor
strips of newspaper form rooms of her house
and her friend's
as well as the building
where the dance will be held
and not to forget the rapidly sketched rectangle
a silver convertible

she dresses her paper doll for the festive occasion
a peach mini skirt and a velvet bolero over a lace top
She walks her doll beyond the paper walls.
the friend, falling ill, has not appeared

it is fortunate the girl possesses power
over circumstances
she will be the belle of the ball
her friend will die.

Dream I

Soar of seagulls
lap of surf on sand
one bare footprint and then another

I dreamed I drowned my husband

water so clear I see the stones
pebbles of quartz and lakes of mica
bits of seaweed tumbled by current

I held his shoulders so his face was under.

dog plunges into waves finds ball
I watch the owner in the dunes
a dark rectangle against the sun

arms of kelp entwined his body.

tonight I sit on the cool deck
stir ice cubes in my drink
think of him here.

Elizabeth Morton

Cerberus

And I snoozed like a dog at the gates of Hell,
dreamed of yellow paddocks and livestock,
a world above of foliage and campfire,
ranch barns and buttercups crisping in the heat.
Stationed at the Third Circle, gobbling soil like air,
I waded in sewage with the other bodies,
picking crops of excrement with my dog teeth.
I was a three-headed show hound.
My mane of snakes spat indignities to the soup
of humans smeared over the gory petri dish.
I would emulate the slow wag of Minos' tail,
needle at granite with my lion claws.
And I would shepherd the sinners to their vaults,
yap at stragglers and fugitives, yowl moonwards
and rattle the iron gate, braying for honeycakes,
music, and a master with warm hands.

The Audience

We picnicked under the crucifixion,
sucked on chicken feet and gizzards
while the mother mary shook
and the paparazzi shot their polaroids.
We supped off our best silverware,
clawed apart a pomegranate
and let the innards spill out over
jesus' toes. We licked the juices
off his bunions, blisters. We handed
him up a glass of wine. Cheers,
we think his cracked voicebox said.
Cheers Cheers. And we sat in
constellations on the clay. And
while jesus looked grimly at the
night, we toothpicked the poultry
from our gums, packed our trash
into biodegradable bags,
and hitchhiked out of Calvary.

Heidi North-Bailey

Winter, Kings Cross

I see you now, Housing Block,
winter stripping you bare,

trees cringe, naked
their branches scratch
thin as the anorexic
drunk who sleeps with his face
to God,
hiding nothing.

I see your red doors
your stark cheap painted
windows with their bars
you huddle on the other side
of the dark canal

I see you.

Brutal as the concrete sky
Kings Cross slung around your neck too,
I see you. You see me.

Keith Nunes

an escalation

eating lawn clippings this balmy Saturday, lacklustre leaves afraid of discourse, Sharon peeling off my tattoos while I prune my conversational style and throw it in the compost, over-the-fence Bob tells me how to screw my wife because he's had positive feedback from her, the virgin bush blushes every sunrise and seems outraged about how she was treated every sunset, it's uniformly uncomfortable when I sit around here where the stinging barbs come from behind as you're trying to climb to the next level

Stephen Oliver

Broken

for Bob Orr

My brother Deluxe 1350 portable typewriter. You were at your clattering best back in the 70s, as young as I was, clacked through the days and nights, under wintry, black ribbons of cloud that spooled by, over Reynoldstown high above Careys Bay, up Blueskin Road, toward Mount Cargill. You clattered against nor'westerlies and macrocarpa; clumped windbreaks sloping out across the ridgeline, over rock-strewn paddocks.

You travelled with me back to Wellington, then Auckland, and finally, onto Sydney. Now look at you, keys yellow as old teeth, type bars slumped in their basket. A hollow Amphitheatre. O Brother! Such shouts and applause arose from your chest's alveolus. Letters stamped upon the page as your carriage rolled those sheets away. The bell that sounded the end of each line!

It could have been a boxing match. You returned by sea but too late. Unceremoniously, I dumped you on the side of the road. Amongst stained mattresses, broken TVs, soiled clothing. Then, unaccountably, I wanted to make amends. I returned an hour later, thinking I could salvage something from the past. To mend your broken, metal heart. To assuage my sentimental one. Nothing was found. You had been cleared away with the garbage. A fitting end, brother, I thought. We had both moved on, though not without regret.

Alistair Paterson

Cold Harbour

This is the end of the poem
as it was
from the beginning …

& this is Falstaff – 'foul staff' –
Shakespeare
had to dispose of, if
Hal was to become the hero –
the victor at Agincourt.

And it's why
I want to hear them shout
when the poet goes up
to the microphone & waits
in the Olympic stadium …

I want to hear them
call the poet's name
the way it was
in the mead hall
when the bard stood up,
struck the lyre
& said –

but we can't quite get there
can't get there because –
wherever it is we're going
is a long way off
& the harbour
as it's always been –
the harbour's cold …

Vehicles are sold

The docket rests on the counter

birds sometimes make a summer
but need

to be strictly observed

when the greater is better

than what
was there
it was always
the lesser

a cube provides adequate work space
there are no cars available

overseas visitors receive attention
but don't always
deserve what they get

pay less than what's expected

there's no sense in being in a country

patrolled by
armed soldiers

Landscape with pictures

Art and Yorkshire from Turner to Hockney
a bridge of sighs connecting the furthest
edges of the world to birds here in the garden,
to the segments of bread I've thrown to them
on a cold autumn morning

And in the book there's Philippa Pearson's
Bringing in the Milk (c. 1940) ink and wash
from the Estate of the Artist – pale, suggesting
snow but inhabited by that same night
that pervades everything and everyone

And everywhere the shape of unknowing
painted between splashes and blobs of colour:
Katharine Holmes, b 1962 – her painting, 2009
Detail from Living in a Limestone Landscape
oil on canvas (courtesy of the Artist)

the death of what's created and therefore decays
Thomas Girtin's *Fountains Abbey*
the great east window from the presbytery (c. 1799)
watercolour on paper, 46.4 x 32.3 cm
held in the Museum Sheffield

They fill the pages with the colour and light
of another country as distant and unobtainable
as the hills, the mountains, the craters of the moon
invisible now the sun is up but still there –
a silver sphere in never ending night

Milorad Pejić

Ocean Beach

For David

We had nothing either for buying or for selling
when we turned onto the narrow road to Ocean
Beach. There's nothing about Ocean Beach
in brochures; on the map it's a tiny speck,
but we gave word to each other that we would
find something to remember it by.

Low tide is the shallowest part of the day.
It seems that we ourselves are being emptied
of our own thoughts. With high tide the villages
on the hills again come closer to the coast,
invading the pastures. The houses are wrestling
for a view of the sea. We jumped in, unwary
bathers, and the current pulled us to the open sea.
It took long for the boats to arrive. Too long for me,
and too late. Since then I've not slept nights.
The thoughts of water taking away our bodies
will never empty.

[*Translated by Omer Hadžiselimović*]

Sarah Penwarden

Lady-in-waiting

Your Karen Walker dress
blue with tiny white dots,
a gentle fabric, wafer-thin;
it would have wafted around you
as you walked.
White arms, cylindrical –
a Greek marble statue –
they have painted your finger-nails pink.

Your hair is
brown, tinged red;
I'm not sure now whether it's your own,
or whether the emperor of maladies robbed
that from you too.
Closed eyes,
closed mouth –
I'm willing your chest to rise.

Carried aloft, this lady-in-waiting,
carried aloft in a natural wood coffin;
we circle around you
sleeping princess,
fine as a doll
with clasped hands, we wait on you
while flitting candles
are lit.

Charmed

(Interview with a West Country great-aunt)

The blitz was on
(it' s not cool dear)
we went down to a shelter,
(this is true)
we were blown over the steps,
my Mum was blown across the road
by the blast
and cut her head
(we had charmed lives really).

If we'd have gone down when the sirens went –
if my sister had been there five minutes before –
she would have been killed with
all these children,
all the children.

We went back home when the raid was over;
My Dad went to get something
to shift masonry to get to
these children,
(this is true)
when they came back again,
all they could do was ...
my father felt a little girl's hand,
and she died.

We went back home to make a cup of tea:
we had a dresser with the cups on.
All the cups were gone,
but all the handles were still there.

Mother washed out some jam jars,
my father took his shaving mug and washed it,
and drank soapy tea;
he said it was the best cup of tea
he ever tasted.

My Dad was always good
at making something
beautiful.

There was a knock at the door.
It was an air raid warden, who said,
(I'm going to swear, I don't usually swear)
What the bloody hell are you doing here?
You've got an unexploded bomb in the next garden!

We had to go back into that shelter
where those children were lying,
and we stayed there
all night
(we had charmed lives really).

Mark Pirie

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(or Throw Stones The Easy Way!)

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Kerry Popplewell

At sparrow-fart

Here comes morning
with its customary gift of light
and list of things to be done.

Three days ago we came home.
Now you too have returned,
small expectant gargoyles
perched evenly apart
on the rim of the garage roof.

At sun-up
my every move is monitored
through the kitchen window pane.
You're prepared it seems to pardon
my late dereliction of duty
if I deliver the goods –

if I make *quite* sure
it's Fast Food.

Joanna Preston

Portrait of Great Aunt Lavinia as a Bathysphere

So reinforced – her waist, the bounty
of her chest, her coral reef of painted hair –

you'd swear she'd walk away unharmed
from being struck by lightning, by
a trolley-car, by a sudden fancy

to walk down to the quay, and keep on walking

past the shops – shuttered now, and sleeping – past
the window where they sell the ferry tickets,

past the nikau, holding up and out their palms
in meditation or in supplication,

past the bollards, counting off the waves
along the pier, and on and off the end

into the water.

And now she finds that water

is her element. Bubbles are a shoal
of fish that shimmer round her, and she

is open-mouthed with love.

She sinks deeper, her skirts a plume
of jellyfish, her shoes a pair of cuttlefish,
unlacing and retreating in a puff of coloured ink.

Her hair uncoils slowly from its braids,
trailing languorous above her, like her fingers,

a farewell to the air-soaked world above,

and I know that she crossed gladly, slipped
into the boundless kingdom of the ocean,

leaving nothing but her name, a story
touched with brine.

Nightfall

Little by little, day winds down
its props, its scaffold of light.
The sun is slipped into its case,

and a woman with a basket
of washing is the last pin
holding back the curtain of night,

the tumble and the weight of it.

Vaughan Rapatahana

he wāhi hū mohoao

ko kāore he ira tangata.
ki tēnei wāhi.

ko ngā rākau whakahara anake
ngā manu taurikura anake,
he awa rangimārie
ki he korero i he pākorehā.

ko te wāhi
o ngā atua, riwha
engari kei konei tonu.

a wild silent place

nothing human
in this place.

only the massive trees
only the undisturbed birds
a peaceful river
with a speech to nothing at all.

the place of the god-ancestors, part-invisible
but here always.

NB. Atua is particularly untranslatable to English reo or language and hence, culture = our semi-godlike ancestors who could manifest themselves in the natural world and still can do so.

kāore wareware

kaore wareware koe tēnei moana
ko tāu toto
kaore wareware koe tēnei wai
ko tāu manawa
kāore wareware koe ēnei tūātea
ko tāu ngā.

kei mua ngā manu
i tēnei
kei mua ngā ika
i tēnei
kei mua ngā tangata māori
i tēnei

te kāinga o Tangaroa

tino nui
tino kaha
tino tahito

ko tāu ora

kāore wareware koe tēnei.
kāore wareware
tonu

Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

don’t forget

don’t you forget this ocean
it’s your blood
don’t you forget this water
it’s your heart
don’t you forget these breaking waves
it’s your breath.

before the birds
was this
before the fish
was this
before the common man
was this,

the home of Tangaroa

very big
very strong
so primeval

it’s your life

don’t you forget this
don’t ever forget

The Pacific.

[Tangaroa – Māori – God of the Sea.]

Nicholas Reid

From the Sky Tower

From the Sky Tower, it's a planner's map.
Each boulevard is flattened, Albert Park
is a smooth greensward with no cranky hill.

20 degrees from upright, the near roofs
are mould– and rust-specked, grimy, but beyond,
at 45, they're architects' templates.

On arrowed arteries, the matchbox cars
slide silent journeys past homunculi
scaled to the bath-tub yachts and bonsai trees.

Ideal city on an ideal plane
Toytown to the horizon, dropped among
volcanoes, greenery and shipping lanes.

Unreal city from a tower-top
where laws of gravity are put aside
by abseilers, whose risk is pocket-deep.

Time for those fantasies from table-top
and childhood bedspread, when each fold and crease
was a defile for ambush and broadside.

The men of Ponsonby, with shields and spears,
do war with galleys from the Howick coast
and fuel 20 books of epic verse.

Condottiere, paid by Ellerslie,
force-march their way to Northcote in mere weeks
and pillage to their mercenary code.

A *Grande Armée* plods up the motorway
to Remuera Borodino where
Mt Hobson is the aristos' grandstand.

The wind that shakes the tower is a mob
of orator-enraged Parisians
called out to sack casino or Bastille.

Unreal Toytown from a tower-top.
We Harry Lime it on our Ferris wheel
with cash-value assigned to human dots.

Till down the baculum we drop at last
to noise, humanity, the proper scale.
Reality. The city on the ground.

The Trail

True history has a trail. Not just
the bubble of the moment but
the strings tied to your feet, in
ancestry, paternity, uncle– and aunt-ship
and those who survived a time
before your own, but can still live it
in your time, recalling, explicating,
seeing things in the present
of yourself. And in your brain, too,
1966 is not just 1966, but what
you have brought to that table.

So it's '66. I'm fifteen
or thereabouts and watching
on Sunday afternoon television
(single-channel, black-and-white)
an English film from 1951
called *I Believe in You* in which
a do-gooding probation officer
with plummy voice
saves proletarian youth from crime.
And I'm thinking "*How old,*
how very old, this film is!

You'd never have a lead now
played by Cecil Parker, or
the audience asked to like
these snobby types." Not that
I put it into words like that.
(I'm redacting. You understand.)
I mean I had a sense the world
had changed, and even, un-rebellious,
on a sofa, in a living room, I knew
this was the 60s
and the film was an antique.

So now I'm stunned to find
the gap from film to me was only
fifteen years; and fifteen years
is nothing in my life now,
taking me back only to
1999 when I knew what I know
and who I know and was already
me as much as I will ever be.
And I'm thinking of the trail,
the strings, those things
clutching the grown-ups

in 1966, the older ones who thought
this film something they'd just seen
yesterday at the Bijou,
modern, like them. And 1951
was last year. And outside the pub
old RSA types still in their heads
fighting Tobruk, and not having
to ask why Matapan Road was called
Matapan Road because that was
their recent history and they dragged
the trail into my time
and theirs.

Dikra Ridha

The Last Day in My Country

Butterflies, when they migrate,
how do they know where they're going –
do they know before they go? I heard
their wings flap against the sky. No.
I don't remember leaving the rising

dust of my country. Nor do I remember
the colour of sky when the stars faded.
Did the wings flap or flutter? Hold
the dried thymus leaves in your hand,
breathe them in; do you remember

what you prayed for? I tried to inhale
the threads of light, but the hand of prayer
was inside my abdomen, clutching
my diaphragm, pressing it, folding
it, kneading it into my lungs, if the ground

could powder under my feet; warm;
its dust gathers round my ankles, earth rushes
up to my knees, cold, ruffling, howling
upwards. I raise my arms, close my eyes
and taste it on my tongue. But the rising

dust missed the butterfly wings and fell
onto my drawings; sitting under the sun
with you, doodling with twigs in the earth –
flowers in our hair – maps of our lives.
The ancient ruins remain where our footsteps

had been. The shoes I lost will home cocoons
for butterflies that fill my place – fluttering
from flower to flower – their mottled
wings spread the orange over that old colony.
Our latitude to the sun alters our heartbeats

and the mud, when it rained, suited the life blown
into us. We pray for the peace of an old country,
for the earth to hold my shoes under its thymus
shrubs – its butterflies rely on the sun's rays
to return in autumn. How do they know?

We waved from the car as the dust rose
behind the tires, stone blended into the ground,
the sky turned pale, the building turned into time.
Pulling my veins, straining them towards
my back – the heart turned in my chest.

The Flower Beneath Baghdad

For grandma Zahra

I've been told that at dawn you sat on a rock,
aching after childbirth, grinding wheat grains
for the family. Grandma, the bread you fed

the family had your tears in it. I am the daughter
of one of your children. I may have your eyes
or your small hands. You couldn't read

or write, but I know you sang lullabies
while the fox circled the hens – your son stood
behind you at night and listened.

Who were you grieving for? You had
five children in a mud hut, fed
them from the orchard you kept, boiled

water from the Tigris you feared. You wept
for the son who left the country at night
in a boat. Somewhere, at a certain distance

from the river, you became the roots of wild
flowers. But a decade before you baked,
your mother named you Flower; the girl

who served and smiled'. With your petal
hands you sifted flour and kneaded
the dough. You sang calling your mother; telling

her about your son; how you named
him after the saint; if she could've held him while you cried
or fed him while you ate. How you had no sugar

to sweeten the pain. You sang asking why she brought
you to a world of sadness and left you in it.
Grandma, beneath the streets of Baghdad, you heard

the birds in the orchard, the hens scattering,
the village doula's prayers, granddad's requests
for dinner, crickets at night, footsteps of Baghdad, boots

of invasion, the shaking ground, running feet, falling
body parts, tankers rolling over and dogs fighting
for food. You were a poet who only sang at night, a poor

person in a grave – unmarked. Beneath the city,
you – and how many like you, blend into the old mud,
soak in the chemicals of war. Beneath the city, the wild

flowers have died. Cement has been laid
there and no one knows where you are. Grandma,
where do I lay flowers for you – if I ever walk in Baghdad?

David Romanda

Fast Food

The dude who comes to you with a pubic hair in his burger ... Do you make him a new burger? Or do you punish him, as you've been punished time and again in this cruel world, by plucking the hair off and re-serving the dude his same sandwich?

Do you notice the dweeb trying to signal you for a third refill of water? Or do you turn your back on him, like so many have turned their backs on you, and make him wait ten minutes in line?

Do you rat out the pimply, warty rat boy that mixes creepy shit into the sauces? Or do you join him and lash out at the multitudes by adding your own creepy shit?

As soon as it's ready, do you jet out the order of twelve chicken burgers to the dick-faced jock waiting in his brand spanking new yellow Hummer? Or do you get revenge on all dick-faced jocks and forget to put the chicken in the fryer? After he complains, super red-dick-faced, do you forget to put the chicken down again, and yet again?

Do you clean, clean, clean like a good worker bee? Or do you spread the love by wiping down the urinals, then wiping the faucets, door handles, trays, tables, and salt'n pepper shakers with the same cloth?

Do you pay back all the sexy mousy bitches that have wounded you by snitching on the sexy mousy bitch that breaks into registers with a paperclip when the newbie cashiers are out cleaning the dining room? Or do you demand a ten and a five and jive, jive, jive?

When the homeless guy comes in asking you to refill the coffee cup he fished out of the trash, do you follow procedure and call your ass-faced manager, Brad? Or do you give the guy a new cup filled with fresh coffee, and hell, toss him a free cheeseburger as well?

Angel

In bed, one drunken night, Tiffany tells me
her ex had “crazy-intense” back hair. It was shaped like
two angel wings, she says. Imagine.
Fast forward a half year, and she asks me why
I never call her angel anymore.

Brittany Rose

To Dad

It's all
your own
fault.

You told me,
"Men
are discriminated against
in a family court,
ruled over by
gutless men and
selfish women."

When I couldn't describe
my knotted intestines,
the rope
twisted around my stomach,
my mother held me,
"I will protect you."
She told me, "Blame me,
let him hate me.
Do what is easiest
for you."

Disobeying you made my heart
drop
to my gut
and writhe
with crimson butterflies.

I couldn't strand my mother
at the kitchen bench,
marooned
with celery sticks
and peanut butter.
So
I took my sister's hand

and told her, “We’re going home,
I’ll take you home.”
The nerves
in my fingers pulsed hot.

My little brother
never told me
that he sat behind
the big, wooden table
watching you
kick and scream
like a child
who was told ‘No’.

My brother didn’t tell me that
you resisted
and swore.
That they broke your ribs.
That the bald man,
and the other man
took you away, because
you
refused to cooperate.

My mother didn’t tell me
that my brother
couldn’t breathe.
That my twelve-year-old brother’s
breath shuddered,
and rasped in his throat.
That his inhaler was
nearly empty
two
hours
later.

My mother
never told me
that you
cared more about the

principle
of being a father
than caring for me like a parent should.

You told me.

You told me,
when you sat my brother
at the table
forced a pen into his hand
and demanded he write
a statement.
Wet, burning salt
slid down the
grooves
around his wailing mouth,
droplets fell
on refill.
Blue biro ‘peper spray’,
on the page
soaked up the tears
dripping from
his trembling chin.

You told me, “Kids
need their dads.”

You were wrong.

Dagmara Rudolph

Mummy?

Mummy?
If I were a dolphin I would dive
I would dive down below the waves
And then I'd come back
You know why I would?
I'd do it to see you again.

Mummy?
If I were a bird I would fly
I would fly far, far away
And then I'd come back
You know why I would?
I'd do it to see you again.

Mummy?
If I went away would you cry?
Would you cry every single night?
I'm not sure you would
But I hope with all my heart
That someday you'll come back again.

Ken Ruffell

Streets Ahead

It's not as easy as it looks, slipping by unnoticed
Bleached baseball cap, jacket and haversack
The bindle on the back

His pitch is the CBD
Not five miles a day on the highway
But round about the arcades and byways

The quip "I've me Goldcard," keeps them at arm's length
Where he sleeps is a guarded secret – his business,
Away from spies and Samaritans

Jaded jeans. Op-shop shoes
The shapeless gent from Oamaru
Is softly paying his dues.

Nurul Shamsul

The Liberation of Wine

Pashmina blended with the softest silk,
It's colour of wine so sweet
But so sinful,
Conceal
My
Loyalty to God.

Proudly,
It dances in the wind so freely
But secured are
My values,
My identity.

However,
'Modern' is the society.
And 'backwards' is I,
The girl
In the silk pashmina,
Wine red scarf.

But
Liberated
I am,
To know I can be
Beautiful
With just inner beauty

And to
Mystify
Wonderers of my outer beauty.

So

Who
Are
You

To say I am ‘oppressed’?

And

Who
Are
We

To ‘believe’ the media?

Don’t look at me.
Look into me;
For I am a girl

Liberated

With her silk pashmina,
Wine red scarf.

Kerrin P. Sharpe

cleaning the stables

for years I slept under
Siberian pines to forget
the harsh lights of voices

after they broke my legs
the mole in the field
found the name Tatania

and I became fond
of caravan tea
and cabbage soup

as soon as I spoke Russian
my other languages grew
smoky and full-bodied

now I'm the bride of the God
of tall black hats who opens
his arms to hollow wooden dolls

and snow covers my spy life
like a corpse though once
when I passed a barber's shop

I thought a man
was having his throat cut

my teacher has no lungs

my teacher has no lungs
yet takes no rest from talk

self he insists *self*
when he means us

my teacher's talk
is loco parentis
you simply need to know this

my teacher is a man
with no breath to catch

a man in a boatshed
under the pump

Emma Shi

fingers stained with chlorine

august blots my tongue bright red. my mother says i will
be beautiful. *just a few stitches*, she whispers, heart
curved back against her spine, *then
dear, you can swim again*. my skin like
eggshells, splintering, as they fill my lungs with
fairy dust. but it always
grows back.
they take me away again and pretend it doesn't
hurt. they say *it's okay*, then *it's all right*, then *please*,
icicle jaws clenched tight. but *i don't want to. i don't-
just a few stitches*. they paint my lips anaesthesia, a
kilo of dust, and i fall asleep to a
lullaby about a heartbeat that never breaks. my
mother sits at my side as the doctors talk about
new aches, dry skin. a chance that
only lucky girls without
plastic veins taste. *do you have any
questions?* they ask, and i say no, eyes all
red.

i think, in my dreams, i swim and swim and never
stop. the iv line tugs against my arm and i
tug it back till i'm bleeding, august again. *i don't
understand*, i say, and my mother sits silently in the next room,
vacant. i take a shower instead, the water flowing into an open
wound. cover the drain with my feet, pretend to
x-ray my heart and find nothing there but blood. they don't tell
you about what happens next. so i gasp for breath, sing from a to
z. hands stretched out to the ocean.

skipping dead insects across the ocean

i wake up with fists clenched. the glass shimmers
and crushes under my fingers like wings. he
cites me as the one with broken knuckles. it
is easier, he says, to remember things that way.

i start to wear creased butterflies in my hair. then
stuffed in my coat pocket, wrapped in brown paper
like a parcel. on tuesdays, i carve words into
the shore: *run, flight, fog*. wait, watch as the
sea chases them away, and chase it back
till i'm up to my heart with water.

the last butterfly flickers away at high tide. i practise
breathing underwater but the fish gnaw at my skull
like metal. *i don't know what i'm waiting for*, i
tell him, and he says, *whatever's left*. so i press my skin
against seashells, forget how to breathe again.

Jaspreet Singh

Emperor's New Clothes

He drove me in a TATA cab
through the streets of Old and New
Delhi. The air un-breathable. I heard
his bone voice

breaking down,
telling why he didn't vote
for 'the man who wears a 9,00,000 rupee
pinstripe jacket' – why no vote for 'the party with saffron testicles'.

A week ago they kicked
his young wife
out of the government
hospital, where every micro-

peon to head-doctor has a cut
in the business, he said.
Needles programmed to take
600 gram blood

but the clerk acknowledges
'only two
hun-dred'.
Not paying

19,000 rupees underhand
has consequences
for
a caesarian.

'Whole system
bad for nothing.' So perplexed
he was, even the slip
of tongue failed to change mood. And

outside on the streets
the Saffron Man in election poster
continued to look
down at dust-bright denizens

of the city and said nothing.
Completely silent he was
about vandalized churches, ghar-vapasi, and Ram-haram
Death was once again trying to become

a Dada in India. It was early February, and
the man in the poster was silent about hate
within his cadres. Silent about expunged
Ramanujans and Ramayanas

So silent, he
seemed to have forgotten he was silent
So forgetful,
he had forgotten his own name.

The cabbie
applied a sudden brake.
We approached
glaring mirror towers of a 5-star.

I ascended into the hotel's
aromas. My hand made contact with hands
that had written poems and novels,
and my wine glass clinked with lit-fest

sponsors and arbiters of artistic taste-
n-talent. As I mutter-paneered and
rogan joshed with panelists (hush:
debating Charlie Hebdo) I wish I had asked

I wish I had asked the one in the TATA cab –
What color the testicles of mega-merged publishers
who pulp their own author's
books? (Exhibit number one: Doniger's *Hinduism*)

Now several months have passed by, and I am half
a continent away. And as I scribble this so-called poem
almost a shoem, the Saffron Man has gone silent again.
This time – Savage lynching in Dadri.

So silent, he
seems to have forgotten he is silent
So forgetful,
he has forgotten his own chest, his own clothes

And most eyes
are shut
or find themselves doubting
what they have seen.

Elizabeth Smither

Day breaks in dressing gowns

In your double bed, raised on a little platform
your two figures in dressing gowns, backs against
the headboard, are sipping cups of tea.

Two dear dressing gowns, one blue, one white
their sashes tied, though out of sight.
Perhaps your toes are stretching beneath the covers

toes you would recognise if they were stolen away
one toe overlapping on the left foot (high heels)
the other (male) pristine and soft.

No need for dressing gowns in the summer air
one made of towelling, one of poplin
but how they dress you, how I applaud

standing in the doorway, robed in
a spare I found behind my door.
I know you so well, I think,

and the dressing gowns seem to concur.
I hope never to hold them in my arms
empty forms and dangling sleeves over which I weep.

Kenneth Steven

Where

Nothing is sacred now
said the man who takes the five pounds
and seventy pence in the motorway service station
at ten thirty on a filthy Sunday night.
And I looked at the front of a lorry
hurtling out of the north with anger in its wheels
its eyes grazing my face with their brightness
and I wondered. This used to be a place
for larks and meadow pipits and snipe
until we decided to bypass Sunderland –
now it's just the number of a somewhere
we hammer north and south of.
And I drink sweet coffee and watch the windows
of the all night café
where the girl with the automatic smile,
the instant thank you, wipes away another customer
and smokes another cigarette.
I get out the map and lay it on the dashboard
and wish I could be back so much
it hurts the pit of my stomach –
and I realise, suddenly,
we spend the first eighteen years of our lives
desperately getting away
and the rest of them trying to go home.

Michael Steven

Omitted Entries from Lonely Planet Guides

for Dene Barnes

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Blue traces of Luminol spray cover the smashed display cabinets;
Interpol agents interrogate the traumatised store manager.
Holding a black attaché case, the fence boards a flight to Antwerp.

Düsseldorf, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

There are no tours of the Luftschutzbunker. It was here, in the
terrible summer of 1972,
four-piece instrumental band, German Oak, recorded their
eponymous third album.
Only twelve copies sold. Among collectors of krautrock it is lauded
as a seminal work.

Henderson, West Auckland, New Zealand

Ghosts circle the ceiling of his skull. He fills the glass pipe again
– was that a police siren or was it the wail of a banshee?
The things he thought happened yesterday happened a week ago.

Chechnya, North Caucasus, Russia

Of Anatoly Vadim, the man formerly employed to guard missile
silos: no records exist.
They disappeared along with several nuclear warheads. It is entirely
plausible
these were sold to organized crime groups. After years of no pay,
he'd run out of rubles.

Belfast, Northern Ireland, Ireland

The mood is somber tonight in O'Halloran's Bar. Niall and Seamus
sup their dark draughts slowly. Beyond the heavy oak door
is the shipyard, the burnt-out cars, the sulfuric tang of spent
gelignite.

Blanes Campground, Costa Brava, Spain

After the Feast of Santa Anna and Saint Joaquin, a woman runs to
the ablutions block.
Unbeknown to her, she passes the shack where former custodian,
Roberto Bolaño,
drafted his first novels. How could she know? There is no statue or
gold memorial plaque.

Baltimore, Maryland, United States of America

Smoke still rises from its chimneys, but the steel works were closed
years ago.
Oblivion is the growth industry; corner boys peddle today's product.
An addict slumps in an armchair after the warm thump of hard
chemicals.

Kings Cross, Sydney, Australia

Where the flâneur once strolled, synthesizing the death of a friend
and the harbour
into his most famous poem. Now swarthy men, wearing black
Armani suits
and sunglasses, move between the bars and vice clubs, collecting
protection money.

Tijuana, Baja Peninsula, Mexico

In a non-descript alleyway two blocks south of the Delegación
Centro district,
behind a trestle stall of AK-47s and Glock pistols, Hernando
Cardenas,
fans himself with a comic book. A devout Catholic, he dotes on his
many children.

Marc Swan

On the road to euthanasia

When thunder rumbles over his bed
he doesn't move. Does he hear it?
Does he understand? He's been
in this place three years. His pale
watery blue eyes grown accustomed
to changing light of morning, afternoon
and night. He speaks less, mostly phrases,
jumbled thoughts, sometimes a pinhole
appears and words flow. I watch his eyes
flutter. What *does* he hear? His impassivity
is unsettling. He has an untreated angio-
sarcoma, raw and oozing on his forehead,
unclipped fingernails, toenails thick
and gnarly, a shock of unruly white hair.
We wash it once a week, says the stocky
woman with yellow teeth, a crooked smile.
In the afternoon residents gather in the main
room for games and cookies. *His girlfriend*,
my mother says, pointing to a dark-haired
middle-aged woman in a blue hospital gown
staring at the red exit sign over the door.
Her husband comes daily as my mother
does. They never seem to notice, off by
themselves in another time. I think of
choice. I think of timing of that choice.
When the whippoorwill sings, there'll be
a new day. If you hear it. If you understand.

In retrospect

In the time before the time I knew
things could have been different
or could have been better understood,
my grandfather came into a room filled
with my father, mother, uncles and aunts,
and told me to pick up the spilled beads
from the glass elephant. Sounds
simplistic in this day and age, but then
it was *PICK UP THE BEADS*. I was five.
I gathered the beads in first one, then
both hands, dumping them carefully into
the elephant glistening with brightly colored
beads. He raised a leather strop and slung
it at my left arm. I know it was left because
that's where the scar remains. *Faster*, he said.
I yelped then held back the tears and loaded
that elephant belly full. I think of that today
after a dinner with our grandchildren – two
young self-absorbed prima donnas in frilly
skirts, flower headbands, diamond earrings,
picking at the food, preening for attention,
insulated from the rigors the future will hold.
Will they find a guide? Will they understand?
I look back on my seven decades, how our
fluid world shifts and shapes each generation.
For my grandfather, a post-depression man
from northern Appalachia supporting
a family of nine with limited education,
a blue collar job, change was not easy
to accept – to understand the way the life
bowl fills and levels and fills again.

Richard Taylor

Flowers

These flowers.
White twistings –
clouds on green stalks,
explode in mushroom-delicacy.

Silently they shout: “Life!”

Not far, my cat, in the sun,
liquid Sphinx,
sleek enigma,
subtle Siamese:
curls contemptuous.

Unquestioning,
Unaware he is a part
of evolution’s procession.

A stopped still:
sunlight illuminates –
Here is seen:
The cat, the flower, the man, the dream.

I Have Cut Off My Own Head

Now that I have cut
in savage sadness
this hanging hate
there bleak is still in me
a Phantsmagor or nightmare.
Weird this world.
I spin to my self-destruct,
and devils' dreams
explode with cackling flames,
and today, in this sun-hell\of cicada-maddened world
that is hot and still and red:
beats my brain with omnipresent negative.

I am a statue
with a red pumpkin for a head.

I have committed
all metaphors of cut or kill –
the blood of my empty,
once-was-life, congeals around –
from darkness, the ranting
laughter of maddened fiends.
My friends turn to magpies
made from marzipan. They are coloured
with bright blue faces.
She whom I loved is dead in my head.
She walks the world like a Walt Disney thing.

I have cut off my own head.

Vivienne Ullrich

Sonic Sister[7] Sestina

Because I want you to pay
attention I will draw
your eye to the spaces
between, I will make you see
past the pattern and shadow.
I will own the emptiness.

It does not matter what I draw
to your attention if the spaces
are sufficient for you to see
burnished light and contrast shadow,
an attempt to challenge emptiness.
for that is the price you pay

when you forever fill up your spaces
with so much you cannot see
the ghosts that lurk in shadow
and repeat and remind of emptiness.
I will have hit pay
dirt if this is a means to draw

you away where you can see
how there is no light without shadow
no completeness without emptiness
no chance to play and pay
without the opportunity to draw
down the blind on open spaces.

7 "Sonic Sisters" 2002 by Elizabeth Thomson
bronze, patina, oil paint, lacquer, acrylic on wood
1800 x 3600 x 50 mm.

I will have you out of shadow
and long past the depths of emptiness
if I can convince you to pay
a visit where I can draw
you out of yourself into spaces
you have yet to dream to see.

I want to show you the value of emptiness
I want to teach you how I pay
out a line that only I can draw
because I understand the power of spaces,
I understand the need to see
the light that justifies the shadow.

Pay attention, pay attention to the emptiness,
Pay attention to the shadow that I see,
Pay attention to the spaces that I draw.

Richard von Sturmer

from Songs for a New Identity

The Pale Sparrows of Chernobyl

In a land that borders
Hope and disorder
I want to see
The pale sparrows
Of Chernobyl.

Tell me when
The war is over.

Tell me when
The war is over.

The Tide Goes Out

The tide goes out
A long long way
Tomorrow's never going to be
Just another day

A long long way
Between fence posts
The fields are full
Of angry ghosts

Don't even ask me why
Why I'm so remote

Around the Margins

I roam the margins
With a group of friends
We don't seem to fit
Into any programme.

There's a love of rust
A love of decay
We stay up all night
For the break of day.

One has a limp
One wears a frown
One looks like he's spent
Years underground.

You may smell sulphur
Or Eau de Cologne.
Each of us has
A style of his own.

Jen Webb

Metamorphoses

And speaking of things that change – I am
older, greyer, more dense, and know
now that the laurel bush, the white cow,
the hind – these forms have escaped me.

Things no longer change, or not that way. Humans
remain disappointingly the same: arms, legs, eyes,
desires. I too am disappointingly
the same. Light shifts in the living room,
the cat looks up from its sleep, there's the shadow
of a god's descent: branches sprout from my shoulders,
snakes move in my hair and the swan between my thighs.
Then the urgency fades, again I am disappointingly
the same; changing only as all humans might –
incrementally.

Outside, the mysteries still conspire – I can't tell
where a story ends and the world
begins but they do in their own ways
begin and end. Trees change
with flood or fire, Daphne blinks, sleepy,
from each leaf. The light portends.
The great swan beats his wings; at the far side
of the field the white bull shakes his head,
and the much more modern Cinderella
shakes the ashes from her shoe,
joins in the dance.

Desire lines

1.

You can see it from the moon,
bigger than Singapore, it
snakes right down the west.
Lake Moore – we call it 'lake'
but its water turns to salt,
its skin to sand.

Halfway down, the borders bulge. This is
lake as open palm, facing the sun;
it has forgotten its past, and
the small fish that swam in its shallows,
the eels that lurked in its depths how
things change; now
only light remains.

2.

The small plane unscrolls the sky
stretching out new lines,
writing my desire.

I meet you on the path – hands stretched
out to say hello, feet on the ground,
our eyes on the sky: 'read the signs'
it spells, 'and not' – we
hold our breath, as it turns, as it catches
its own breath – 'the time'

Propeller blades edit the letters; its
wisdom blurs. Step off the path,
follow
the lines of your
own desire.

3·

The cats are sleeping like drunks
on chairs they've clawed to rags. Birds
are rugged up, bats tucked away, and
only possums broach the night
snarling over scraps.

Indoors, a sediment
of silence mutes the air. What
words might we assay?

The strata form between us, quiet
takes shape. There is little else
to say – we might as well
be on Mars, we might
as well be dead.

Then between the moment
and the thought, frost
creaks, possums call.

4·

It's this thing we'd almost forgotten
a splinter nudged up against
the bone. It had been there so long.

No matter – is anything
what it seems? Birds outside, shouting
for seed, would turn us to dust: the lizards recall
when they were dinosaurs and we
were mud.

Don't look down, don't
look back
Keep walking.

Sue Wootton

Kids

Animals inhabit them: tiger, lion, bear.
Nothing they've ever seen in the flesh.
But roaring, but clawing, but fangs, fur,
fins, feathers, fear. Dinosaurs inhabit them,
and wolves and sharks. Blue whales,
killer whales. Dolphin, unicorn, coyote, fox.

Animals inhabit them until they inhibit
the animals, inhabit the uniform, achieve
the standards. The animals hibernate, wait
for it to dawn. Spring comes, and maybe late,
with the kids inhabiting Sunset Villa, rocking
and dribbling. But when it dawns, the animals

come out of the cave, famished. They howl,
they rumble. Naturally, they roam and hunt.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness. Such a pretty name, for such a bitch.
A misnomer, like dropping Patience or Prudence
on the brow of a soft babe held over a stone font
who grows up an impulsive, careless cunt.
Forgiveness is all claws. She won't come to my call
but nor will she shake loose. She has me in maul.
Most mornings, 3 a.m., she speaks. You can't give me away
she says. Nor am I for sale. If you want to use my name
to settle debts and soothe your pain, you'll pay. I'll have the wring
of you, you'll twist and shout before you sing
the bad-good song, the did-no-wrong, the put-it-all
behind-us-now, move-on. My job's to prowl
your mind and heart and scratch up squirts of acid.
Not until you're out of stink will I be placid.

Karen Zelas

Elusion

So they go to the mountains
to be married. The static of morning,
clouds streaking the blue like fingernails
or chalk. An eye in the sky. They have left
the birds far below.
                They bear white cloth
but no table, champagne and
roast duck, a small silver cross. Climb
basalt steps single file, roped
as one. Always he looks up, always
forward, climbs to where thin air
starves his lungs. At the peak, the north
wind wars with his fortitude.
                Who sees what he sees?
His eyes screen the sometimes:
                the old city, the child crying
behind broken walls, eyes meeting his
briefly. Moving on ...

                They exchange vows;
eyes closed, he kisses her hopefully. Ghost eyes
burn, even now, in the sun-glint from snow

John Geraets

Retrospective: briefly, briefly …

It's true, as Duncan used to say,
We need permission for what we do
Next we must grab permission by the horns & hang on
It isn't just a grant, a gift, a boon, grab it and run
Before they change their minds
Philip Whalen, 'Treading Water'

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brief magazine, which first made its appearance some twenty years ago as *A Brief Description of the Whole World*, cannot reasonably claim to have described the world in its entirety nor has it proved short-lived. For me, as one of the made-to-feel-welcome longer term contributors, it is fair to say that I have enjoyed first hand some of the benefits of its considerable staying power; yet in what follows the chief interest is not to do with longevity. Rather, this retrospective will deal with something less than half the magazine's activity to date, focusing only on the establishment years under Alan Loney (1995-8) and then my own time as editor (1999-2002).

One reason why as editor I decided to move in small steps towards a foreshortened *brief* masthead was to bring greater attention to what the magazine was especially wanting to achieve: as well as indicating events of short duration, the word 'brief' also signals an act of informing or updating – or it can refer to a set of preparatory orders, extending all the way up to the commissioning of a special undertaking or major assignment. In its early phase *brief* is distinguished in all three ways, although in my view the most telling designation is that of taking upon itself a major cultural reassignment, whether tongue in cheek or not.[8] Set

8 Uncertain as to the exact intended tone of the original lengthy title, it was allowed to evolve by way of iteration over a number of issues into something, well, *brief*er. The original title derives, as Alan has explained, from a catalogue listing of books for sale in Pickering & Chatto, Haymarket, 1902, 434pp, price 6d: 'A BRIEFE DISCRIPTION OF THE WHOLE WORLD, wherein is particularly described all the Monarchies, Empires and Kingdomes of the same, with their Academies, as also their

directly against the contemporary literary 'mainstream', here is an exclusive allocation of publishing space to a select group of writers identified with the 'other tradition'.

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Alan's *brief*

> *And again, the question about who one writes for emerges. To my knowledge there isn't a single commentator on what I will call 'the other tradition' in New Zealand poetry since the early 1970s who documents it, either for that specific community or for the literary community at large.* (1997)

I'd had occasional contact with Alan Loney since our first meeting in 1992 when he resided as Literary Fellow in Government House at the University of Auckland. Back from Nagoya on a brief return visit three years later, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a phone call from him outlining his plan to establish a new magazine. It was to be committed to local writers whose work Alan liked and whom he felt had been either explicitly or else at least effectively snubbed by the mainstream platforms (read *Landfall, Sport*, *New Zealand Books* and others).[9] For at least a

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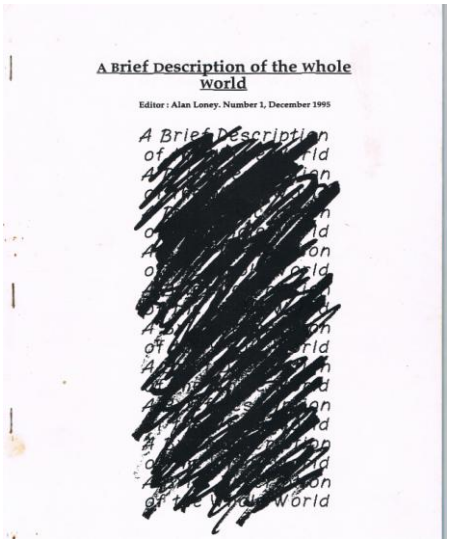
severall Titles and Situations thereunto adjoining, written by the Right Reverend Father in God, GEORGE ABBOTT, late Archbishop of Canterbury. 1634.'

9 Unsympathetic reviews of publications by Leggott, Edmond and Loney (representing postmodernism) which appeared in *New Zealand Books* in the mid-1990s had resulted in squabbles between Alan and some of the reviewers (see Numbers 4 and 6). Interestingly, around the same time Alan was himself withholding permission for inclusion of his work in a number of publications, most significantly the Williams-Bornholt-O'Brien *An Anthology of New Zealand Poetry in English* (1997). Meantime, against what was perceived as an unreceptive NZ backdrop, Alan's second book of poems *dear Mondrian* had already earlier attracted the attention of visiting American poet Robert Creeley, who applauded it as a strong and innovative book, acknowledging its links to such writers as Olson and Zukofsky while also celebrating its local character (*Islands: 14* Summer 1975). And even today, much the same invisibility complained of then remains: 1,248 pages comprising the Stafford-Williams *The Auckland University Press Anthology of New Zealand Literature* (2011) contains nothing by Alan, nothing by Richard von Sturmer, a single poem each by Davis and Curnow, and so on. Whether or not this can be read as a conscious act of exclusion of the other tradition is open to discussion, less so is the consequence that any consideration of a distinctive 'otherness' is lost when the story told is of one of common denominators and of assimilation into an encompassing mainstream

decade there had been no regular outlet for alternative writers, a gap he felt needed redressing.[10] Alan wished this other tradition to be approached separately and to be examined in terms of its own specific concerns rather than have it end up being indiscriminately tossed in with and so assimilated into more conventional ways of understanding.



At the same time as this initiative saw the establishment of a specialised publishing venue available to a restricted selection of writers, it also provided Alan a corner from which he could carry the fight to the mainstream as champion and key advocate on behalf of those aligned with The Writers Group.[11] Participation was by invitation only and assumed a broadly shared aesthetic. While this aesthetic was not to be fully articulated, nonetheless it proved welcoming and self-reinforcing from the outset. The magazine saw itself as culminating initiatives that dated back to the late 1960s small magazine *Freed* ('The over-turning proposed by *Freed* was never completed'),[12] and in certain ways it extended the work undertaken

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practice. Compare to this the PennSound programme at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States, which includes innovative contemporary writing and holds dollops of Loney, Curnow and Green.

10 According to Alan, no adequate platform existed from 1984 until 1995 when *A Brief Description* 'took on that necessary yet sadly neglected role' (*Reading|Saying|Making* The Writers Group 2001: 78; also 100). He further points out that major changes in physical culture, specifically print technology, contributed significantly to an improved financial viability of small distribution magazines: a shift initially from letterpress to off-set printing, and later on to the relative cheapness and ease of photocopied reproduction: *A Brief Description* is a child of the photocopier.

11 It is interesting to note that the isolation of which Alan complained might also be viewed as something that he, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to, and so perpetuated: on the one hand by withholding permission for his own work to be reprinted, and on the other by his own embracing the mantle of outsider on behalf of himself and those considered even more on the outside than he was–to the extent that eventually physically (and likely emotionally) he removed himself to Australia, where he reestablished writing and publishing networks and ventures (see his Electio Editions) in that country and in North America.

12 Alan had been on the fringe of that group; Edmond and Brunton were editors and key players. The statement appears in the conversation with Leigh Davis included in *And* (1983). From *Freed* through to the mid-1980s a number of alternative magazines are acknowledged: '*Frontiers,* a few NZUSA *Literary Yearbooks,* a few *Kiwi, New*

already in Alan's Hawk and Black Light presses in the 1970s and 1980s[13], as well as his editorial initiatives in the 'postmodern' quarterly *Parallax* (1982-3). Indeed, he was much indebted to the American postmodernists, especially Olson, and their work serves as an important benchmark and stimulus in his own projects.[14] *A Brief Description* includes writers involved in these earlier endeavours as well as some come across later. To elaborate: writers who appear in the later magazine who also appear in the three published issues of *Parallax* include Green, Stout, Curnow, Jenner, Horrocks, Joanna Paul, Davis, Harlow, Lindsay and Barnett; others arrive via the early 1980s magazines *And* and *Splash* (Calder, Geraets); still others number among more recent of Alan's personal acquaintances (Radich, Wilson, Beard, Pillay, Paula Green, Nash, Kyle).

A couple of dozen individuals were each guaranteed a minimum four pages per quarterly issue to fill as they preferred, no questions asked: a novel and enterprising show of approbation indeed. Contributors were expected to be also subscribers, thus allowing the magazine to pay its way. And copy-ready material, including the occasional art-insert,[15] was to be received by due date, at which time the contents were placed between white (occasionally single colour) illustrated paper covers, photocopied to produce 50 copies and then stapled and despatched. Certainly it was a coterie operation and yet – as Alan has pointed out – in fact it was not much of a departure from the contemporary reality which

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Argot, Morepork, Parallax, AND, Splash, Untold, to some extent *Antic*' (Number 4 page 6).

13 Those published in book form include Loney, Brunton, Wedde, Lindsay, Creeley, Haley, Joanna Paul, Edmond, Manhire, Jenner, Smither, Harlow, Curnow, Horrocks, a majority of whom appear in *A Brief Description.*

14 Much of Alan's life's work has been given to improving the prospects of the other tradition: 'When I was first "influenced" by the American poet Charles Olson, the year was 1970, I was 30 years old, I had been writing since 1963 and publishing since 1969. The interest that proceeded from that event, thru Olson, Robert Creeley, Edward Dorn, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Gertrude Stein and the English poets John Keats William Blake and Basil Bunting, was less a formative than a reformative influence on my work: That is, this event acted as a kind of second wave of connection with the wider tradition of contemporary poetry' (R|S|M 52-3). The wider literary community had not been as responsive to the same strong influence: 'In the early seventies we were trying to get into *Islands* and *Landfall* and being pushed back and back... There was a set against the kind of writing that we were making–' (100).

15 Billy Apple's pageworks feature prominently. There are also some striking word-art pages from Kaiser/Barnett.

meant that even more popular literary magazines represented at most a very small range of writers addressing a not much larger group of specialised readers, the two groups added together amounting to only a very tiny portion of the wider literate culture. *A Brief Description* was not looking (or likely) to attract a significant range of readers. Alan's major innovation was to proudly champion the few of the few and to shift the editorial thrust away from quality control and toward opportunity provision. For invited contributors this meant that they need not feel constrained by the predilections of an editor who might be out of sympathy with their work: typically well established and in mid-career, they were given a free hand to do the best that they knew how.

The shared aesthetic proved an important underpinning, although as indicated above there was a paucity of theoretical writing (certainly outside of Alan's own regular and rather uncompromising editorial pieces). Even Alan Brunton's 'Remarks on "The Future of Poetry"', the single distinctively aesthetics piece included, strikes me as typical of that writer's provocative statements in *Freed* rather than signalling a significant poetic shift:

> the poem shares with the interpretations that fact that it comes second; the originary event is always legendary; the urge to repeat the legendary event is what makes an 'avant garde'. (7 21)[16]

The anticipated close critical examination of each other's writing was in practice quite limited: Tony Green reviews Geraets (1) and Geraets in turn reviews books by Loney & Leggott (3) and Loney (6) – that's pretty much it. Indeed, Alan was quite prepared to castigate even those whom he had set out to support over what he saw as their complacent acceptance of the status quo, thus exacerbating their current isolation. It was 'the denigration of our work' that needed to be outed and rectified:

> It hurts me to say it, but in this country, and to my own continuing disappointment, the documentary record of the other tradition in poetry, from *Freed* to the present day, is generally left to the bewilderment and frequent spitefulness of mainstream critics and reviewers. Appallingly, that record goes

16 However Brunton the social and ecological activist is strongly present in the opening issue in 'A Objection to a Proposal' and always his texts are diversely referential.

> almost completely unchallenged by the considerable number of talented, intelligent, and able participants in its life upon the page. We have, as members of the other tradition, colluded in the overall denigration of our work by our silence in the face of undue criticism. (1997)

Alan's editorials convey a sense of someone at once harnessing forces and wanting to assert an historical divide. This is immediately clear in the personal tone he adopts in the opening page of the first issue: 'Dear Graham [Lindsay], these notes will probably come slow. I'm not sure what "clarity" can "mean". But perhaps I should go straight to the first trigger – Wystan Curnow's comment…"' – an approach that extends itself to a vigorous defence in Number 5 of his own earlier editorial endeavours in '*Parallax* revisited'; not to mention in the following issue the direct personal endorsement given to Tara McLeod's production of Tony Green's *NO PLACE TO GO*. All such position-takings are thoughtfully delineated and polemical in nature. Another example is Number 4's 'Who do I write for?' (editorials were individually titled) in which Alan bemoans the unanswered 'need for the documentation of this other tradition [that] is felt both by the bewildered mainstream reader/reviewer as well as by those authors whose work is persistently over-determined and under-read in mainstream reviews'–exactly the need that *A Brief Description* had set out to satisfy. In keeping with such statements, let me take Alan's own ground breaking earlier review of Joanna Paul's *Unwrapping the body* (1981) as a reference point to help identify the essential literary tenets that distinguish this other tradition:

Mainstream	**Other tradition**
Texts rely on a naturalistic (believable) continuity of time, event, place, character (i.e. 'prior reality')	Disruptive of conventions of continuity; normal 'reality' is not a pre-given
Parts merge into 'organic' wholeness, into representative word pictures	Discrete particulars, wholeness never more than provisional

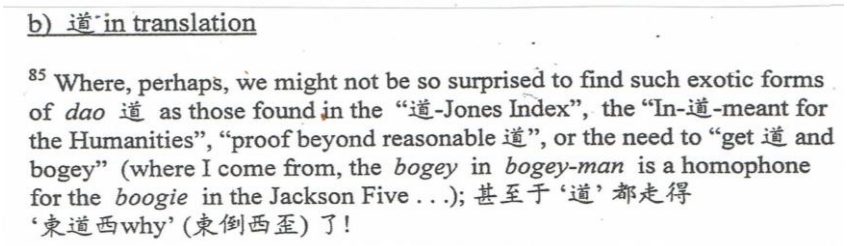
Produced in fidelity to prior external shared realities	Self-determining patterns of 'representation', non-reductive use of language
Insightful of human and emotional depths, cathartic cleansing	Non-remedial, non-ameliorating, witness rather than cure
Integrative and resolving (of disparate range of experience and emotional feeling)	Engaging as process, non-resolving, enactive
Equivalence between word & thing (language as reliable representation)	Words and objects affect each other, determined by convention

Of course, each of us will have our personal favourites among contributions. For me these must include Ted Jenner's translations from Ponge, clearly delineated, precise, without pretence. Tony Green is ever sprightly. Murray Edmond writes confidently with a knowing, deft touch, and is always a pleasure to read. Michele Leggott is eloquent in everything she writes, an angel of the luminous, and I appreciate the poems that she and Edmond and Brunton produce, the three editors of *Big Smoke* (2000) who complement each other so well. Yet Leggott's work is also nicely complemented in another way by that of other *Brief Description* writers Paula Green and Judi Stout, each of whom achieves a similar emotional perspicuity albeit in a less decidedly literary manner. I immediately respond to the way Green presents commonplaces as commonplaces without enlarging or reducing her language to anything else, in a lovely light use of space:

White bean soup with rosemary

Leaves seem to infuse a union
Between the poet and her windmill surf
Tracing a memory of lost daughters
How lean how freewheeling
Fictions that are brilliant enough to dissolve
Our moonlight walks giving ourselves an edge

The other writer whose emergence in the opening issue of *A Brief Description* is striking – for his contributor son Mark Wills as much as for Alan – and for me! – is the student of oriental languages and spiritual culture Michael Radich, self-deprecating within a sharpness of intellect:



b) 道 in translation

[85] Where, perhaps, we might not be so surprised to find such exotic forms of *dao* 道 as those found in the "道-Jones Index", the "In-道-meant for the Humanities", "proof beyond reasonable 道", or the need to "get 道 and bogey" (where I come from, the *bogey* in *bogey-man* is a homophone for the *boogie* in the Jackson Five . . .); 甚至于'道'都走得'東道西why'(東倒西歪)了!

There are several other individuals or pieces of writing that could be happily noted. The main thing is that, while it is twenty years since the first issue appeared, returning and rereading *A Brief Description* carries for me, and no doubt for others, little sense of the time passed having detracted from what can be still rewardingly enjoyed.

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John's *brief*

The Geraets *brief* made fewer major innovations, was not brilliant, did not really get a full head of steam, yet it was good to have because it continued Alan's ground breaking work and was there as an encouragement to talented writers who were willing to try their hand and who didn't take writing overly seriously. As Libby Wilson's son said: The best things are the covers. *Pure* Poetry.

There were to be several iterations in name and arguably contents. I was living in Nagoya working at Aichi Gakuin University and newly married to Karen, when Alan invited me to become editor at his

impending retirement.[17] It was co-incidentally a time when I had also arrived at a kind of impasse in my own writing and attitudes, having reached a number of intellectual limits working alongside my friends the potter Wali Hawes and the American poet Bruce Malcolm,[18] hanging out in the tiny all-nighter *KuKu* of all places, drinking a lot and watching videos of John Cage and a world spinning by. Several conjunctions occurred at this time and the one that matters here is that I returned to New Zealand to start a teaching job at St Peter's College in Auckland and to edit *A Brief Description*.

The first year was going to be a busy one in all respects so a good place to start, prompted by an earlier enquiry from Leigh Davis, endorsed by Alan, was to reissue on behalf of the magazine the award winning *Willy's Gazette* (1983). Leigh did the bulk of the work preparing the text and Christine Hansen came up with the impressive design. This exercise likely spawned the idea to publish books by individuals within The Writers Group.[19] Meantime I was getting in touch with some past and some prospective contributors and decided on a general format that could be used: white & black on the glossed light board cover, simple lines, suitable visual-conceptual items included whenever possible, the editorial lead to be unobtrusive but keen (in retrospect rather much so?); in terms of material contents inclined to the experimental and not averse to these constituting a mélange of different effects while hopefully fitting well enough together. A bit much to hope for? I liked those writers Alan liked but wanted as well to attract younger ones trying new things.

Twelve issues and a couple of book publications was the result. The having come to a kind of impasse in my own writing and thinking proved (as they say) a kind of blessing, because it freed my hand and allowed me

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17 I had in 1997 sent to Alan a copy of the *Back to Front* Nagoya Writers Group magazine which I had edited and my hunch is that Alan, who would around this time have been contemplating his own future (as editor and New Zealand resident/protagonist: he was soon to move, more or less permanently, to Melbourne), may have remembered the Japanese magazine when in the year following he invited me to take on the editorship.

18 See 'Helix', a joint submission in *A Brief Description 1* (1995).

19 *Willy's Gazette* proved to be the first of The Writers Group's book publications, this one under the magazine's banner. Subsequent publications appeared under their own titles, Loney's *Reading|Saying|Making: Selected essays* (2001) and Sugu Pillay's *The Chandrasekhar Limit and Other Stories* (2002). It was good to see the initiative later on consolidate with the establishment of Brett Cross's Titus Press (2005), which continues to publish other tradition writing associated with the magazine and its contributors.

to enjoy more what was happening in front of me, realizing the writing didn't matter beyond all else and literature itself was not actually about things going right rather than going wrong – often enough the reverse – that it was essentially a specialised activity that had its own terms of reference and engaged readers to this degree or that, depending on so many factors.

It was great to have Leigh's work start to reappear, even if following the reissue we would see only one further poem of his and 'The Bicycle', an appraisal of the contemporary poetry marketplace reception of Leggott's *As Far As I Can See*.[20] It was good to continue to receive personal support and a number of poems from Alan, along with his contemporaries dating back at least to the days of *Parallax:* Jenner, Green, Kaiser & Barnett, Lindsay, Brunton, Harlow, Curnow, Judi Stout; along with newer associates including Peter Crisp and others. It was always refreshing to work with people like Michael Radich, who commented at some point that the magazine's quarterly appearance was sufficient reason for him to get something done each time; and I remember bumping into Richard von Sturmer with his wife Amala late one winter evening at the Chinese Dragon Festival in Albert Park soon after their return following several years at the Rochester Zen Centre – to hear that Richard was sitting on a carton box or more full of manuscripts and was excited at the prospect of getting back into print locally on a regular basis. Then there were the newer faces that appeared, earlier on Jack Ross, later on Simon Field and Will Joy Christie,[21] and in between the young student friends who had worked with the spirited student small magazine *Salt* – Hamish Dewe, Michael Arnold and Scott Hamilton especially. Later on again, it was lovely to receive regular poems and critical writing from Anna Jackson, a quirky writer who is able to write quite dazzling pieces: she and Simon Field seem to my mind to occupy very different points on the same spectrum. Jack Ross was definitely a stayer, a bridging and sympathetic figure with a broad writing range, and

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20 Coincidentally I had recently received a photograph from Tony Green showing a bicycle lane ending in an obstruction, which was placed immediately after Leigh's review piece, all in good humour. But I do realise I likely tried Leigh's good patience, unfairly, when in the editor's slot in the same issue I took the liberty of including an email exchange between contributor Scott Hamilton and myself concerning Leigh's 'reemergence' as a poet – and the same issue (14) contained as well Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul's uneasy review of the Davis/Curnow innovative book package *Te Tangi a te Matuhi*.

21 It was great to see her first book published by Titus: *Luce Cannon*, 2007.

it would be he who would become my successor as editor of *brief*. I had approached Paula Green as an initial choice but, to my disappointment, she was not well situated just then to take on the job. Jack accepted, and from *brief#24* onward the story belongs to him and subsequent editors.

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To my happy surprise the magazine paid its way and a little more. I am grateful to St Peter's College, where I was teaching at the time, for providing photocopy and assembly resources at a very modest cost. A small number of New Zealand libraries had standing subscriptions as did one or two overseas institutions. Approaching 80 copies per issue, the magazine was self-sustaining and had consolidated Alan's earlier modest but vital readership. Overseas contributions were not sought. It went without self-publicity, sent no copies out for review, and printed little in the way of reviews of individual books with few book notices. A majority of the earlier set of writers continued to contribute. The invitation that Alan had extended to them remained open, and this gave a centre round which I hoped to introduce newer, younger writers. Maybe it's possible to delineate a shift in emphasis in the magazine's terms of reference from those mentioned above in terms of Alan's leadership:

Innovative writing...
is based on the mechanics of delight
occupies a circumscribed, contested space
exercises a non-normalised relationship with language
& a non-normalised relationship with an assumed commonplace 'shared' reality.

Language is literature's tool by which aspects of human experience are represented, rather than a tool of transport
& is neither autonomous nor reducible to its representational function: it exists in an unsettled state.

Of course each of these points stated proves itself endlessly contestable. I cannot say with any particular confidence that the magazine achieved a desired 'impact' on mainstream activities or greater recognition of itself in terms of what constitutes timely quality writing.

Highlights, disappointments? The pageworks (visual concept pages) that were contributed by Kaiser & Barnett throughout, and those I was able to include from Simon Ingram and Mary-Louise Brown were particularly pleasing and lifted the appearance of the magazine, giving it a sharper look. As the issues progressed I became more aware that *brief* actually represented quite a diverse set of mature established individual writers, not – or at least no longer in that way – radical insurgents. Writers like Judi Stout and Michael Harlow who seemed to be less productive than formerly continued to be very welcome; others who appeared to have reasonable access to more mainstream publication (Paula Green, Lindsay, von Sturmer, Brunton, Jackson) seemed content to still offer work to *brief*; while for several others *brief* seemed to offer perhaps the best opportunity to appear regularly in print (Jenner, Green, Wilson, Geraets, Crisp, Pillay, Pardington, Radich, Kyle, Harnett, Ross, Hamilton, Dewe, Field, Christie &c). I was very pleased to receive a contribution from Dinah Hawken ('Where We Say We Are' 16), whose work I admire and who seems to me through and through innovative, even when from the start she has had strong mainstream recognition and associations. I was pleased to get at least some work from Leggott (as in other cases, I asked for it, in some cases more than once) and disappointed not to get anything from Murray Edmond, notwithstanding earnest solicitations. The innovative writers who most excited me I would have liked to see more of in *brief*: Leggott, Loney, Edmond, Davis,

Hawken, Harlow (who I liken to Hawken in more than name sound), certainly Judi Stout had she been still producing. It was good to start to receive work from the younger *Salt* writers, and I hoped that they might prove to be a reinvigorating point, but that did not really materialise. On the plus side, I was excited to get a run of outstanding things from under-rated Simon Field and Will Joy Christie's emergence late in my time was a special pleasure. It was a particular thrill to receive regular contributions from a friend and contemporary based in Japan, the linguistic anthropologist *enfant terrible* Ian Harnett. Ian presented a stream of (consciousness?) pieces which explore space and placement, locution and the allocations of language. His 'Strata Jumping in the Silky Vade Mecum' in *brief23* is an example of the uncanny that continues to be marvellously suggestive:

> It is possible that Linguistics is the inconceivable middle page with no reverse? thought the cripple boy. He pondered the question. What would it mean to have no reverse? It would mean having a heart on one side of the body. It would mean life before death, youth before old age, mothers before babies, hens before eggs. It would mean that it would be impossible to escape if a magic circle was drawn around one. It would mean syntax before speech, syllable before word, word before phrase, phrase before sentence, sentence before story, story before genre. The crippled boy wondered if it was possible that a volume of Antilinguistics also existed and if in that world a girl crippled too like him sat winnowing fragments and pondering as enigmatic phantoms drunk from the chalice of melancholia in the library of AntiBabel. While the crippled girl thought as she sat winnowing and weaving the fragments which fell like tears from the melancholia of the enigmatic chalices of the phantoms, 'What would it mean to have no reverse in Antilinguistics?' (69)

Sensing a lack of newer writers I tried a couple of things. The first was to carry out a kind of playful reversal of the lure of the mainstream: rather than have the marginalized writer appear to be the one struggling to appear in more popular mainstream outlets, I thought to invite some of those established mainstream practitioners over to our 'shore'. On this basis I received work from Ian Wedde (no poems but a challenging critique of Leigh Davis's literary return entitled 'Beauty, Sex, Heroism'

22), which shows an irrepressible Ian back in the game. Bill Manhire (one piece, not of his best I considered) and Greg O'Brien (once more one piece, and again not his best). In an editorial note I had mentioned the idea of 'contest' in literature – that the magazine (indeed literature more broadly) provided a kind of contentious space in which works and writers could face off or show off or choose sides in a way that keeps shifting how we view both the contest and the contestants, literature as moving figuration. That fire did not catch – yet the prospect remains: particular positions adopted are always open to negotiation, yesterday's and tomorrow's choices as to what's best read or read best is always being arrived at.

I mention a second initiative, and this was to explore aesthetic positions adopted by our innovative writers themselves. The idea had its germ in the issue dedicated to Alan Loney's work, something he had himself suggested. *brief17* includes 'endless beginnings', a piece I had invited from him as a kind of updated form of the 'Beginnings' (biographical) articles that Charles Brasch had instigated in *Landfall* in the early 1960s.[22] The sustained focus on Alan's work allowed a number of interests to converge. One particular favourite of mine was Elizabeth Wilson's anticipatory review of *The Falling*, pert and prescient.[23] Another was the interview form; here Alan answering questions posed by Graham Lindsay–in a later issue (19) Alan Brunton answered a number of questions that I had put to him. The fruition of the second initiative was a number of individual contributions on aesthetics. What was particularly interesting was to see that no single aesthetic predominated, rather a string of committed personal statements: Jenner's classical postmodernism 'Aisthesis' (23), Dewe's 'On Aesthetics' (22), Lindsay's 'Dear John' (21), and in issue 20 O'Brien's 'On Aesthetics', Martin Edmond's 'an.aesthetic', Radich's 'Writing [2]':

> There is a sense in which I know nothing about my writing at all: what any reader might make of it, especially some of it. If I have written a piece as a joke I want to be certain only I can get, then that fact sits like an implacable hermeneutic wall between

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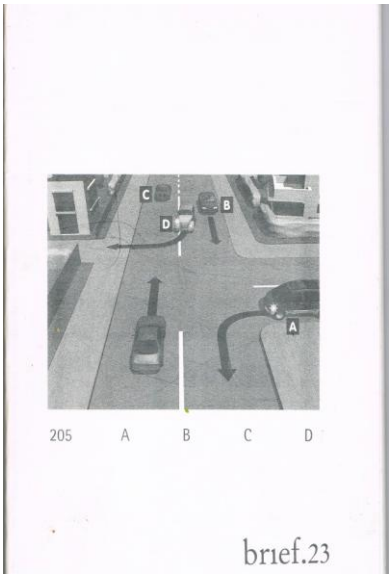
22 According to Alan, this piece provided inspiration for him to write more in this vein of personal reminiscence. A hoped for series of 'beginnings' did not eventuate, though I remember suggesting the idea to Wystan Curnow and one or two others.

23 I remember hassling Elizabeth through the later versions of her review right up to deadline – in the end publishing a version that I thought was terrific but which she considered still premature. It remains a favourite piece.

> me and the bewildering fact that, once it's out there, people "read" it. "Read", here, is for me a cipher, empty of content, and undeciphered script. So I tried some limits with that, too – with putting out stuff that I was uneasy putting my name to. Except for the stuff I believe in; I've only dared to put *that* out in dribs and drabs, set like gemstones in curlicues of canniness. (43) I like the idea of crumbling, fissuring subject, but I think it's only a half-truth, or a limit case, like a quantum property of subjectivity that doesn't apply at ordinary scales of being. I get a laugh out of trying to stage a brave deconstructive flourish and watching the ego evaporate only to creep back in through a side door, or rise undead from its dismembered remains like a computer-game zombie.

and von Sturmer's 'Mysterious Beauty':



> Someday I may submit an article on Zen practice and writing. But for now, taking a broad perspective, it seems obvious that we will be facing major challenges as a species in the course of this century. A demanding practice like Zen helps to simplify matters and establish priorities. To be a good writer is not enough; you have to liberate your innate wisdom and compassion as well. That's the real work. (20)

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And so, to close, what kind of intersection can we say we are left to negotiate after the Loney-Geraets *brief*s? Each cover of *brief23* used one of three variant images: my wife Karen had come across these when preparing for her licence test in multi-choice answer options to a question on turns and rights-of-way at intersections in the driver's Road Code test booklet. At least one car was taking a turn and the question asked was which car/s had to give way to which car/s. It seemed to be a lovely (concealed) pointer to the uncertain future turnings and directions that were likely to be taken in the magazine, not likely a single right one.

Janet Newman

Prose Poetry:
A Series of Abandonments

In 1917, T.S. Eliot told writers not to mix genres. "Both verse and prose still conceal unexplored possibilities, but whatever one writes must be definitely and by inner necessity either one or the other" (159). His imperative did not stop experiments with those "unexplored possibilities." In 1918, Katherine Mansfield rewrote verse in prose form to create what she termed "special prose" (qtd in Mizuta, 81). By 1960, the term "prose poetry" was well established and so popular in the United States that *Denver Quarterly* devoted "a special issue to the form" (Horvath, 105).

Poets, however, have struggled to find an apt definition for the hybrid genre and the question of how to define it remains. Abrams says "prose poems are compact, rhythmic, and usually sonorous compositions which exploit the poetic resources of language for poetic end, but are written as a continuous sequence of sentences without line breaks" (256). This definition is problematic. It begs the questions: at what length does a prose poem become something else? What does a prose poem become if it is not "rhythmic" or "sonorous"? How do we define "poetic end"? Drury contends prose poetry is "a brief work in prose that is considered a poem because of its intense, condensed language or because of some other similarity to poems in verse"(211). Again, there is the question of "brief" and uncertainty about what is meant by "intense" and "condensed."

Perhaps a more useful way of seeking a definition is offered by Bin Ramke when he asks: "A question to raise about the problematic genre of prose poetry might be, which part is the prose?" (129). Horvath provides the following division. Prose poetry, she says, incorporates "certain effects or 'devices' more usually associated with prose (the introduction of the right-hand margin, organization by the sentence and paragraph rather than the line or stanza…)" or foregoes "certain effects or devices (lineation, meter) usually associated with poetry" (106). I propose to add a third clause: that prose poetry achieves the effects of poetry by abandoning aspects of prose. To answer Ramke's question then, the part that is prose varies from poem to poem depending on how much of prose

has been left out. The fewer abandonments, the more a work will be like prose; the more abandonments, the more it will resemble poetry. In this essay, I will examine three prose poems and show how they become more like poetry through a series of abandonments.

Of the three, Robert Hass's "Museum" is the most like prose. It incorporates the devices normally associated with prose – the right-hand margin, sentences and paragraphs. It does not include the devices conventionally associated with poetry – rhyme, metre, stanzas and lineation. Its prose form sets up the expectation of sequence, that is, the logic of description, argument and narrative. And it does contain a narrative – a couple with a baby come into a museum restaurant, sit down and eat a light meal. But instead of unfolding out like prose and taking us from here to there to somewhere else, the poem zooms in on the moment like poetry, abandoning the prosaic convention of linearity.

It begins by setting the scene: "On the morning of the Kathe Kollwitz exhibit, a young man and woman come into the museum restaurant. She is carrying a baby." Rather than telling us 'what happens next', it continues to describe the couple:

She drinks coffee, scans the front page, butters a roll and eats it in their little corner in the sun. After a while, she holds the baby. He reads the *Book Review* and eats some fruit. Then he holds the baby while she finds the section of the paper she wants and eats fruit and smokes.

It continues to focus closer and closer on the couple until it is so close it is looking at the remains of the food on the plate in front of them: "the green has begun to emerge from the rind of the cantaloupe." While the poem is largely prose as we would expect it, the abandonment of the linearity we anticipate – either causal or chronological – gives rise to the effects of poetry.

By returning to the scene again and again – first, "she is carrying a baby," then "he holds the baby," and "the baby cooperates by sleeping" – Hass enlarges the scene to a greater significance, a technique often used in lyric structure. His repeated movement closer and closer to the couple requires us to take greater notice of them. Eventually, they become a metaphor or symbol for something of universal significance. Like Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," which focuses closer on the woods until the final stanza's "The woods are lovely, dark and deep" provides a perceptive image of rest, relinquishment of duty, death even, "Museum" focuses closer on the couple towards a perceptive image

of familial contentment. It takes on the effect of poetry described by Voigt quoting Flannery O'Connor: "'(I)n a story something has to happen. A perception is not a story.' But perception is precisely the lyric poet's gift" (102). By its end, "Museum" achieves poiesis, which is the transformation of the work into art through a perceptive moment. The perceptive moment is the creation of a poetic image of the couple as a symbol for the fragility of happiness and peace.

Poiesis is achieved by contrasting the image of the couple with the images that surround them. The Kathe Kollwitz exhibit portrays familial suffering and horror:

All around them are faces Kathe Kollwitz carved in wood of people with no talent or capacity for suffering who are suffering the numbest kinds of pain: hunger, helpless terror. But this young couple is reading the Sunday paper in the sun

By interrupting the journey of the couple, and focusing on the moment when they sit in the museum restaurant, Hass represents them as a symbol – as an inversion of what they are looking at. He frames them in contrast to the Kollwitz art, so the final words of the poem, "everything seems possible" becomes the perceptive moment that implies the fragility of familial contentment in the modern world.

Instead of describing a journey in the manner of prose, "Museum" interrupts one, in the manner of poetry. It achieves "what lyric uses stopped time to manifest" (Gluck, 12). Voigt, speaking of John Crowe Ransom's "Vision by Sweetwater," explains the effect: "Action, imperative in a story, is displaced by shifts in our relation to the scene; the material of the poem, the true subject, is not what happened but what was felt" (101). Hass creates "a representation … words so arranged as to create a simulacrum of human experience, not the experience itself" (13), which is how Williams describes the lyric mode. By abandoning the linearity of prose, Hass creates the effect of poetry within the prose form.

"The Mountain," by Hera Bird more closely resembles poetry because it abandons several aspects of prose. At first, it appears to be a prose paragraph describing a mountain. Its terse sentences use scientific diction, the kind of language we might expect to find in a tourist brochure. It begins: "The mountain is a landform created by the collision of lithospheric plates. The mountain rises above the surrounding land in a peak formation." As the poem progresses, sentences begin to personify the mountain: "The mountain has no central nervous system. The

mountain looks like it is wearing a white hat." The shift from the language of science to the language of imagination disrupts the expectations of the prose. At the poem's midpoint there is an even more dramatic change. The poem repeats itself but the words "the mountain" are replaced with the word "love." For example: "Love is a landform created by the collision of lithospheric plates." Then, the word "snow" is replaced with the word "love" creating, for example, the sentence: "The mountain is covered in love." Finally, the words "the mountain" are omitted. The final sentence is: "Love falls down like white horses." The change from scientific discourse to simile and metaphor disrupts the expectations of prose set up by the poem in a more explicit way than Hass's "Museum" because more of the aspects of prose have been abandoned.

Instead of taking us forward on a journey, through description, "The Mountain" folds back on itself through duplication. This creates the effect of poetry as "a circle or a sphere: something that is closed in on itself, a self-sufficient universe in which the end is also the beginning that returns, is repeated and recreated" as opposed to "the geometric figure that symbolises prose … the line: straight, crooked, spiral, zigzag, but always moving forward with a precise goal" (Paz, 57). The final sentences: "Love falls down and covers the people. Love falls down like white horses," mimics the earlier sentences: "The snow falls down and covers the people. The snow falls down the mountain like white horses." But the final sentences abandon logical progression by returning to the same scene, drawing our attention to it in the manner of poetry.

The authoritative voice of prosaic instruction, which starts the poem, has been abandoned. In its place are poetic devices: disjunctive association, simile and metaphor. These create surreal, illogical and nonsensical images. The prosaic sentence: "The mountain is billions of years old" contains the clear voice of authority. But its corrupted image: "Love is billions of years old" is questionable and subjective. The language of science has given way to the language of imagination and emotion.

From this arises the poetic effect of revealing language as object, which is the treatment of language as the subject of the poem, rather than a tool in the expression of the poem's subject. This poem uses scientific prose self-consciously, holding the language itself up for scrutiny, rather than using the language as a device for imparting information. The

substitution of nouns and repetition of sentences allows new meanings to arise from words that at first appear transparent. The substitution of "the mountain" with "love" in the sentence: "Love is measured by these criteria: elevation, volume, relief, steepness, spacing and continuity" allows each word to reveal multiple meanings. "Relief" takes on sexual and emotional connotations, "volume" may refer to a quantity of lovers or the intensity of relationship, "steepness" may mean relationship difficulty, and so on. The treatment of language as object allows these new meanings to surface. It gives rise to the poetic effect of calling on words' connotations, denotations, etymologies and sounds. It draws our attention back to the original scientific sentence when "steepness" meant only vertical elevation. It defamiliarises the scientific diction, giving rise to the poetic effect where words "throw two shadows" (Oliver, 89). The language of the poem is used to "enact experience, rather than to formulate abstractions from experience" (Johnston), which is a feature of Language poetry.

Bird's poem abandons prosaic linearity just as Hass's does. But it further disrupts our expectations of prose by abandoning logical sequence, by abandoning a single tone or 'voice' within the prose paragraph, and by using language in a way other than to impart information or to tell a story.

Zara Butcher-McGunnigle's "(Wheels fall off to create drama)" abandons even more fundamental aspects of prose and, of the three poems discussed here, most resembles poetry. It abandons the connections between sentences that we expect in prose, where each paragraph contains a singular referential focus. Silliman calls this aspect of prose the "syllogistic leap or integration above the level of the sentence to create a fully referential tale" (385). Instead, Butcher-McGunnigle's sentences are disconnected, or connect to each other through reference points arising from contexts created by the location of the sentences next to each other. Like Bob Perelman's 'new sentences,' each sentence "is more or less ordinary itself but gains its effect by being placed next to another sentence to which it has tangential relevance" (313). For example: "She is tired and tires" is connected to the next sentence: "Absorb shock while keeping the wheel in close contact with the ground" by the pun on the word "tires." It has little or no connection to the next sentence: "A moment needs to be applied, but when I am, then I will." It does, however, connect with the third to last sentence:

"Bearings are used to help reduce fiction at the interface," which itself is related to the penultimate sentence: "I had stopped reading novels" through the substitution of the expected word "friction" with "fiction." These connections between sentences mean the poem veers from subject to subject, abandoning a basic tenet of the prose paragraph: a common point of reference.

According to Silliman, the limiting of "syllogistic" movement – that is conclusions drawn from two propositions – to connections primarily between a sentence and the following sentence, creates the effect of poetry by "keep(ing) the reader's attention at or very close to the level of language, this is most often at the sentence level or below" (397). He says "(t)he torquing which is normally triggered by linebreaks, the function of which is to enhance ambiguity and polysemy, has now moved directly into the grammar of the sentence. At one level, the completed sentence … has become equivalent to a line" (396). The paragraph, then, is understood to be "a unit not of logic or argument, but as quantity, a stanza" (396). Commenting on Bob Perelman's "a.k.a." he says "this continual torquing of sentences is a traditional quality of poetry, but in poetry it is most often accomplished by linebreaks, and earlier on by rhyme as well. Here poetic form has moved into the interiors of prose" (395). Butcher-McGunnigle's poem moves poetic form into prose by abandoning the logical connection of meaning between sentences in the same paragraph, resulting in the abandonment of a specific referential focus.

These abandonments give rise to the poetic effect of co-opting the reader as co-creator of meaning. The sentences, "One misses relevant information if it is not phrased exactly the way one expects" and "The answer depends on the assumptions," may contribute to the internal meaning of the poem or may be a reflection on the writing itself or on reader reaction to it. It is a question of interpretation. Perelman says "parataxis", which is "the placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (of coordination or subordination) between them" (OOED) results in the meaning of each sentence being "heightened, questioned, and changed by the degree of separation or connection that the reader perceives with regard to the surrounding sentences" (313). According to Horvath, reader interpretation is one of the appeals of the prose poem form, because the reader is involved "not only as co-creator of meaning and significance

but as co-creator of the text of the poem" (113). Eliot said reader interpretation was an effect of poetry "because the poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings exist … the reader's interpretation may differ from the author's and be equally valid – it may even be better" (30-31). By abandoning prose tenets, Butcher-McGunnigle's poem embroils the reader in the poetic effect of discovering meaning in its words and sentences.

Prose poetry can therefore be defined not only by the way it abandons aspects of poetry and adopts aspects of prose, but also by how much of prose it abandons. Of the three poems discussed, Hass's is the most like prose because the only aspect of prose it abandons is linearity. Bird's poem starts out like prose, but by abandoning scientific diction and logical sequence gives rise to the poetic effect of treating language as object. Butcher-McGunnigle's poem abandons the basic tenets of prose, the connection between sentences and a single referential point within a paragraph. This puts poetic form – the torquing of language – into the interior structures of prose, the sentence and the paragraph. Each abandonment allows poetic effect to surface in a new and surprising way within the prose form. Prose poetry thereby pursues "poetry via a different subsystem, a different grammar, in the hopes of thinking new thoughts" (Horvath, 112). It creates poetry by delving into what Eliot called the "unexplored possibilities" of each genre.

In 1917, when criticizing a growing interest in amalgamating the two genres, Eliot asked whether "poetry and prose form a medium of infinite graduations, or is it that we are searching for new ways of expression?" (158). Arguably, both conjectures are correct. Poets are finding new ways of expression by defining those graduations, in order to abandon them.

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Alistair Paterson

Poetry, Science and the Real

In the silence of the moment
a word – a word & the moment
a word discovered
drawn from confusion . . . [24]

The four lines above suggest one of the many different ways we can think about poetry. They imply it's an upwelling from the subconscious driven by deeply experienced emotion and its formalization in a linguistic structure – in words. This may be enough for most of us to read poetry and talk about it, but perhaps other ideas and approaches can similarly offer ways that can help in expanding and deepening our understanding of it. This essay sets out to explore how poetry and science might relate to each other and to suggest connections between them, and how they may represent conjoined aspects of the world we experience and our perceptions of it.

Most of the ideas and the views offered here were originally developed for a lecture and reading (*Poetry, Science and the Arts*) given to members of the New Zealand Studies Network at Birkbeck College of the University of London on the 25th of June 2014. It came about through my visiting the UK and a subsequent invitation from the Network to read and speak about poetry and, as I later learned, through discovering that Anthony Burn of the North Atlantic Space Agency[25] would also be speaking.[26] There seemed to be a problem here, the problem of relating the two, poetry and science, and presenting some kind of connection between them which at first appeared impossible and yet – and yet, a little reading suggested something could perhaps be managed.

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24 See *Poetry NZ* 9, (Auckland: Brick Row, 1994), p. 9, and *Summer on the Côte d'Azur* (Wellington: HeadworX Publishers, 2003), p. 32.

25 Anthony Burn is an expatriate New Zealand and a lead consultant for NASA and the International Space Station working on Project Looking Glass, in Europe and in the United States of America.

26 Burn's address concerned satellites and their employment in global surveying.

It seems that we all experience and perceive the world and ourselves in many different ways. Poets do it in terms of the wide range of poetics they're committed to and others in as many different ways as there are people on the planet – all of us experiencing the world and employing language differently. In the wider sense Max Tegamark[27] has interpreted these differences in terms of the nature of reality suggesting, that there isn't a single reality but perhaps three realities: external, internal and consensual – a shared – reality. The first of course is 'the world out there', the objective world that science attempts to describe. The second, internal reality is a person's inner experience and understanding of how everything (inclusive of him or herself) functions and is. The third, consensual reality, represents the way in which groups of people or the collective as a whole agree things are in terms of themselves and the other two realities.

Tegamark's view can be interpreted as offering connections between the arts (poetry, painting and the like) and science (astronomy, physics, chemistry, mathematics and so on). It's a three dimensional view with the dimensions linked yet distinct and separate from each other which suggests there's an objective reality which exists in and of itself outside and independent of human perception and experience, and is amenable to and can be understood through scientific research and analysis.

The concept of reality and Tegamark's triple view of it, attractive as they are in terms of description and experience, don't actually tell us what reality is. 'One should never mistake mathematics for reality,' David Harris reminds us.[28] Mathematics is a language not markedly different from any other language and like other languages is self-referential and yet, in Tegamark's terms, can be referential to the external and in some respects to his two other concepts of reality. Similarly what we perceive as external reality is the way we see it in terms of ourselves – and the way we do so is the result of evolution and how our ability to perceive it in these terms has contributed to our survival and safety. We don't see or hear light or sound waves but construct colours and sounds from our experience of them and in accordance with how our survival might

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27 Max Tegamark, *Our Mathematical Universe* (Canada: Random House, 2014).

28 David Harris in *nothing surprising, insights everywhere from zero to oblivion,* ed. Jeremy Webb (N.p.: Profile Books Ltd, 2013), p.153.

benefit from them.[29] Mathematics and science describe how we see things but not necessarily how they are if it were possible for things to be perceived independently from ourselves and our own seeing – which is what Tegamark must have meant when he said, 'One should never mistake mathematics for reality.'

If the opposite were true it would be true only up to a point because our experience of the 'out there' has been established though the evolutionary process of relating to it in terms of whether or not it can be dealt with in regard to the way in which it affects our survival. The over-ruling reality from the human perspective is that it's apparent rather than objectively real – how things appear to and affect us – which means external, internal and shared reality are subordinate to our being human and how we relate to them. And science, even experimental science, is subject to experience even if the mathematics of the out there and the revelations of micro and macroscopic science seem to suggest otherwise.

That is, science as a practice and a mathematical description of things is normally thought of in terms of the 'out there', the out there being discoverable, identifiable and comprehensible and indeed that it really is discoverable and measurable. It begins with the construction of an hypothesis based on observation or previous knowledge or a priori beliefs which make predictions and can be tested experimentally to determine if the hypotheses are correct. Yet neither science nor mathematics deals with a purely objective reality but with reality as we experience it – as it appears to us. There's a difference and the difference is important and ironically enough, in the way we experience things, as being real.

Language, literature and poetry work in much the same way as mathematics. On the surface they appear to be dealing with one or all of these three realities: external, shared or internal reality. And this is why poetry is sometimes described as offering a window onto the world – an image Jane Hirshfield[30] refers to but nevertheless contradicts by reminding us that, '. . . another world than the natural world exists.' Viewed as a window on the world, poetry like so many forms of prose is

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29 Cf with animals such as dogs and bats for example, whose perception of light, sound and so on differs considerably from that of human beings.

30 Jane Hirshfield, *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World* (New York: Knopf, 2015).

often used as if it were describing an external and objective reality. But there's a sense in which this isn't true, in which poetry is dependent on language in the same way as a theorem or an equation relates to mathematics, a work of art such as a piece of sculpture is dependent on stone or a painting on canvas and pigment. Language, mathematics and stone are referential only in so far as we ascribe reference to them.

The structure, shape and organization of poetry as well as our inner experience of it seem parallel and contiguous with the ways in which we deal with mathematics and science, with the outer and consensual – with our shared worlds. The way in which we subjectively experience these, together with the sense of satisfaction they provide, could perhaps (although some might disagree) be termed 'aesthetic' even if it's not a word that's usually associated with science or mathematics.

Poetry (and the arts in general) are also defined in terms of their practice or ontology. The first describes the way in which the poet, the commentator or critic believes it exists and should be written – its structure and its linguistic mode of operation. 'If it doesn't rhyme and isn't written in iambic pentameters or similar metrics, it isn't poetry,' some have maintained and still insist. At the other end of the spectrum is the view that, 'The grammatical and linguistic structures of language limit what poetry can do and how a poem can operate and that therefore the business of the poet is to break down and move away from the restrictions of grammar, syntax and reference.' Between these two views and as far back as the Anglo Saxon alliterative half line, is a larger number and a wider variety of isms and poetic structures than most of us can deal with. They include Symbolism as represented in Charles Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (1857)[31], the free verse of Gustave Kahn and Jules Laforgue in the latter's *Derniers vers* of 1890[32] as well as in the work of Ezra Pound and T S Eliot (which followed on from them), together with expressionism, modernism, postmodernism, L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry[33], Flarf [34] and a host of other forms and isms. Although not shared

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31 Two editions of *Les Fleurs du mal* were published during Baudelaire's lifetime – one in 1857 and another in 1861.

32 Jules Laforgue, *Les Dernier vers*, ed Edouard Dejardin & Felix Feneon (Paris, 1890).

33 See *The L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E Book*, ed. Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein (Carbondale and Edwardville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).

34 Flarf was invented by Gary Sullivan, who wrote and published the first such poems, rejecting conventional subject matter in favour of material not usually

by everyone, these are still shared realities. But such realities – relatively harmless as they usually are – can sometimes be immeasurably destructive as in the case of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' European assault on meso-American peoples and their culture, the fifteenth century's Spanish Inquisition and the prejudices afforded to so-called heretics.

Many such isms (including literary isms) rest on shaky ground for much the same reasons as Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God did. They lean towards *a priori* assumptions and tend towards tautologies that assume, 'This is the way to do things and nothing else is possible.' Groups[35] and individuals often commit themselves either consciously or unconsciously to believing their literary theories and writing modes are absolute and necessary, and that these are the norm – as in such cases as those who tend towards a fundamentalist and unmodifiable approach to romanticism, modernism, L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poetry, and sometimes writers in university English Departments as well as members and supporters of political parties, sports bodies, Councils, Committees, Boards and many other groups with special interests and concerns.

Most poets tend to approach to poetry in terms of its *parole* (as Ferdinand de Saussure[36] might have put it) rather than of *langue* – on using the language rather than on its linguistic system and structures that aren't always or immediately thought of during the writing process.[37] More recently literary theorists and a number of poets and

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considered appropriate for poetry. A central method, invented by the Flarf poet Drew Gardner, was to enter the internet with miscellaneous search terms then organise the results into poetry [cf https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flarf_poetry_–_cite_note-2#cite_note-2].

35 Systems of behaviors and psychological processes occurring within social groups (*intragroup* dynamics) have been researched over a long period and in company with other behaviours can give rise to sometimes disturbing prejudice and discrimination.

36 Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), the Swiss linguist and semioticist whose early 20th century *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) summarised his theories and ideas and laid a foundation for the later ongoing development of present-day linguistics and semiology.

37 And language as a system of signs can sometimes be confusing, as Robert Creeley suggested to the present author in Albuquerque in 1982, when he said it was difficult to think of poetry as some kind of semaphoric signalling going on between two people waving at each other from different hilltops.

other writers have become concerned with the limitations and restrictions of language and, as in the case of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E and a number of semiotic poets, have striven to use language in a way that avoids the limitations of its grammatical and other constraints. But languages aren't set in concrete, aren't fixed systems frozen in structure and time. 'Langue' as most of us are aware constantly changes – that is we change it so much over a period of time that it's impossible to understand or respond to the literature of the increasingly distant past without extensive and formal study of the language and the period in which it was written. When contemporary poets disrupt the language's grammatical constraints, the majority of present-day readers find their work difficult to relate to and *a fortiori*, those of the future may find it even more challenging.

Likewise poetry and science sit uneasily amidst the persuasions of Tegamark's three realities and under the larger umbrella of the apparent that covers them. At bottom all human experience is individualistic and has no existence outside that of the individual experiencing it. Because we're all uniquely different from each other, no two people will have exactly the same awareness of the language they use, the world they live in or of anything in or outside it. In the case of poetry what we read or hear is also and always a one off event because it takes place on a specific occasion, at a specific time and in relation to the individual's accumulated and current experience of the language, the social environment and the present circumstances of the world he or she lives in. How for example, if it were possible, would Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", Eliot's *The Waste Land*, or W. H. Auden's poetry be experienced by someone living more than two hundred and fifty years ago, in the distant future or in some isolated social and geographical situation of the present? The way a poem is understood or responded to depends on all these and many other factors and is inevitably and always experienced on each reading as a different version of itself.

It's been suggested[38], 'Poetry is a relational aesthetic experience involving language.' That's to say the aesthetic aspect of a novel, a poem, of science, mathematics or anything else isn't an aspect of these things as entertainment or knowledge, but of how it feels to experience them. Our perception of the aesthetic and particularly of its relationship to the experience of others also depends on what's called 'the theory of mind'

38 Alison Blaiklock in conversation with the author, June 2015.

(ToM) which according to Robin Dunbar[39] we learn very early in our lives and seem to share with other primates. It enables us through empathy to relate to how others feel and to some degree with what they think. While this can never be specific and complete it's usually sufficient for effective personal and social interaction and for an understanding of how other people feel and for gaining an insight into their similarities to and differences from us. More subtly and perhaps equally important it helps in the construction of what we are ourselves, of the self[40] – to identify how we accommodate ourselves socially and physically and form part of the umwelt, the environment that surrounds and includes us, and to assist in our surviving in it.

Poetry and science are two of the things we employ in shaping our apparent selves and dealing with the apparent world we live in. They bring order and meaning into what we experience, assist us in making sense of it and enhancing our ability to deal with it and deal with ourselves – which comes through in Eliot's "The Love Song of Alfred J Prufrock," where it could be said he uses the poem (ironically perhaps) to give identity to himself (what he might like to be), to help him relate to and be recognised by those he's writing for, and enhance his social and personal survival when he says:

> I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
> I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
>
> I do not think that they will sing for me.

And Charles Olson does much the same in "Maximus, to himself"[41]:

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39 Robin Dunbar, *Human Evolution*, Pelican Books (New York: The Penguin Group, 2014), pp. 46-48.

40 This is not to suggest that we each have an undivided self nor contradict the view that there might be several interlinked and different selves that relate to each other but operate separately. There's also the more extreme view currently appearing in a number of journals and magazines, that the self may be illusory rather than an identifiable reality. See: Bruce Hood, *The Self Illusion* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2012); Richard Fisher, *The Great illusion of the Self, New Scientist* 2905 (23 Feb, 2013).

41 Charles Olson, 'Maximus, to himself', from *The Maximus Poems*, 1953 & 1956 (Berkeley & London: California UP, 1983).

I know the quarters
of the weather, where it comes from,
where it goes. But the stem of me,
this I took from their welcome,
or their rejection, of me

In *A Guide to the Maximus Poems* George F. Butterick[42] points out that, 'They [the poems] were begun as a succession of "letters" . . . to poet Vincent Ferrini in Gloucester, where Olson had grown up, and through Ferrini to the city itself. As such, they provide a vehicle . . . for the public voice known as Maximus of the private individual Charles Olson, although eventually the distinction between public and private, Olson and Maximus, becomes inconsequential as the integration of person and place, man and his earth, is achieved.'

More recently Lisa Samuels[43] talks about poets she is attracted to and admires as 'accidental imaginers who turn the forms and categories of self and cultural givens into strange attractors and repellers – they repopulate the examined world as attentive ways of constituting it,' perhaps the most significant aspect of her practice and, 'I want to represent the dispersed inexplicable since that is for me the most real.' (cf. footnote 17.) Her work is developed on the substrate of a linguistic stream of consciousness which accompanies almost everything we think and do but once more directs the self (the apparent self) towards the consensual, the shared arena. Less known poets whose work currently appears in the majority of the literary journals in New Zealand and elsewhere (irrespective of their use of very different linguistic approaches from Samuels') appear to be doing much the same. While they seem to be looking at the natural world and their relationship to it, at the same time they appear to be constructing an aesthetic from their subconscious – an aesthetic that may not exactly parallel that of any of their readers but which hopefully they do well enough to establish a measure of consensus with them.

Coleridge, Eliot, Olson, Auden and Samuels like most poets whose work appears in the literary journals, are examining and shaping their

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42 George F. Butterick, *A Guide to the Maximus Poems* (Berkeley & London: California UP, 1980).

43 In *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook 1*, issue 49, ed. Jack Ross (October 2014), pp. 41 and 43.

identities, enhancing their physical and psychological survival. They're also directing what they're doing towards towards the construction of the how and what others might feel and think – attempting to shape and modify themselves, their inner reality, and the realities of others.

As Bernstein puts it in his early essay, "Writing and Method"[44]: 'The text calls upon the reader to be actively involved in the process of constituting its meaning . . . The text formally involves the process of response/interpretation and in so doing makes the reader aware of herself or himself as producer as well as consumer of meaning. It calls the reader to action, questioning, self-examination,' and one might say into restructuring his or her self in the same way as creating the text leads poets and their readers into modifying their inner realities and their identities.

Such realities and identities are almost always provisional and as Russell Blackford says, 'There is much that we understand with confidence from everyday experience and from the formal enquiries of scholars and scientists, so I am not advocating scepticism of any radical kind. All the same, one general truth that we should all accept is that in many situations we cannot be justifiably confident about the answers to questions that confront us. This can apply in areas of science where the evidence is incomplete and is commonplace in the humanities, where the available facts frequently leave us struggling to answer the most interesting questions.' [45]

It could be said that there's a sense in which the meaning of mathematics or a poem is not in narration, description, or a message – aspects of which perhaps more properly belong elsewhere. None of them defines poetry, a poem or a work of art even though any or all of these can be found in them. In this respect it could be said that what we perceive through mathematics and science is not the real but how the real appears to us – and this applies equally to the other forms of reality. The universe for instance has no up, down or centre except in relation to the way we experience it[46] and at the same time because we all differ

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44 Charles Bernstein, 'Writing and Method,' reprinted in *In the American Tree,* ed. Ron Silliman, National Poetry Foundation (Orono: University of Maine, 1986).

45 Russell Blackford, *Living without God, Christianity* is not *Great*, ed. John W Loftus (New York: Prometheus Books, 2014), p. 469.

46 David Goldberg, "The greatest physics theorem you've never heard of," *The New Scientist* No 3018 (22 April 2015), p.36.

from each other, the universe and everything in it are almost certainly different for each of us and (if any) all other observers.

What we bring to these things includes our emotions – our individual and adaptive responses to the various realities. They provide the driving force for dealing with perceived situations – and they do it in much the same way as our experience of poetry, mathematics and science does for all the realities. We structure the world and ourselves in relation to how these appear to us and particularly in regard to the emotions and aesthetics we ascribe to them. An attractive landscape – open spaces, trees in the distance, a river and their related features seem always to have been pleasing to people. In human and particularly early human terms, vistas like this almost certainly offered safety and a measure of security thus enhancing the possibility of survival.

Aesthetics could have arisen from the value systems that arise from the degree of recognition and approval we give to the organisation and structure of things, of the arts and the sciences – organisation and structures that arise from our evolutionary need to perceive and relate to reality in terms of how it appears to us and the way in which this appearance relates to an observer's survival and well-being. As Reviel Netz puts it: '. . . merely as a visual pattern . . . objects on a tray [a plate with sandwiches on it, with fruit and a cup] possess properties such as symmetry and composition [some of which] are not psychological but aesthetic: they belong so to speak, not to psychopathology and everyday life, but to the aesthetics of everyday life.' [47]

Of course, objects on a tray (or any objects poetic or otherwise) don't in themselves 'possess properties such as symmetry and composition,' but it's we, the observers, who ascribe these qualities to what we see and in the larger sense to what we experience – poetry, science, mathematics or music perhaps. And it's music, particularly instrumental music, that comes as a rich and aesthetically rewarding inner experience very different from what science (in terms of objective reality) suggests it is: variations in the pressure waves conveyed through the air that surrounds us. It's in terms of ourselves and our apparent and various realities that individually and to some extent collectively we assign structure, organisation and aesthetic worth to things. Poetry's primary function (as to some extent it is for physics, mathematics and science in general) isn't

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47 Reviel Netz in *Visualization, Explanation and Reasoning styles in Mathematics*, Paolo Mancosu et al. eds (The Netherlands: Springer, 2005), pp. 251-293.

as entertainment or the provision of information but the aesthetic experience we associate with it.

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Reviews

[MC] = Mary Cresswell
[HD] = Hamish Dewe
[RE] = Rachael Elliott
[JE] = Johanna Emeney
[MH] = Matthew Harris
[BL] = Bronwyn Lloyd
[EM] = Elizabeth Morton
[JR] = Jack Ross
[RT] = Richard Taylor

1. Miriam Barr. *Bullet Hole Riddle*. [RE]
2. Charles Brasch. *Selected Poems*. [HD]
3. Diana Brodie. *Giotto's Circle*. [MC]
4. Stephanie Christie. *The Facts of Light*. [EM]
5. Mary Cresswell. *Fish Stories*. [JR]
6. David Eggleton. *The Conch Trumpet*. [JR]
7. Brentley Frazer. *Kulturkampf: Selected Poems 1995-2015*. [MC]
8. Kerry Hines. *Young Country*. Photos by William Williams. [JE]
9. Iain Lonie. *A Place To Go On From: Collected Poems*. [JR]
10. Anna Jackson. *I, Clodia, and Other Portraits*. [EM]
11. Edward Jenner. *The Gold Leaves*. [RT]
12. Frankie McMillan. *There Are No Horses in Heaven*. [BL]
13. Nina Powles. *Girls of the Drift*. [JE]
14. Vaughan Rapatahana. *Atonement*. [MC]
15. Jack Ross. *A Clearer View of the Hinterland*. [MH]
16. Maureen Sudlow. *Antipodes*. [MC]
17. Jane Summer. *Erebus*. [JR]

Mary Cresswell

Diana Brodie / Brentley Frazer / Vaughan Rapatahana / Maureen Sudlow

Diana Brodie. *Giotto's Circle*. ISBN 978-3-901993-41-1. University of Salzburg: Poetry Salzburg, 2013. RRP £10.50 (+ 2.00 p&p), €13.00 (+ 2.50 p&p), US$ 18.00 (+ 3.00 p&p). 96 pp.

The book starts out bright and loud:

> An O
> drawn freehand, his arm
> used as compass, his brush
> dipped in blood red, ('Giotto's Circle')

The first section is full of red, crimson, vermilion, and gold, ekphrastic angels screaming, Dame Edith Sitwell hovering, a locked-up nun collecting cash. But quickly the darkness begins – we hear of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Dachau. The section ends with the ironically named Golden Bay, dull and isolated, soggy under the heavy New Zealandness of the past.

New Zealand and memory are as entwined as braided rivers. Family, scenery and the past combine in one flow:

> I am the spill
> in the estuary
> of the Bay of Plenty
> I am no river where
> the river was ('The River')

The world is one of drudgery, not a place to look back to with affection. 'Dad' rode everywhere on his 'old black Raleigh bike' …

> 41 years in one office.
> How many days is that? He said he'd
> hated every single one. ('Take It from Here')

Children fare no better:

> Late that night I wrote a poem.
> Mum found it, tore it up,
> put the pieces in the bin. ('Dove Cottage')

Most of the poems evoke family history, misunderstanding, quarrels and death. It is not until the seventh (and last) section of the book – where we meet the contemporary family, the poet's granddaughter – that justice is seen to be done:

> Lily, six, lies all afternoon
> on a comfy cushion, reading books.
> When we're back home,
> we sit at the kitchen table,
> and together, we write a poem. ('Lily Rose')

and

> but she kept skipping until afternoon
> looked more like evening and every time
> she jumped the rope, her voice rang out in rhyme.
> ('In the Courtyard')

This last section uses more traditional form than the rest of the book does. Little girls are described in several sonnets, and the form works as a control or boundary, holding them safe from the free-wheeling (free-verse) anxiety of the little girl in New Zealand, which was bleak and never-ending.

Verse structure is nicely varied throughout the text. There is a fine series of broken sonnets ('Song of the Apprentice Angel') as well as other uses of sonnet form. The poet has a great affinity with triplets: she plays with them and seems to turn to them as a relaxed setting where she is at ease and enjoying herself. They are sometimes part of a villanelle ('But Where is He?'); other times they are terza rima:

> I came here to observe the two-toed sloths.

I gave that up. The species is extinct. …
I should have told you this but never wrote.
I had no stamps. My pen ran out of ink.
('Gap Year Letter from a Five-Toed Sloth')

The collection finishes most elegantly with 'Arrhythmia' – triplets using lines of 15 syllables and ending with:

To lie waiting for the heart to beat can be a lonely art.
In the poem's unravelling circle, pen follows pulse. It must.
Sometimes I write a poem that takes its rhythm from the heart.
The pen ekes out words and end-stopped lines. The circle falls apart.

Or, as with the poetic granddaughter, some things can go full circle.

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Brentley Frazer. *Kulturkampf: Selected Poems 1995-2015*. ISBN 978-0-9941861-1-9. Brisbane: Bareknuckle Books, 2015. RRP AUS$ 15.95 (+ $5 p+p). 114 pp.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, most young poets were constrained to write parodies of *The Waste Land*. These were all much of a muchness and best forgotten, but Brentley Frazer's new book presents 'A Greener Pasture' – one of the better Eliot parodies I've read. It starts out:

April gets hot here, lizards mate on cracked footpaths, pre-mix aluminum Bacardi cans stir desire for the drought to break; memory of dull roots, thirst for rain. Couldn't get warm at all last winter, it figuratively snowed.
('1. She Kissed Your Arse Goodbye')

The full poem moves along briskly, making sense in its own world without the painful hiccups that parodies often suffer while proving how witty they are. And how has this wondrous event come about? According to the author's abstract on www.academia.edu, he has used a combination of two oulipo devices, homophony (imitation of sound) and

homosemantic translation (imitation of sense) (more or less!). It isn't *The Waste Land* but it feels like *The Waste Land*, a very good exercise if you can do it, and he has certainly done it.

A difficulty (or success) in writing with many constraints is that if you are doing it very well indeed, the trick is hard to spot – unless it is a conspicuous one like dropping out a particular vowel or punctuation mark. I suspect that most/all of the poems in this book are done with specific constraints in mind, which means it's nearly impossible for me to comment on Brentley's technique. He has elsewhere spoken of his devotion to E-Prime (English Prime, dropping aspects of *to be*), but I have no idea how to spot the technique in use. The poems are all readable and fluent, even on vastly different topics.

A second suite of poems is 'A Factory of Shadows' – again I can't guess the constraints, but it feels like a free-for-all version of *The Divine Comedy* with a mega-cast: Lucifer, Krishna, Jesus, Shiva, and Buddha (for starters) emote back and forth while going in for a good bit of derring-do, ending up sounding like open-mic night complete with fencing foils. But the topics are all tried and true ones, ones for which we have no solution yet. One character begins:

> – I am the Son of a Star.
> You won't find what you're looking
> for here, in The Factory of Shadows.
> All of this is an illusion; you have been
> institutionalized by language, concluded
> values based on an error in your
> understanding. You are in a cemetery
> disguised as side-show alley,

and is answered:

> – Ok...wow! I said, gesturing him
> to sit. That's random. How do you fit?

The debate gets heavier, and answers appear imminent. Then:

> And I, intoxicated with the wine
> and the hash Shiva had provided
> and the pulse of the music, forgot
> my place.

Damn you, Dark Lord, I shouted.
Now I'm right back where
I started. (all from '4. Fornication Boulevard')

And that's it. A virtual person from Porlock (who has already appeared hither and yon as a place-holder for Prufrock) stops the clock again. That's a major constraint, if you want to look at it that way … unless, I guess, you're from Porlock yourself.

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Vaughan Rapatahana. *Atonement*. Artworks by Pauline Canlas Wu; musical score by Darren Canlas Wu. ISBN 978-988-13115-1-1. Hong Kong: MCCM Creations for ASM/Flying Islands Books. RRP US$ 11.00. 124 pp.

This is a small (A6) book with a big geography. The first poem is from Hong Kong (one of the poet's home territories):

the day is an elephant
…
an immoveable
mass mastodon ("a hong kong september")

Other poems move on to the Philippines, Macau, Mauritius, Tinian, Okinawa, but its heart lies in poems from Aotearoa. The book's illustrations are all of Aotearoa. Aotearoa – and especially te reo – underlies not just the poet's personal past but also much of the passions he displays here. He speaks of what might have been between father and son ("a forced reunion") and, just as painfully, between the land and its people:

not a city,
neither a town –

more a sketch
of what could have been

a draggled clothesline
of had-it houses
&
not-quite homes ("east coast hamlet")

The closer the poet comes to an unsalvageable past, the more often he seems to need te reo – the Māori language. One poem is entirely in te reo and has an English translation, titled in square brackets, so we know it is separate from the poem itself. And elsewhere, seeing a "dead burial ground" conjures up long-gone children's voices:

what was a gate
has evolved into
some kids' swung
plaything *tātou tātou e*

no mower
was ever taught
how to dress properly
around these
lumpy mounds *tūtira mai ngā iwi* ("he urupā mate")

The book ends with two blues songs and a score sheet for one of them. Both, as blues songs do, leave us with a picture of intolerable loss, sometimes of our own making, although this isn't addressed specifically.

This is in many ways a disconcerting and noisy book. The typography breaks up and comes back in various ways, sometimes making immediate sense, as in "he patai" ('a question') in which the entire poem forms a question mark, or as here:

the deluge
was worse
than any locust plague
s w e e p i n g d
from the mainland. *o*
w
n ("santo tomas deluge, 2012")

Other times, the typography seems to be aimed simply at reinforcing the discrepancy between sound and sense, running a stick along a fence to grab our attention.

The poet also likes alliteration and unexpected words – much of it works with fine effect, grabbing us and moving us along:

its ramshackle
rattle of
scatterbrain rain
&
misanthropic
mist ("so winter")

or

the aircraft
silhouettes
sneaking through
the snide skies ("kadoorie beach, tuen mun")

But sometimes the unexpected goes too far for usefulness, and we feel as though we were playing oulipo with Edward Lear:

spy the patulous
tide
frisk
the
leering sand
& forgo
the mnemonic moon ("mauritian time")

Last but not least, there is the book's title, *Atonement*. Is the poet really trying to 'atone' for something? I can't see it, unless he has kept it well hidden? Or is this the first step in a word game, where he is announcing his intention to write poetry 'at one' with a world which is remarkably spread out, both linguistically and geographically? You might read the book to find out.

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Maureen Sudlow. *Antipodes*. ISBN 978-1-927242-69-8. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2014. RRP $19.99. 60 pp.

Maureen Sudlow's new book – her first poetry collection – is a balanced combination of haibun, photos, and a variety of free verse and rhymed styles.[48] Most of the photos were taken by the author and these, along with the use of colour, give the book a relaxed, summery feel, even though the contents tend to be valedictory in many ways.

The haibun make up about a third of the book. I'm new to the form and not a haiku or haibun judge, so I've read them only in terms of how they fit in with the full collection. They are first of all a change of pace, visually on the page and in content. Most of them have a pattern in which the prose poem gives specific detail and the accompanying haiku make a comment on a more abstract level. For example, in "Other lives" the poet is watching shooting stars from "... the West Coast of New Zealand":

> ... I go outside and lie on the driveway. I have never seen anything like that wonderful sight – before or since. They say you can only see so many shooting stars before you die. I think I passed my quota.
>
> *celestial storm*
> *through the aeons of space*
> *coldness of stones*

The haibun all work as illustrations in their own right, where a prose poem is the equivalent of the black-and-white first stage of a woodblock print and accompanying haiku gives us a layer (or layers) of colour overlay for the basic structure.

There are various stand-alone haiku which reach out to touch passing instants of awareness:

> in the wind
> bamboo hedge
> break-dancing ("Haiku")

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48 Sudlow is Christchurch born and bred but now lives on the Kaipara Harbour. Her website is www.kiwis-soar.com.

Other forms are also included. “Down the pit (Pike River tribute)” moves along in a lively, and traditional antipodean, ballad style reminiscent of Banjo Patterson or Thomas Bracken:

> The West Coast is a wild land leaning to the sea.
> Mountains tower o’er foaming rivers, dripping bush and barren
> scree.
> The hills are full of secrets, old pits and dead mean’s bones
> and many a lost wanderer has never made it home. …
>
> And now the roll call’s lengthened – Pike River takes its place
> in the murderous assemblage where the miners work the face …

The author does not neglect the domestic, either. She remarks a “lazy day/ sparrows dustbath/ in the ruts of the track” (“Summer dream”) and provides intimate detail such as “… it wasn’t the wind or the driving rain/ ’twas your snoring that kept me awake” (“A wife’s lament on a stormy night”).

She leaves us on a philosophical note:

> What is it drawing us
> to the hills
> to the sea
>
> to the beaten down
> remnants of homes and churches
> gates loosely swinging
> on protesting poles …
>
> where the ghosts
> are all that is left
>
> to hear the nor’wester
> moaning through
> the ribs of the past
>
> what is it that draws us
> blood calls to blood

The collection as a whole offers us a wide range of possible answers to these and other questions, all of them interesting food for thought.

Hamish Dewe

Charles Brasch

Charles Brasch. *Selected Poems*. Chosen by Alan Roddick. ISBN 978-1-877578-05-2. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $35. 152 pp.

Charles Brasch is a poet I'd never really made time for. I'd worked through *Indirections* and of course came across the usual anthologised poems and common quotations, yet I'd never read him with any real attention. Perhaps I still haven't, as I cannot help but see him as an interesting failure, a poet who began with so much promise but fell into slack commentary and self-interested discursiveness.

Thematically, even the technical excellence of his earlier work doesn't transition well for a modern reader. Poems in which the tangata whenua, never mentioned by any name in this volume at least, recede uncomplainingly in the face of the colonists betray an unforgivable, perhaps even wilful, ignorance of history or even commonsense. Since when did any people willingly cede their homeland?

This is not to say that Brasch's work has no value at all. The first two volumes, *The Land and the People* and *Disputed Ground* have much to commend them. His strengths are most obvious here where he roots his generalities, which later waft off into unrooted talk, in the specifics of the landscape. See, for example "Pipikariti," which is for my money the pick of the bunch:

> Stone weapons, flint, obsidian,
> Weed and waveworn shell and bone
> Lie in mellowing sand with wood
> Of wrecked ships and forests dead.
> Winds confuse the sand and soil,
> Long-rooted grass and sea-fed pool
> Content between the cliff and sea
> That creep close for fiercer play –
> The caress of earth and water
> Stretched togeher till they shatter

Impetuous side against stiff side
One silent and one loud.
The sweet sun and the wind's light stroke
Charm that fury into smoke
And music, twirling the blue spray
And lighting rage with a fierce joy,
That of the wasting strife appear
Only a lulling ghost of war
Intoning in a measured chant
The history of a continent.

The predominantly four-stress lines and half-rhyme couplets give the piece a flexibility within the structure that wonderfully plays off the contest between the earth and water, the stiff and the impetuous. There is even here a rare acknowledgement that Maori, who are known only by their material culture, in some way contested the appropriation of their land. The truth of colonial brutality cannot find an outlet in Brasch's poetical vision and must always be subsumed into the mythology of the compliant Maori nation, where they are allowed to exist at all. "Forerunners" is a particularly notable example:

Behind our quickness, our shallow occupation of the easier
Landscape, their unprotesting memory
Mildly hovers, surrounding us with perspective,
Offering soil for our rootless behaviour.

You should hear, of course, the sarcasm of the reviewer's voice when he repeats a line like 'their unprotesting memory / mildly hovers' or when he states, along with Brasch, that yes, of course the noble Maori, who now no longer exist except as memory, had as their only function 'nam[ing] the bays and mountains' and that '[i]n the face of our different coming they retreated, / But without panic'. Excuse me, I need a drink. Be right back.

The only thing holding back a wonderful poem like "Waianakarua" from a modern reader's view is a certain awkwardness of syntax that crops up in several other poems of the period. Lines like:

but nothing here of you
Speaks the inexpressive face
The rough skin of your country

or

Knowledge ends thus with the traveller's glimpse

are simply too forced to sit comfortably with the rest of the poem. "Waianakarua," set at a halt, overlays the landscape with memory and imagination, giving voice to an otherwise mute country. I don't think I can find anywhere else in this volume anything quite as painterly as:

Tall where trains draw up to rest, the gum-trees
Sift an off-sea wind, arching
Rippled cornland and the startling far blue waves.
Westward the shapeless low hills are forced
Here by a twisting amber stream,
Still in one pool under the corner willows
And crossed by the stone bridge beside the mill.

This brief moment of memory and introspection before the journey, which is a passage of both time and place, resumes. The personal connection, memory, infuses the land with a significance which it could not otherwise express. A similar mode reappears in later poems, where memory, often given some sort of physical form, serves to give depth to the landscape. The most obvious examples working this thematic territory are "The Ruins," "Letter from Thurlby Domain" and "Autumn, Thurlby Domain," though none display the same quality of attention as "Waianakarua." Brasch's poems often attempt to find some way of naturalising pakeha presence in New Zealand. Most often, it is accomplished by having one's forebears interred here

Not the conquest and the taming
Can make this earth ours, and compel
Here our acceptance. Dearest dust and shadow
Must we offer still
"The Land and the People (III)"

Dead house and living trees and we that live
To make our peace on earth and become native
"Letter from Thurlby Domain"

It is interesting, but probably not intentional, that Brasch's mode of belonging, of becoming native, is so different from that of the tangata whenua where the ritual marker of belonging is the burial of the placenta. Brasch, of course, makes death the marker of belonging. It is a death that "Offer[s] soil for our rootless behaviour" ("Forerunners"). Bear in mind though that the context for that last quote is the "unprotesting memory" of the tangata whenua.

With the last few poems under consideration, we have now reached *The Estate and Other Poems*. This is the turning point. From here the limpidity and controlled rhythms of Brasch's landscape poems infused with memory begin to be displaced by a limp conversationalism. A few poems seem leftover from Brasch's earlier style, like "Blueskin Bay," but the volume also sees the arrival of dryly introspective pieces like "Self to Self," whose title tells you all you need to know. From here on, the rewards are so few it seems best to end with a rare moment where the same detailed attention of the earlier work seems to carry through into the more conversational mode:

He sits to read, smoking and considering.
His hand holding the cigarette is poised
Considering, his head held by its look
Balanced, a little inclined, all suspension,
Directed to the book his left hand holds.
"Semblances"

Rachael Elliott

Miriam Barr

Miriam Barr. *Bullet Hole Riddle*. ISBN 978-1-927242-68-1. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2014. RRP $19.99. 64 pp.

The third of Barr's poetry collections takes the form of a triptych, exploring issues of consent, relationships, trauma and the dichotomy of voice and voicelessness that accompanies it. *Bullet hole riddle* opens directly into the sexual abuse of the speaker, but this act is not the driving force of the collection. Rather, the spaces left behind and the ways in which the speaker attempts to fill these and heal from their trauma push the poetry through the narrative. Enviably, Barr has caught the soul and flavour of her performance poetry and translated it onto the page in a way that does not cage its energy. These poems, particularly within the first two sections, demand to be read aloud.

"Bullet", the first, and in many ways the strongest, slice of the triptych, is immediate in both style and content; the voice plunges the reader into their childhood abuse, the aftermath of which shapes the collection. Like the poetry within it, "Bullet" is clipped, stark and to the point. The first poems fling the reader directly into trauma, yet manage to leave room for memory and sadness. The opening poem "At the Time" begins "There was too much to say/so she said nothing" yet fronts a collection that makes a business of defiantly speaking the unspeakable while "No Craft" peels back the first layer of society's issue with consent: "No is one of our oldest crafts/ for some of us it is the first word we learn/ for others it is the first word we unlearn". *Bullet hole riddle* does not flinch, but wades into the growing debate around consent and culpability with its feminist hat firmly on, and its boots ready for kicking. In many ways the backbone of the collection, the first section is unflinching as it races into its final poem, the title piece 'Bullet hole riddle'. It rips in with nuance and beautiful refrain, but without apology or equivocation. Hands down a standout piece of the collection, its sharp edges create the space required for the second phase of the work: acknowledgement, survivalism, and restoration.

Like the seven year creative process that shaped it, the rest of *Bullet hole riddle* will not be rushed. If voice drives the first section, imagery drives the ones that follow; they slip a little, moving into porous imagery that pulls the speaker through their chaos. Like the speaker's healing process, "hole" and "riddle" face their past, and with growing self-awareness, evolve into resolution. But while the shift allows the second section to spread and knead its way through its experiences with energetic and unexpected imagery, it leaves the third section becalmed, with much of its power lost. For a collection that opens with such vigour, its conclusion feels weak by comparison. While almost anything could be found within the 'holes' of the second section, the third was full of the whimsically inevitable. Compared with the originality and force of the preceding poetry, the 'happily ever after' of "riddle" feels hurried, and a little contrived.

Bullet hole riddle is a captivating and enjoyable collection, with moments of dynamic voice and complex, concrete imagery, and truly standout pieces of poetry. Its depiction of regeneration and moulding of self through trauma, its timely political commentary and its moments of rhythmic brilliance make it a must read.

Johanna Emeney

Kerry Hines / Nina Powles

Nina Powles. *Girls of the Drift*. 2014. ISBN 978-0-473-30843-8. Wellington: Seraph Press, 2015. RRP $20. 20 pp.

This chapbook by Victoria University graduate Nina Powles features thirteen pages of poetry about historical women, fictional and real. A school ghost and a whaler's daughter are imagined, and Katherine Mansfield's characters from "Her First Ball", "The Woman at the Store" and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" are reimagined. In addition, New Zealand's first female lighthouse keeper, Mary Bennett, watches gulls and watches over her children during a harsh winter, and a dark, prophetic telegram from Blanche Baughan to Jessie Mackay responds to the former's encouraging and lyrical letter. Ending the small collection is a fragment (in the style of Anne Carson's Sappho translations) from Katherine Mansfield – a journal entry/letter recollecting life with her brother Leslie, contemplating his death, and presaging her own demise via pulmonary haemorrhage.

Powles' characterisations are interesting, but more arresting are her evocations of the environments the characters inhabit, refracted through their own points of view. The strong, cold wind at Pencarrow is described as if in an omniscient voice, but then an instruction follows, as if to one of the gulls:

> The wind spins dead things in circles.
> Collect up the wintertime, won't you,
> crack it on a rock,
> drop it from a height. ("Pencarrow Lighthouse")

Again, in "Volcanology", Powles begins with a (mis)quotation from "The Woman at the Store", suggesting that the first person narrator of the poem is eponymous. The monologue is shaped like a volcano, rotated 90 degrees, and the last lines ominously claim, "I know one/hundred and twenty-five ways/to bury a man in earth/that was once/on fire."

“Shipwrecker” opens with the daughter of a whaler tending an unusual garden – one “corner plotted out with bones/pulled from the ribcage of a sperm whale.” That detail seems incongruous, macabre, even, but the girl is happy in the garden, and quite at ease with its souvenirs from the sea. The poem is full of such well-researched details which deliver a richness to the images of the dual environment of the whaler’s home and his place of work, both of which the daughter inhabits daily.

Powles is particularly adept at crafting both a credible environment and an endearing, believable central character, and “Shipwrecker” is the perfect example of her prowess. The narrative, imbued with the daughter’s naïve phrasing, is the more delightful and the more vivid for her innocent tone, discernible under the point-of-view’s purported third person:

> When whales forget their maps they strand. The first time
> she thought they were rocks but the funny shapes spat air,
> little cloud prints floating just above. By tea-time they had died. (“Shipwrecker”)

Rock-shaped whales who forget their maps, whose deaths are memorable because they coincide with meal-times, are far more poignant than those described by an adult narrator – for an adult narrator would probably perceive their forms accurately from the first and record their deaths in ‘real time’.

For this reader, in the chapbook as a whole, the most successful poems are those in which Powles creates the characters afresh, not trying to reimagine characters who have already been depicted elsewhere, or written in their own words. Powles is skilled at breathing life into a well-researched idea, place and time; she is able to develop a narrative voice and furnish a setting which puts flesh on the bones of intriguing research.

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Kerry Hines. *Young Country*. With Photographs by William Williams. ISBN 978-1-86940-823-7. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2014. RRP $34.99. 200 pp.

This is a beautiful book, which counterpoints nineteenth century photographs of colonial New Zealand by William Williams with poems that play off the images. It is divided into four sections: "The Old Shebang", which focuses on Williams' Cuba Street dwelling, "Never Far From Water", which contains poems about Wellington waterways, "Settlement", an extended poem which tells of one woman's life as a settler bride and, lastly, "Whakaki", which focuses on the eponymous station—the subject of many of Williams' photographs.

Snatches of early-settler life provided by the poems are as vivid and credible as the photographs themselves. In "Walking Her Home", the small-town atmosphere is evoked economically by the twitching curtains, controlled by "the electric impulse of the muscle of the street", and the gossiping neighbours who later decide on what colour the young lady wore, "if his suit was best or second-best", and "how much separated them" both in terms of physical distance and class. Throughout the book, other small, vivid details depict life in the young country—many of them humorous: "eel and spinach pie, cooking with gorse" ("Sarah") and "pigs reeling drunk on peaches" ("Letters Home").

Again, true to early-settler life, "British Eden" is a poem that feels as if it has been made entirely of found snippets from archived letters back to England, with blunt statements like, "It has no snakes" and "You are never far from water." However, Hines ends with the delightfully playful:

> A hungry man may fish himself a feed,
> or live on windfall sheep
> and apples.

The characters of *Young Country* are not limited to Williams and the men with whom he shared his Wellington residence 'The Old Shebang'. There are all sorts of men and women, real and imagined. This reader found the women characters particularly three-dimensional. One example is the butcher's-wife-cum-medic who "could darn a man's hand, slap/something raw on a black eye" ("River Hutt") as well as lay out a corpse. Gruff, guttural sounds together with occasional half-rhyming

assonance in the first two-thirds of the poem give a diurnal ordinariness to her medical duties and a sense that the butcher's wife had no time for fuss-makers. She fixed all sorts of injuries:

> ... A kick, a cut,
> a ricocheting saw,
>
> a spill, a fall, an axe.

However, the description of how she talked to the dead, "touching them/as if they hurt", saved for the final lines, adds a tenderness and kindness to her ministrations.

Hines does not match every poem to every photograph in *Young Country*, but the words and pictures are always complementary in some way. On occasion, the poem is a direct commentary on the photograph, though, as with the pairing of a picture of young Maori men digging a ditch and "Enclosure", a poem about what a person might do when it seems that he/she can do nothing:

> **Enclosure**
>
> What is the healthy response to
> an unhealthy environment?
>
> Some people leave; some people live
> in quarantine; the healers
>
> sicken. Rabbits breed.
> The wise speak their mind
>
> once only. The clouds form
> a pattern resistant
>
> to pattern.
>
> If you can move, keep moving.
> If you're stuck fast, dig.

Certainly, Hines' poems respond to Williams' photographs which are particular to their nineteenth century context. More impressive still is the fact that they also work on a universal level. "Enclosure" is a good example of this double-work. The poem provides a commentary on the photograph of young Maori men digging a deep ditch. Pakeha men line the banks, watching the workers in a manner reminiscent of plantation overseers, while the muscular Maori dig, spades to the side in unison, like warriors rowing a waka. They are, paradoxically, moving while stuck. Hines sees their dignity. She also perceives the everyday bravery of "dig[ging]" when one is "stuck fast" in any type of situation that seems unassailable, and she communicates this to the reader as a maxim of sorts in the poem's final two lines.

Young Country is the book of an accomplished poet who has done her research and worked with another medium in an intuitive and respectful way. Hines has used the photographs as intertexts and as catalysts, and the resultant poetry is a pleasure to read on many levels.

Matthew Harris

The Places Behind the Place

Jack Ross. *A Clearer View of the Hinterland: Poems & Sequences 1981-2014*. ISBN 978-0-473-29640-7. Wellington: HeadworX, 2014. RRP $30. 192 pp.

Walter Benjamin, in his 1936 reflections on Nikolai Leskov, classified two kinds of writers: those who readers imagine as the "trading seaman", bringing stories from afar, and those "resident tillers" whose craft depends on a thorough knowledge of the local soil. Jack Ross, I think, is first and foremost a writer of the latter tradition. As a writer who has lived most of his life in Mairangi Bay, Auckland, he has done a great deal of graft in promoting writing in the region, from co-editing *Golden Weather: North Shore Writers Past and Present* in 2004 to initial selection work for what became known as 'The Trestle Leg Series' – a sample of North Shore writing which has graced the underside of the Auckland Harbour Bridge since 2012 (not to mention his support of numerous local journals, and nationally significant publications and poetry events).

For those familiar with Ross's work, this is probably needless to say, but his resident tilling can also be clearly seen in both the subject matter and the form of the poetry collected here – which, I should note, brings together 33 poems and sequences from a time span of 33 years. The North Shore figures in miniature records of place (I like to see the islands in the gulf, driving / down the long hill, ships floating / down the sky ["Except Once," p.12]); in humorous tweet-sized lines which sum up the changing nature of Auckland (If you can't park in Birkenhead / where can you park? ["Birkenhead," p.112]); and in more atmospheric descriptions:

> That scent of air-conditioned air
> as you pass a door,
> cave-cold; fur
> of condensation
> on a beer:
> Auckland midsummer.
> ["God's Spy," p.18]

And if the subject matter of the poetry is frequently localised, it could be said that the form is too. To raise something of an old chestnut, fans of the North Shore writing might also see something in the way Ross extends a typically Sargesonian interest in the cadences of everyday speech and pushes it to breaking point, by his inclusions of what appear to be verbatim records of conversations. From a poem set at North Head in Devonport:

> –I'll scrub them when I get home
> –What*ev*er
> –Have you had an inspiration?
> –Uh
> –Get up and stop being stupid
> – to a fallen child –
> ["A Sunday Walk," p.113]

While there are plenty of Easter eggs for North Shore readers (one might want to play spot-the-reference-to-Sargeson's-bach?) I should note that any suggestion Ross's use of the local might result in a kind of inward-looking parochialism wouldn't stand up. He is also one of the most well-read poets in the country, conversant in several languages (translations are another feature of the collection), so his body of knowledge means he also writes, in Benjamin's terms, "from afar" – or, at least, from a perspective which includes – occasionally to a reader's frustration – reference to diverse and sometimes obscure sources. His allusions to figures such as Celan, Thomas Mann and Britney Spears – not to mention lesser-knowns like Bishop James A. Pike and Alexandra David-Néel – provide a colourful, and occasionally disorienting, juxtaposition to local subjects.

> Are *you* thinking about them
> ducking round this plinth
> in Eden Crescent?
> [...]
> *Of course* one wears a thong
> to pick up kitty *Stella Maris*
> Lady of the Sea *ora pro nobis*
> As in Th. Mann *Unordnung*
> *und frühes Leid*
> cry yourself to sleep
> ["Disorder and Early Sorrow", p.53]

These allusions are more frequent in his earlier work, and over the three-decades of Ross's writing covered by the collection, it may be possible to detect a drift toward more relational and experiential – rather than pointedly experimental – forms. Certainly, in the latter half of the collection, he isn't always so determined to complicate his storytelling with external references, and his penchant for literary rarities and the exploration of conceptual archaisms takes up less of the foreground. This, I suppose, will variously please or irk readers who have previously lauded or criticised his leanings toward the avant-garde: Mark Houlahan has called Ross's writing "slippery" and "quixotic", Michael Morrissey a "challenge", Lisa Samuels "uncomfortably interesting, richly literary, and intensely sympathetic", and Harvey McQueen "a tantalising maze". But I don't think one could say Ross's hyper-connected synapses are any less active in the later poems. The recording of curious text-types, say, in the first half of the collection (the overpass graffiti, bumper sticker, or job recruitment ad) continues to tap into sundry folk-wisdom right until the end of the book (in references to Albert Street signage, t-shirts, and text from a Massey University staff toilet). And the early allusions to Calvin Klein and Miss New Zealand's head are no more surprising than the later nods to Hosanna Horsfall, Clever Hans, and Slash's anus. It's just that the latter are given more context in the poems.

> Hosanna is an idiot
> I'm going to New York
> I'm going to be a star
> If they tell me to eat myself
> I'll do it
> ["New Zealand's Next Top Model Speaks", p.146]

Call me a lazy reader, but I tend to most enjoy Ross's later, more self-contained, narrative poems such as "The Darkness", "Asbestos hands of Dr. J", and "Howard". The first of these, which tells the story of his father's journey down the Waikato river on an air-mattress, deftly shifts perspective to give the reader a sense of the dread his mother must have felt, and makes the point that being caught up in the main action can sometimes be less memorable than by-standing. The ending of "Asbestos hands of Dr. J" is both touching and funny as it scorches the writer's devotion to his craft, and sums up his desire to condense words into something combustible – the poem as a coal nugget, perhaps. The last poem of the collection tells the story of a noisy neighbour who grieves

his mother's death by playing Led Zeppelin through the early hours of the morning:

> the fuzz turned up in force
> we heard them knocking first
>
> then going round all the doors
> finally they broke in
> cuffed him
>
> and took him off to jail
> ("Howard," p.183)

It might be said that Ross sacrifices a little attention to form in these more personal narrative poems. For instance, one might query why, in "Howard", Ross reveals who has called the police so early in the poem, rather than saving that point of tension for the end. Or one might wonder whether the details about his parents' medical occupation were necessary to the story in "The Darkness". But these are minor points in otherwise memorable and affecting pieces of verse. If I have any real gripe about the collection, it's to do with formatting. The Table of Contents is missing page numbers, which makes the book difficult to get around. And the pain of this omission is in no way lightened by the irony of including the poem "Index" which purports to provide contents information on a 1966 edition of *The Teachings of Buddha*.

All in all though, this retrospective is well and truly worth the effort spent in navigating it. Thirty years seems a good amount of time to draw on for a clear view of Ross's personal hinterland – and being his fifth collection, it does a thorough job of covering the many of the most important themes and influences behind his large body of work. I would concur with Graham Beattie, in saying that this is Ross's "most substantial" collection to date. It's certainly a book I'd recommend to those who haven't read Ross before. Many pieces will give pleasure in future re-readings, and there are plenty of fascinating allusions to add to one's reference-chasing wish-list. For those approaching it for the first time, starting at the end, and reading through backwards might be a good idea though: beginning at the place of arrival before moving back to the places behind the place.

Bronwyn Lloyd

Lies we tell ourselves

Frankie McMillan. *There Are No Horses in Heaven.* ISBN 978-1-927145-67-8. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2015. RRP $25. 102 pp.

Browsing through the posts on Peter Peryer's excellent blog, I noticed the way the celebrated photographer describes certain images that "stick to the ribs," and how this sensation helps him decide which of his photos are "keepers." I think the same is true of a collection of poetry. Every time I read a book of poems there will always be one or two that stay with me long after I've finished the book. Often though, I'm surprised by *which* poems turn out to be the ones that stick to my ribs.

There are many memorable poems in Christchurch writer Frankie McMillan's collection *There are no horses in heaven* and a slew of redolent images lift from the pages and enter your mind's eye as you read it: a gorilla dressed in women's clothes, a whale-bone corset singing when it nears the ocean, a dress of spun glass, a pair of silt-covered shoes, a vine growing through a bedroom wall, and an etched deer breaking free of the glass door that contains it. But the 'rib-sticker' for me turned out to be the unassuming short prose poem "Pin-striped jacket" in the middle of the third section of the book.

The poem is about a Marilyn Sainty jacket found by the narrator in a second-hand shop. It is a "jacket that promises so much" because of the name of the prestigious New Zealand designer on the label and the claim that it is 100% wool. But when she places the jacket on the counter she notices that the fabric is pilled in such a way that suggests that the garment is not entirely wool. The inference is that the label is fraudulent and so too is its maker, and the poem ends with the casual statement by the sales assistant: "These days, …they lie, everyone does."

The idea at the centre of "Pin-striped jacket" is that lies, big and small, are the substance of everyday life and a designer jacket that isn't what it claims to be is one instance of this. What is particularly clever about the poem, though, is that the narrator doesn't reveal whether she actually bought the jacket. We are left to reflect on what decision we would make

in the same situation and whether the label of the maker would override the doubts we might have about the integrity of the garment.

The real value of a poem that sticks to the ribs, like "Pin-striped jacket" did for me, is that it sets ideas simmering, and I found the concept of everyday lies in this poem extremely compelling, so much so that it informed my second reading of the book in a way that made greater sense of the collection than the five titled section breaks printed on sky-blue paper did. Thinking about those lies that we tell ourselves, those lies that we choose to live with to mitigate the disappointment of the promise of something that doesn't match the reality, and the consequences of those lies, allowed me to see how McMillan's book revolved around different kinds of deception.

The title piece of the collection is a case in point. The blanket assertion that "There are no horses in heaven," operates as an alleged statement of fact, and yet it contains a double lie. Is the lie that only creatures possessing a soul go to heaven, or is the lie that there is a heaven to go to at all? The notes at the end of the book tell us that the poem was inspired by a conversation with a fellow poet about childhood memories; the formative time in our lives when we accept the truth of things much more readily than we do as adults. This is set against the poem itself, which is about a nun who is increasingly unable to make the distinction between her waking life and her dreaming life, in which she is a horse:

> Sister Teresa wakes to the taste
> of an iron bit
>
> she does not recognise underground water
> the wild grasses good to eat
>
> she stands, shuddering in her skin
> the world laid bare before her (p.45)

The title of the piece complicates the issue, and is another instance of the way McMillan's poems set ideas simmering. "There are no horses in heaven" begs the question of whether a person of faith who possesses a soul, but believes she is a horse, will still be granted access to heaven? This act of poking holes in alleged 'truths' and revealing their complexity is a real strength of McMillan's collection.

Another strength of the book is the way that the writer forms links between the poems in which she sets up an idea and follows it through. The final poem of section one, “My father’s balance,” for example, makes the analogy between a tightrope walk and the process of negotiating a new marriage, which involves mastering “the art of equilibrium.” This is followed at the start of section two by a poem “The glass slipper was only half of it,” about an accomplished glass blower who “knew his business” but couldn’t keep his wife, and thus the balance of his life was lost. After she leaves him he fools himself into believing that he can fill the void by making a dress from molten glass, replicating his wife’s proportions. Two poems later, the point of view changes, and the consequences of the lie become apparent. In “The glass blower’s boy,” the man’s son, who has accepted that his mother has gone, observes his father giving shape to the lie as he “spins a glass dress / filling the space with his breath.”

The continuity of ideas creates a satisfying sense of cohesion to McMillan’s book, but she is careful not to labour the links between poems, and the resulting mix of subtle narrative and thematic connections throughout the book allows for ideas to attach to other ideas, often in surprising ways. I particularly like the less obvious links between poems, such as the poem “Herd” that immediately precedes “Pin-striped jacket.” “Herd” opens with two gorgeous couplets: “when the shadow of a horse / darkens the road / it fools migratory birds / into errors of navigation.” You can see how this idea nicely dovetails into the concept of the next poem about the Marilyn Sainty jacket showing the way that an element of doubt creeps into our judgement about a thing, like the shadow darkening the road and throwing off the flight-path of the birds.

There are no horses in heaven is an accomplished, original, and thought-provoking book of poems that repays repeat readings. It is a book that is certain to stick to your ribs for a very long time.

Elizabeth Morton

Stephanie Christie / Anna Jackson

Stephanie Christie. *The Facts of Light*. deciBel Series 001. Ed. Pam Brown. ISBN 978-1-922181-28-2. Sydney: Vagabond Press, 2014. RRP $AUS 15. 48 pp.

The Facts of Light is a pipsqueak of a collection, comprised of a mere 21 poems. But its scope is lofty and its message is urgent. This is poetry in its last breath, a Swan Song in verse. Christie gives us a sniff of the end times – the "dystopic mess" and "decay of systems".

But this collection is not a resignation; this poetry won't lie back and think of England, nor is it an ostrich with its head beneath the sand. Rather, it greets the new reality in full frontal and intones a call to arms. With poems titled "Revolution", "Manifest oh" and "Save Today", we are smuggled into a world that's turned to custard, and we are urged to act.

"Passivity of witness" beckons the end of the world as we know it. Sidestepping issues clinches the breakdown of psyche and civilization. Things must change. The hedonistic tendencies of humanity are scrutinised. Christie asks whether "our crude fun (is) what all this / devastation's worth". We are chastised for being so "crazy for self-reflection", for "believing our families / to be the most deserving", and yet, somehow, this work seems too nuanced to be called didactic.

Language is as much a pollutant as the "casual wounds, car crashes, alcoholism, genocide and theft". Christie writes of "a tumbling vicious language" and of a "lingo (which) contaminates the globe". We need to be gentle, to speak carefully, Christie seems to be saying. We need to be kind. We need to "try learning to love".

There is a relentless anxiety, a sense of dislocation. This is a world where fear is recursive. Our narrator says she's "scared of the discomfort of experiencing fear" and "you keep coming back to find out why you keep coming back". This is not writing-as-therapy, although the narrator confesses she writes so she "can feel / and let there be feelings". Her poetry pegs the ineffable to paper.

The Facts of Light is where the physical and the psychical coalesce. There are unexpected pairings – "the loneliness has cellular depth" and "dislocated thoughts collect / at the bottom of the glass".

The poetry is playful and unsettling. It brings to mind the title of an REM song – "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)". The gravity of the "impending crisis" is met by nervous laughter.

The Facts of Light reads more like Siri than music. This adds to the sense of disjunction. Poems here read as though a science textbook has been mashed with a love poem in a Burroughs cut-up machine.

Textured wordplay, transmuted cliché and wry humour set the reader on his toes. Christie's poetry is not warm – It is deliberate and indelicate. This poetry would rather grind axes than administer tranquilisers. This is not palliative care for the end times.

Welcome to the deep-end.

> When we fall into the sun
> finally, there'll be
> no more darkness.

•

Anna Jackson. *I, Clodia, and Other Portraits*. ISBN 978-1-86940-820-6. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2014. RRP $24.99. 76 pp.

Odi et amo, wrote Catullus. I hate and I love.

Anna Jackson's portrait of the infamous Clodia Metelli is both love letter and hate-mail. Dancing between tenderness and execration, Jackson summons Clodia from the shadows of History. Clodia is conferred a voice which, hitherto, has been appropriated by men.

The educated Roman aristocrat leaves a smear of secondary testimonials in her wake, with accusations of incest, promiscuity and allusions to Medea. (Most notably, Clodia appears in the letters of Cicero, and takes the alias 'Lesbia' in poems by her lover, Catullus,). But, in Jackson's sequence of poems, it is Clodia's turn to take the floor.

Clodia does not hole up behind Anna Jackson's verbal frontage. She is not some biographical splinter of the author's psyche. Unlike the author's earlier work, *Catullus for Children*, this volume does not allow anachronism or New Zealand life to seep into its narrative.

This is clever poetry – It can flitter between free-verse and hendecasyllables and galliambics (which, admittedly, I had to look up). The verses which I find most compelling are the more pared down, such as Clodia's message to Caelius Rufus:

> So there are verses about me circulating about the city.
> At least they keep a pretty metre.
> Campaigning against them
> would be like campaigning against blossoms falling in Spring –
> lean over? Let me brush a petal off your hair.

It is as though one of antiquity's more notable love affairs (that between Clodia and Catullus) has been cryogenically set and now thawed. Jackson has given Clodia a new life, and in this incarnation she is poet superior, not merely "a ghost once loved by a poet".

The second half of Anna Jackson's *I, Clodia, and other portraits* is a wholly different kettle of fish. Here Jackson lets us into the world of "The Pretty Photographer", whose foray into portraiture is, she tells us, "the worst disaster of her career".

The Pretty Photographer captures small absences – the "smile that doesn't appear on her face", the subject who says "it was her birthday / when it wasn't", the "hallway out of reach", the "two planes, one / undoing the writing of another", "the "with" withheld".

Here her subjects are arrested, "the stills betraying an extremity of / emotion not apparent / on the move". We meet a procession of people in their worlds – "Amanda in the mirror", "Saoirse at the fridge", "Timothy, after the conference". These are portraits that are sometimes dramatic and high-contrast, sometimes gentle and soft-lit. We catch subjects in moments where they are vulnerable:

> Saoirse weeps at the fridge door
> removing nothing, the cold air
> on her tears, her feet in socks
> from Singapore Air.

The Pretty Photographer's cautioning, her statement that "this creation / of 'portraits'.... makes her want / to throw up in the sink", seems off-beam. Portraiture, rather, seems to be a strong suit. *I, Clodia, and other portraits* is a deft shooting of character, in two parts. Don't fall for the Pretty Photographer's self-deprecation. This is poetry with clout.

Jack Ross

Mary Cresswell / David Eggleton / Iain Lonie / Jane Summer

Mary Cresswell. *Fish Stories*. ISBN 978-1-927145-66-1. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2015. RRP $25. 131 pp.

The ghazal (pronounced, I'm reliably informed, "guzzle") is certainly trending in contemporary English-language poetry. One can see its advantages in combining close attention to form with a dizzying number of possible variations: a little like the spread of the sonnet form throughout Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth century.

Mary Cresswell, an American poet who has lived in New Zealand since 1970, says of her collection as a whole: "It is accessible poetry, using rhyme, varying poetic structures and a range of topics," and goes on to "encourage other poets to use formal verse and rhyme as I think it's rewarding and fun."

Her work, she explains, is "not confessional, not an emotional diary and not an autobiography." What *is* it, then, if it's none of those things?

> Yes, I've heard about the vacant chambers of my mind.
> Are you here because you hope to fill the vacant chambers of my mind? ["Eine Kleine Kammermusik," p.23]

This poem, whose title translates as "A Little Chambermusic" (presumably on the analogy of Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik"), rings the changes on the following dismissive remark by linguist Otto Jespersen, referred to by Cresswell in a footnote:

> Jespersen describes (*Language*, 1922) a reading experiment for speed and comprehension in which women overwhelmingly outperformed men. This proves, he says, that women's minds have 'vacant chambers' in which they promptly accommodate new information whereas men's minds are already full of weighty thoughts that slow down such acquisition.

So far, so shocking (though it does remind one a little of the passage in *A Study in Scarlet* where Sherlock Holmes disclaims any interest in the fact

that the Earth goes around the Sun, rather than vice versa, explaining that such irrelevant information simply takes up much-needed room in his well-organised brain).

My question is, however, whether the poem itself has much to add to the absurdity of the footnote?

> I've spoken long with Professor Freud. He knows of course the most
> efficient way those pesky little chambers should be mined.

I'm afraid that most readers' experience of rhyme and strict metrical form is now confined mainly to light verse. The great tradition of such writers as W. S. Gilbert, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and A. A. Milne has led us to expect witty paradox and ingenuity as inevitable features of such techniques.

Their successors were the Tinpan Alley lyricists of the Broadway Musical: "We hear he is a whiz of a Wiz, if ever a Wiz there was," or "Doe, a deer, a female deer," are probably among the lines that spring to mind when one thinks of the fun (Cresswell's word) of poetic formalism.

Cresswell's satirical intentions may be not dissimilar to, say, W. S. Gilbert's, but in a poem such as "Eine Kleine Kammermusik," I think we feel a certain forced quality to the wit. The allusions are there, but – to my ear, at least – the repeated rhyming variations on the word "mind" lack ease. They "smell of the lamp" (to use another nineteenth century phrase).

Where I think Cresswell is strongest is where she sidesteps the stricter demands of the forms she's chosen to write in, and allows the language to speak through her with rather more freedom:

> Night is cold and coming faster than we'd like.
> We sit and shiver under thin and wear-worn shawls,
>
> I assume I'm exempt because I sit around all day,
> reading thrillers, writing predictable ghazals.
> ["Waiting Room," p.91]

We forgive, I suspect, the *intentional* clumsiness of that "wear-worn shawls" line because of the brooding truth underlying the others: the decision to use the ghazal-form, too, can be seen here in better relief – as, essentially, a refusal simply to add to a monotonous chorus of despair.

Some of her experiments in cento, too (selecting and recombining lines from other poets), result in a kind of *poetry despite itself*: a very

personal voice asserting itself through a mountain of off-rhymes and naff experiments:

> *Where there are two, choose more than one*
> three, possibly, or a handful,
>
> whatever you need to cross the desert:
> dates to tuck in your turban
>
> silver coins to tip the bearers
> Biros for taking notes. You know
>
> how hard the sun is on diaries
> not to mention sharp sand
>
> between the crumpled pages.
> ["The Length of Long Days," p.45]

The luminosity of such lines goes a long way to make up for a few arid passages here and there.

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David Eggleton. *The Conch Trumpet*. ISBN 978-1-877578-93-9. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $25. 122 pp.

> Once in a blue moon,
> everyone grows older, if you need something
> to cry on, here's my shoulder.
> ["Syzygy," p.28]

The blurb to his book proclaims David Eggleton's intention to call to the "scattered tribes of contemporary New Zealand." Having duly called to them, though, what does he actually have to say? The lines above illustrate his dilemma.

They exemplify Eggleton's characteristic serio-comic register: his disconcertingly pat rhymes, offsetting the deep emotionalism of the words itself. What, indeed, *is* there to say? We *do* all get older – "if you need something / to cry on, here's my shoulder."

Melancholy and a pervasive sense of loss seem to set the tone here. "On Recrudescence of Waterfalls After All-Night Rain," for instance, begins:

> Before the movies they had waterfalls

and concludes with the less-than-encouraging evocation:

> wet with glitter
> mined as popcorn additive for *Lord of the Rings*. [p.36]

What, indeed, can be found which is *not* fake or (at least) falsely represented in such a landscape?

> The early writers echoed one another
> to haul narratives of settlement into being,
> as if cramming more sail on good ship *Rhapsody*.
> 'Mount Cook, greenstone country, middle island',
> was 'stupendous', 'precipitous', 'gigantic' –
> the sublime defined by extremes: peaks, troughs,
> breathtaking gulfs, gulps of cold illumination.
> ["Wilderness," p.51]

It was all a device for promoting one's sense of ownership of all this "nameless nothingness," Eggleton explains: "a found blank wilderness they would remake."

Such denunciations of the "South Island myth" and its landgrabbing corollaries are, mind you, fairly familiar to most of us by now. The poem concludes more teasingly, though – at the end of a list of such landmark namers as Charles Torlesse, Thomas Cass, Charlotte Godley, and Lady Barker – with a reference to the "nowhere of Erewhon."

> Thus Samuel Butler looked up to stony limits,
> went searching for paydirt in magnetic ore:
> 'At every shingle bed we came to … we lay down
> and gazed into the pebbles with all our eyes.'

It's not that Butler is seen here (by Eggleton, at any rate) as any *exception* to this rule of plundering a landscape through the language one chooses to describe it. It's more that these lines point at the larger

truth of *Erewhon* the satire (rather than the placename): one must *be* somewhere to imagine nowhere – but the point of imagining nowhere is to look back on that somewhere. If you continue to gaze "into the pebbles" with all your eyes, who's to say what strange visions might result? Mineral wealth of some sort, no doubt, but perhaps not in the usual sense.

Elsewhere in his book, Eggleton expresses a certain healthy scepticism about any and all attempts to own [= express] truisms about landscape:

> Bogans, cashed-up, await gentrification,
> seeking a personal tutor in Enzed Lit.
> ["Sound and Fury," p.82]

More to the point, the mediascape he is (we are) forced to inhabit now encompasses a world-wide banality:

> Praise be to internet, now my mind is a search engine:
> a web-headed weave around humanity
> every which way which babbles of conformity,
> and of dissenters in each departure lounge.
> ["The Age of Terror," p. 119]

When clicking on a Facebook "like" icon constitutes the extent of your political conformity or dissent, it might be seen to make little difference what else you do or say: "There are unknown knowns, and then there are the drones."

It is, to be sure, a chilling vision Eggleton paints, and any attempts to valorise it or make it sound cool seem distinctly beside the point. "Let's face it," a young hijab-wearing media commentator said the other day on Al Jazeera, "right now stories about Syrian refugees pouring into Europe are sexy." There was scorn in her voice, but the language she was forced to use somehow belied it.

David Eggleton's latest book reminds us what time of day it is: perhaps as close to midnight as any of us has ever been.

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A Place To Go On From: The Collected Poems of Iain Lonie. Edited by David Howard. ISBN 978-1-927322-01-7. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $50. 390 pp.

First of all, I think it's important to stress just how carefully and sensitively David Howard has laboured to show off Iain Lonie's poetry to its best advantage.

Editorial procedures often constitute the bit at the front of a book which readers skip in order to get to the good stuff inside, but there's no doubt that appreciation of a poet, in particular, can be greatly helped or hindered by the wrong set of choices.

Take poor old Philip Larkin, for example. Given the precision and care with which he shaped each of his four published collections, it was quite a shock to his fans to encounter Anthony Thwaite's boots-and-all gallimaufry of a *Collected Poems* when it first appeared in 1988. There were poems everywhere! New poems, unfinished poems, juvenilia – in a vaguely chronological order which completely obscured the choices Larkin himself had made about them over the years.

Initially unresponsive to such criticism, eventually Thwaite was forced to give in. He tried again in 2003. This time he included the four main collections, in full, with a small selection from the other materials included in his 1988 edition. In other words, fewer poems, but with better internal ordering. But which should one rely on? The fuller (but more chaotic) 1988 edition – or the less inclusive 2003 one?

At the end of a long debate, Archie Burnett's *Complete Poems* of 2012 set out to include all the juvenilia, all the unfinished and uncollected material from 1988 (and elsewhere), and all four major books, clearly labelled and separated, with a far more carefully edited text and more copious information on everything. It might be overkill, but it does work.

Has all this hurt Larkin's poetic reputation much? It's hard to say, but it certainly hasn't helped.

Howard has learnt from these (and many other) precedents. His Lonie edition includes each of the five collections – including the posthumous *Winter Walk at Morning* (1991) – clearly demarcated in its own section. Rather than putting in a single section of "unpublished" or "uncollected" work, Howard has intelligently and carefully shaped a series of chronological chapters from the poet's manuscript and typescript remains.

It's hard to see how this arrangement could be bettered, given the complex and debatable state of Lonie's work, with so many undated

poems available in multiple texts. Howard's decision to include so much information in his endnotes is also a welcome one – as is the inclusion of Bill Sewell's memoir, Bridie Lonie's chronology, and Damian Love's critical essay on the poet.

It's doubtful that Lonie will ever require another editor: on this scale, at least. The great thing about David Howard's book is that it virtually guarantees that he won't need one.

But, after all that, what of the poems? Howard quotes a telling remark by Lonie's eldest son Jonathan, written after reading his first collection *Recreations* (1967):

> I never realised how close to Donovan it is, I suppose I judge all poetry by his, but it is perfect poetry and very musical [p.358]

It's hard for a subsequent generation to realise how sincerely this could have been meant in 1968: folksinger Donovan Leitch ("Atlantis," "Hurdy Gurdy Man") has long ceased to be a name to conjure with. I'm not entirely sure that the comparison is entirely unjustified, though. There's a great deal of attention paid to *being a poet* in this early phase of Lonie's work: far less to what (if anything) he has to write about.

Certainly it's odd to hear Lonie invoking Auden and the other thirties poets solely in terms of technique: with an apparent ideology bypass over the motivations behind their demotic techniques and phraseology.

Montale, too, a deeply personal poet eschewing the public brayings of his fascist contemporaries, is translated by Lonie with sensitivity and care, but with a strange disregard to anything but the immediate personal contexts of his verse.

Is that the verdict, then: technical brilliance and profound sensitivity foundering in a gulf of lyrical detachment? Not really. Lonie is a poet for particular moods, I would say: for a bitter mood of telling over past follies, past loves. Bitter, or bitter-sweet? Lonie was, after all, a classicist. There's something Horatian in his attempts to be himself, to live in the world without compromise.

The more of his work I read, the more I become convinced that that in itself is quite a considerable achievement: to be true to something so evanescent by its very nature, with so little clue as to whether one has succeeded – will ever succeed – or not.

I suspect, then, that what I'll be returning to most often in Lonie's work is those last two collections openly dedicated to grief, *The Entrance to Purgatory* (1986) and the posthumous *Winter Walk At Morning*.

One of the loveliest things about this book is the way in which it represents the meeting of two very different poets – David Howard and Iain Lonie – somewhat alike in temperament, perhaps, in their concern for technical precision and tour-de-force, but very different people, who have been able to meet on these poetic grounds almost like Dante himself, walking with Virgil and Homer into the seven-walled castle of the great pagan poets at the beginning of the *Inferno*.

•

Jane Summer. *Erebus*. ISBN 978-1-937420-90-1. Little Rock, Arkansas: Sibling Rivalry Press, 2014. RRP $US 24.95. 185 pp.

I suppose that it's natural enough that I should have started off by regarding this book with a certain suspicion. Not only do most New Zealanders regard the Erebus tragedy as somehow "ours" – there's also the fact that it's already been written about at length in Bill Sewell's *Erebus: A Poem* (1999).

I find myself coming back to that point from Robert Sullivan: "the need to represent one's own stories" [from the interview on p.27 of this issue].

I'm glad to say, however, that I now feel that I was *completely wrong* in this case. Not only is American writer Jane Summer conscious of this need to establish the right to deal with such subject matter, but she handles the whole issue with a deftness and skill one can only envy.

> A yankee, I've been
>
> so out of it for so many years
> I'm not even sure
>
> if I lost Kay in that
> crash or she lost me [p.19]

Her poem is, in essence, a love letter to a lost friend, a friend (and, as we gradually intuit, lover) killed in the Erebus disaster.

She ties together the various knots of her narrative with intricate precision: a "three-month junket / to Australia and New Zealand – / bush vigor, tainted colonialism" [p.23] (I love that description of us: is it the

Australians who have the vigour, and we the taint? Or do both pertain to both?) in 1990 fails to spark any memories of Kay's death in 1979, and even an "*Awful dream: X dies in Alps crash / + I say maybe they'll find her / preserved by the cold but everyone / says I'm fooling myself + my loss / feels inconsolable*" [p.30] does not remind her of it.

Why not? Well, there's the rub. I could tell you, but you'd miss the best part of her story, her gradually unfolding life-lies and comforting delusions. For once, I think I won't issue a spoiler alert, but simply recommend you to the book itself.

Allen Ginsberg's great poem *Kaddish* (1961), a howl of grief for his dead mother Naomi, or Paul Muldoon's "Incantata," (from his 1994 book *The Annals of Chile*) for his ex-lover, the artist Mary Farl Powers, are the kind of company *Erebus* keeps. Nor does Summer have anything to fear from the comparison.

Both Ginsberg and Muldoon innovate technically with a kind of desperate, heart-felt intensity, transcending any suspicion of too much interest in the machinery of their poems.

So, too, in Summer's book, the collaging of log books, the interspersed witness testimonies, the long passages of straightforward verse narrative, never strain our compassion or test our patience.

It's hard to imagine a reader who couldn't empathise with the sheer power of Summer's bereavement: the life that she could have had, the wound so deep it's taken this long even to begin to deal with it.

I feel this is a book I'll keep going back to, and recommend to many friends. It's true; it's unpretentious; it's written with a casual precision that belies the skill behind it. It is, in short, I firmly believe, something of a wonder.

Richard Taylor

The Gold Leaves

Edward Jenner. *The Gold Leaves (being an account and translation from the Ancient Greek of the so-called 'Orphic' Gold Tablets*). ISBN 978-0-9922453-7-5. Pokeno: Atuanui Press, 2014. RRP $35. 161 pp.

Edward (Ted) Jenner's *The Gold Leaves* follows three other poetry books (1980 to 2009) and a translation of the poems of Ibykos from the Greek. Jenner is a classics scholar, a retired teacher of classics and languages, an expert in Pound and the modernists, and moves between the ancient and the new. His innovative poems were published in Michael Morrissey's *The New Fiction*, which came out in 1984. It was a book I was waiting for and reading Ted Jenner and other significant writers (one, Keri Hulme, would later get the Booker Prize) was a stimulating and enlightening experience of NZ literature. Morrissey's book is, in my view, like Stead's *The New Poetic*, one of NZ's critical and literary classics. Jenner's poem or 'creative text' in *The New Fiction* utilizes the visual and the poetical. His poetry and innovative approach needs to be more widely known.

So Jenner, less known than many other writers, is a significant writer as well as a classical scholar.

The Gold Leaves is not a poetic work but involves poetry or poetic writing, for the gold leaves that the book is about, translated from ancient Greek by Jenner have a poetic and a mysterious beauty. Here is an example from the back of this quite beautiful book:

> You will find a spring and on your left in Hades' halls
> and by it the cypress with it's luminous sheen.
> Do not go near this spring, or drink this water.
> You will find another, cold water flowing from
> Memory's lake; its guardians stand before it.
>
> from 'Petelia' (4th c. B.C.)

What adds to this beauty is the gold leaf in question with the original Greek on it, pictured above this excerpt. And the book is beautiful in all senses of the term: it is wonderfully written, excellently designed in terms cover, and of layout.

The Gold Leaves is not only 'poetic' or even only a classic scholarly work (it is that) or an excellent translation. It is all this, but it also involves deep questions not only about the leaves themselves, and the various questions of how the Greeks and indeed other cultures view death, and thus life; but, through Jenner's commentary and those he quotes, invokes deeper questions of the way humans of any time viewed death, the stark strangeness and seeming finality of death, and the way these questions link to various views of the Greeks themselves. Thus there are insights into Greek culture which always remind us by reflection of our own. The book is written for the scholar and anyone else who has an interest or might take an interest in these fascinating human issues, and this aspect of human history. And we are looking at the culture that, in the 5th and 4th Centuries and others, was to have an immense influence on the Western, and indeed, the whole world. These, not because western culture is primary, but because indeed, from deep time, Greece itself was influenced by many cultures and ethnicities.

But no one should think that this subject is too difficult for them. It is sometimes complex, but mostly Jenner presents each aspect of his research and commentary very clearly with references to other scholars. It is like a literary and historical journey.

But what are the gold leaves? Here is the commentary on the back by Murray Edmond:

> *The Gold Leaves* is a study of ancient (c.400 BC-300 AD) verses, often fragmentary, incised on fragile gold leaves that have been found (and continue to be found) buried in graves and tombs in the culturally Greek parts of the Mediterranean world. These leaves have placed carefully, perhaps on the chest, or in the mouth, or in the hand, of the body. The leaves are messages designed to guide the souls of the dead on their journey [in the after life].
>
> Jenner has provided his own translation of a selected number of the texts of the gold leaves. He brings his skill as a poet to these translations. […] For me the book is finally a book about poetry, about its potential and its limits, about its "charm" (in the sense of magic).

This is a typically percipient summation by Murray Edmond, who is an extensively published poet and dramatist who knows well of the "magic", and sometimes the ambiguity, and the mystery of language. And as well

as being a scholarly (but very readable) exegesis of the historical and other implications of the lamellae, or gold leaves, *The Gold Leaves* is indeed about or is itself inherently on at least one level or way of seeing: a work of poetic magic.

And magic, or the magic and mystery of language, is what has fascinated me for many years. Among poets I am probably not alone in this. As a teenager I used to read and re-read Huxley's *Text's and Pretexts* (an anthology of poetry with a commentary) and the chapter on Magic includes some haunting lines, and this line, which is subtitled 'Orphic Formula' which has the Greek above it and Huxley's translation:

> A kid, I fell into milk.

Jenner's translation of the same line is 'I am the kid that rushed to milk.' The mystery of that line, regardless of what is the 'correct' translation, is in many of the writings of the gold leaves. Jenner discusses the meaning of this and many of the texts (for example in Thurii 1). In both cases 'kid' is assumed to be a goat. There is a sense that there may be a sacrifice. But I think that Huxley's comment (and I don't think he knew anything of the gold leaves) is cogent: "Poetry justifies belief in magic..." He explains this and gives examples of the mix of magic and 'logic' in all great poetry and art. It is as if art and science wrestle with each other, particularly in poetry that is innovative or outré.

And magic is tied to the rituals and mystery of death: which those who had the gold leaves with their incantatory instructions when they were buried, had possibly hoped to avoid in an absolute sense. And this may lead us, although Jenner's book is also a good and well organized discussion of the reality (location, date found, the meaning via historical events or writings of the times, research by archaeologists); it is also a discussion of the human situation, or dilemma. And death and life is the interlinked subject. And in one sense at least, poetry and philosophy, indeed all disciplines, and all human activity is linked. Life, the converse has lead most human cultures to some concept of a continuation after death. Funerals, wills, and even writing are ways to offset death: it is a way of somehow continuing. It may be the origin of religion or some belief system, and for many it either gives comfort or adds something to life itself.

But Jenner doesn't philosophize heavily in these matters, but he does show potential connections to various ancient religions such as that of the Egyptians and the cult of Orphism and the ideas of Pythagoras and

the ‘wheel of life’. Orphism is via the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. This myth involved the descent of Eurydice into the underground for part of the year. Orpheus himself is music and art, Eurydice and her mother become the life bringing spring or the season of cold when Hades presides. The Greeks, as Jenner discusses carefully, had complex mythologies and rituals of death. But the Dionysian cults celebrated an almost atavistic joy in sensual life as lived. And the gold leaves reflect these mysteries, rites and practices as well as questions raised about the significance of the wordings of the different texts found on the dead. We are talking nearly one thousand years or more in the past, yet it still speaks to us, or should.

These questions, and the various textual poems (or fragments of poems or invocations), are examined methodically and subtly by Jenner. But not dryly: the reader is in an exciting field.

I said that the book is beautiful. It is. It is beautiful to read, to hold, and it has been wonderfully designed in terms of layout, accessibility and information.

The various gold leaves are named by their place of discovery. These places are shown clearly on a map of Ancient Greece. From this map and by references to the wording on the sequent lamella the reader is able to locate where each translated text came from, and where it is in the book. Each relevant inscription translated has been numbered clearly and these can be read at the back of the book. In some cases the original Greek is presented. Following this there are further notes on the texts in a parallel numbered section. To assist the reader further, there is a page showing the gold leaves by their outline and comparative and actual shapes and sizes. These are each named. In addition there are two indexes, and a bibliography. It is detailed, planned, interesting, and well thought out.

Jenner’s text is a lively and excellently written as well as a scholarly work. Connections are suggested between various religious practices and ancient mythologies. But it is not too definitive, and where scholars are not sure, Jenner might speculate but he always allows room for considered doubt. The texts are, of course, very ancient, and their meanings are still not completely clear.

One example is his evocation of the writings of Hesiod, Homer, as well as Pindar’s and the Homeric Odes and the works of famous Greek philosophers (pre-Socratic, Plato, and others). Pythagoras’s beliefs on transmigration and Plato’s views on reality mix or interact with Orphic

views and the Eleusinian mysteries, as well as the Dyionisian (Bacchic) beliefs.

In T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* Tiresias becomes a symbol of great significance. Tiresias becomes a force in that poem due to this blind prophet's place in the *Odyssey* and later the *Aeneid*. Odysseus contacts the dead at Cumae. Here Tiresias assists to raise them if these 'souls' are able to drink the blood of sacrificed animals. The Greeks at one stage believed that the souls wandered rather dimly in Hades (Hell, perhaps), except those of more august stature, such as Odysseus and other heroes of the Greek world. This aspect of the difference of Christian belief in say a soul reaching some higher heaven (as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*) is discussed, as well as the problematic of remembrance. In the leaves the dead have to drink, it seems in many cases, at a lake or pool of memory. This seems to be a way that the physical being or mind or even the brain-mind-soul, can awake, not into a perfect heaven perhaps, but in actuality. A desire for continuation after death we seem to see that the Egyptian kings desired and hoped for.

This, however is my reaction and speculation (generated by the 'discussion' that occurs in *The Golden Leaves*). But, in this book, we sense the universality of the human concern both for life and some force or spell against total annihilation. It seems that this shows that religion in some form, like Art (poetry, music and all crafts etc), is a universal concern for human beings. And through all time, it has been the concern of poets and artists of every kind.

These issues, however, are carefully discussed by Jenner in a book that is completely engrossing.

The force of this (detailed and informative) book is toward experience: an experience of time, of human hopes and fears, of poetic incantations, of mystery, art, and of yearning and of the now – for we, are as baffled by the terror and mystery of death and the paradoxically the strange resultant joy that this shock of being generates in our 'material' life as were the ancient Greeks.

We recognize these people and their concerns, for they are us. Us now.

Jack Ross

Books and magazines in brief

1. Diane Brown. *Taking My Mother to the Opera*.
2. *Catalyst* 11*: My Republic* (Christchurch, 2014)
3. Martin Edmond & Maggie Hall. *Histories of the Future*.
4. *JAAM* 32: *Shorelines* (Wellington, 2014)
5. Julie Leibrich. *A Little Book of Sonnets*.
6. Emma Neale. *Tender Machines*.
7. Richard Reeve. *Generation Kitchen*.
8. Pat White. *Fracking & Hawk*.

- Diane Brown. *Taking My Mother to the Opera*. ISBN 978-1-927322-15-4. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $29.95. 116 pp.

It's nice to see another hardback poetry book from Otago University Press. Slim paperbacks are all very well, but there's a certain heft and authority in a hardback: especially one as bright and cheerful-looking as this. Diane Brown continues to mine life writing and famly history for her subject matter in this, her third collection of poems, full of pictures which will strike a chord with many readers:

> My favourite photo of Mum,
> snapped at the beach,
> her sensible wedding day suit
>
> ditched for saggy togs.
> Here she is, laughing at Dad,
> as if nothing had ever hurt her. [p.11]

- *Catalyst* 11*: My Republic*. ISSN 1179-4003. Christchurch: The Republic of Oma Rāpeti Press, 2014. RRP $25. 112 pp.

"In 2014 The Republic of Oma Rāpeti Press launched a new republic, complete with a flag, and national anthem. To celebrate this event, we have dedicated a special edition of Catalyst to invite writers to share their vision of their own republic" – so begins Doc Drumheller's preface to the 11th edition of *Catalyst*. It's a pretty cool idea, I think, and the issue is worth it for the illustrations of urban art (what we used to call graffiti) alone. It is, I suppose, invidious to single out particular poems from a fascinating bunch, but I have to say that I was particularly intrigued and moved by Abby Friesen-Johnson's prose-poem "Man Cave":

> Last week a little girl I was babysitting led me by the hand through her house …
>
> "Wow, I've never seen a real man-cave before," I told her, and it's true. I've only ever seen them on TV shows with laugh tracks … she said "This is where daddy comes when he's tired of me," her pride not sagging an inch, and suddenly it made sense why we were still standing at the door. [p.25]

- Martin Edmond & Maggie Hall. *Histories of the Future*. ISBN 978-1-877010-67-5. North Hobart, Tasmania: Walleah Press, 2015. RRP $AUS 20. iv + 100 pp.

I guess the fact that there's a blurb quote from me on the back cover gives a clue that I've already had a certain amount to say about this book. There are some wonderful essays / prose poems in here. The opening piece, "Second Hand Life" with its evocation that older Auckland Martin Edmond calls "Rain City" will stay in my mind forever, I think: especially the parenthetical account of Charles Frances, long-forgotten 1960s New Zealand novelist, author of *Johnny Rapana*, *Ask the River* and other books – who but Martin would know about him, or his apparent foreseeing of the Crewe murders? "What Instruments We Have Agree," about the death of his mother Lauris Edmond (never named, but clearly evoked), is almost unbearably moving. And Maggie Hall's photographs are far more than illustrations: they have their own narratives and intertwinings, the purity of image surviving even grainy newsprint reproduction: benefitting from it, in fact, perhaps.

- *JAAM* 32: *Shorelines*. Ed. Sue Wootton. ISSN 1173-633X. Wellington: JAAM Collective, 2014. RRP $25. 222 pp.

So *JAAM* has now reached number 32, after only twenty or so years of rambunctious life! Dunedin poet Sue Wootton's issue is large and imposing, She's chosen to focus it on the theme of "shorelines" :

> I chose the theme of "Shorelines" partly because I see our islands' physical shorelines as the great connector for us as a people … I decided to arrange this issue around the idea of *kōrerorero*, as expressed in Teoti Jardine's opening poem, a kind of "never-ending ebb and flow" conversation, taking place from one of the country to the other.

She goes on to comment that "Opening *JAAM* is always like lifting the lid on a jack-in-the-box: something energetic jumps out." I have to second that, having opened at random to find Tracey Slaughter's excoriating, kaleidoscopic story "local sluts in your area," and then again and again to other gems.

- Julie Leibrich. *A Little Book of Sonnets*. ISBN 978-1-927242-29-2. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2013. RRP $19.99. 64 pp.

This is a beautifully bound and presented little hardback volume of verse. There are twelve poems here, flanked by as many colour photographs. I have to admit to certain reservations about the idea of committing oneself to quite so many strictly rhymed Shakespearean sonnets at a time, though. There's a certain element of technical tour-de-force when they do come off, and a certain disappointment when they don't. I like the little prose vignettes, and – very much – the images. I don't think the rhymes always set off Julie Leibrich's talents to their best advantage, though: perhaps her guest feature in *Poetry NZ* 17 (1997) is more representative, not to mention her two powerful collections from Steele Roberts: *The Paper Road* (1998) and *Land Below the Waves* (2004).

- Emma Neale. *Tender Machines*. ISBN 978-1-927322-34-5. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $25. 108 pp.

This is a big book, the fifth to date from seemingly effortlessly talented poet / novelist Emma Neale. She herself writes of it:

> To my own mind, *Tender Machines* refers to the cogs and pistons of a poem: a machine that helps us with the psychological work of surviving ourselves. *Tender Machines* are also the tools of our digital age; devices that help to keep us alive; they are also vulnerable physical human forms we love. I hope the phrase also suggests the repetitions we have to shoulder as caregivers.
> [https://emmaneale.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/tender-machines/]

Neale is, of course, referring to William Carlos Williams' celebrated dictum: "A poem is a small (or large) machine made out of words." Williams went on to explain his further comment "There's nothing sentimental about a machine" by specifying that "that there can be no part that is redundant." Neale, it would appear, hopes to retain this lack of redundancy while tempering any implication of a lack of feeling within her poems. The results, I think, speak for themselves in this rich and radiant collection.

- Richard Reeve. *Generation Kitchen*. ISBN 978-1-877578-92-2. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015. RRP $25. 61 pp.

It's been quite a while since Richard Reeve last published a book of poems: not since *In Continents* (2008), in fact – the long poem *The Among* also appeared in that year, but only in a handprinted, limited edition. Since then he's qualified (and practised) as a lawyer, and taken a prominent role in a good many environmental disputes. But what has he been writing? There's a new simplicity to some of these poems, the sombre "Crust", for instance:

> Whether we lived or died, it does no matter.
> We lived and died. We died without living.
> All of this was possible, yet we ignored it.
> We lonely lives slinking home in the dark.

which sounds like a modern coda to Baxter's "High Country Weather." Others display those lovely long lines so characteristic of Reeve: "Like the man who justified his suicide attempts with the answer, 'it's cheaper,' / it moved with an inscrutable logic" ("Winter Storm"). Great stuff!

- Pat White. *Fracking & Hawk*. ISBN 978-0-473-32636-4. Aotearoa New Zealand: Frontiers Press, 2015. RRP $25. 79 pp.

Like Richard Reeve, Pat White is a passionate environmentalist. In this, his ninth collection of poems to date, he sets out to interrogate the deeper sense of unease he now feels about our relationship to the natural world. It's important to note, however, that:

> publication of *Fracking & Hawk* is intended to help a specific cause. After discussions with the principal of Mackenzie College, Fairlie, a Creative Writing prize has been set up at the College. Pat and Catherine have provided a trophy, and guaranteed the prize money for the next five years … The sale of *Fracking & Hawk* will assist them with funding the award, and you can help by buying the book.
> [https://waitingroompoems.wordpress.com/2015/08/17/fracking-hawk/]

This is, I think, a very worthwhile project, and I urge all of you to contribute to this award by buying Pat's excellent book. It won't disappoint you in any way.

Contributor Notes:

- **James Ackhurst** writes: "I am an army brat who grew up in Canada, England, Germany, and Italy. I recently moved to New Zealand from California to teach classics and to continue my research into what modern democracies can learn from ancient ones."
- **Gary Allen** has published thirteen collections. A new collection, *Jackson's Corner*, will be published later this year by Greenwich Exchange Publishing, London.
- **John Allison** currently lives in Melbourne but is contemplating a return to NZ in 2016. He has had poetry published in numerous magazines and journals, including being the featured poet in *Poetry NZ* 14. His fourth and most recent book of poetry, *Balance* (Five Islands Press, Melbourne), was published in 2006. He has also had a book published on poetics and imagination (*A Way of Seeing*, Lindisfarne Books 2003, Great Barrington, MA, United States).
- **Bill Angus** teaches literature at Massey for a vocation, performs original music for humans, and writes intermittent poetry for the love of it. Various outcomes are expected.
- **Ruth Arnison** currently works as the admin person for a research project at the University of Otago. Her poems have been published in literary journals, anthologies, and ezines in NZ, Australia, the UK & US. She is the editor of *Poems in the Waiting Room (NZ)* and the co-ordinator of *Lilliput Libraries*: https://lilliputlibraries.wordpress.com/.
- **Nick Ascroft** is a poet, author, publisher and editor who has returned at last to the green comfort of New Zealand. He has published two collections of poetry through Victoria University Press, was Burns Fellow in 2003, and has a book on five-a-side soccer due out from Bloomsbury in 2016.
- **Sandra Bell** is a poet and singer/songwriter. She has had two books of poems published – by Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop and Kilmog Press. She has 4 albums out, "Dreams of Falling" was on legendary Dunedin label Xpressway, and will be released in Italy on tape this year and in USA on vinyl next year. She has also played in USA and Germany, where she resided for a number of years.
- **Tony Beyer**'s recent work has appeared in *Landfall*, *Otoliths* and *Takahe*. He retired briefly at the beginning of 2015, but has returned to teaching in New Plymouth.

- **Jane Blaikie** lives in Wellington and writes poetry, short fiction and the occasional essay.
- **Joy Blair** has been published variously, both here and overseas. She credits her interest in poetry with geography (a rural Central Otago childhood) and genetics (a Great-Aunt was a published late 19th century poet).
- **Peter Bland** is the author of more than twenty books of poems. His *Collected Poems 1956-2011* appeared in 2013 from Steele Roberts. A memoir, *Sorry, I'm a Stranger Here Myself.*, was published by Vintage in 2004.
- **Liz Breslin** writes poems, plays and a regular column, "Thinking Allowed," for the *Otago Daily Times*. Her poems have appeared in *Bravado*, *Landfall*, *Takahe*, the *ODT* and *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook* 1. She was second runner up in the 2014 New Zealand National Poetry Slam. Her website is www.lizbreslin.com.
- **Iain Britton** was born and educated in Palmerston North, New Zealand. He now teaches Maori Studies at an independent boys school in Auckland. Besides poems published internationally, work has been published recently by such NZ literary journals as *Landfall, PotRoast, brief, Poetry NZ* and *Broadsheet*. New poems are to appear in *Takahe*. Since 2008, I've had five collections of poems published: A new collection – *photosynthesis* – was published by Kilmog Press last year.
- **Jennifer Compton** was born in Wellington and now lives in Melbourne. Her verse novella *Mr Clean & The Junkie* came out earlier this year from Makaro Press.
- **Ruth Corkill** is studying towards her Masters in Physics at Victoria University in Wellington, working on computer models and analysis for a geomagnetism research team. She recently spent three months studying poetry and fiction at The Iowa Writers Workshop Summer Graduate Program and has a minor in Creative Writing from the International Institute of Modern Letters in Wellington.
- **Sue Cowan** is the author of the chapbook *Quake*, from which the poem included in this issue has been taken. She lives in Tawa.
- **Mary Cresswell** is from Los Angeles and lives on the Kapiti Coast. Her work has appeared in a variety of journals in NZ, the US, and elsewhere. *Fish Stories* (based on experiments with ghazals and

glosas), published by Canterbury University Press in May 2015, and reviewed in this issue of *PNZ*, is her fourth book.

- **Jeni Curtis** is a teacher and writer from Christchurch, New Zealand. She has a keen interest in Victorian literature and history. She is a member of the Christchurch branch of the International Dickens Fellowship, and editor of their magazine, *Dickens Down Under*. She has published in various publications including the Christchurch *Press, Takahe, JAAM*, the *Quick Brown Dog*, NZPS anthologies 2014 and 2015, *The London Grip*, and *4th Floor*. She is secretary of the Canterbury Poets' Collective.
- **Jonathan Cweorth** is a poet and playwright who lives in Dunedin. He regularly produces puppet theatre pieces and plays recorders in an early music consort.
- **Hamish Dewe** edited *brief* 43 in 2011. He was, back in the day, an editor of *Salt* (the Auckland one).
- **Belinda Diepenheim** lives in the small village of Ashhurst. She is a graduate of Victoria University's Iowa 2011 workshop. Belinda won the 2013 Kathleen Grattan Prize for a Sequence of Poems, run by International Writers' Workshop NZ, and the 2014 *Poems in the Waiting Room* competition. She has had poems published in *Landfall*, *Takahe*, past editions of *PNZ*, and various magazines and ezines.
- **Eric Dodson** is a Tauranga Poet whose poems have appeared in *Takahe, JAAM, Poetry NZ*, and *Kokako*. he likes working in and around the set forms and tries to add humour into his poetry.
- **J. T. Drazin** is a retired school teacher and has published children's books with Hamish Hamilton and Oxford University Press: She writes: "I am an unlikely poet, being elderly. I took up writing poetry when my husband died as a sort of grief therapy and have had some success in competitions. My husband was a professor of mathematics and I was practically innumerate so we complemented each other and were very happy. I have two adult children and lovely twin grandchildren. In spite of the Polish sounding name I was born in Cornwall and am Celtic."
- **Doc Drumheller** was born in Charleston, South Carolina and has lived in New Zealand for more than half his life. He has worked in award winning groups for theatre and music and has published ten collections of poetry. His poems have been translated into more than twenty languages, and he has performed in Cuba, Lithuania, Italy,

Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Japan, India, USA, Nicaragua, and widely throughout NZ. He lives in Oxford, where he edits and publishes the literary journal *Catalyst* and teaches creative writing at the School for Young Writers.

- **David Eggleton** is a poet, writer and editor. His most recent collection of poetry is *The Conch Trumpet* (Otago University Press, 2015).
- **Rachael Elliott** has an MA in creative writing from the University of Waikato. Last year she was Editor of *Nexus Magazine* (which received three Aotearoa Student Press Association awards) and she won the 2degrees Poetry Slam. Her work has appeared in previous issues of *Poetry NZ, Mayhem, 4th Floor and JAAM.* Rachael is also a weekly columnist for *Nexus* and on *Mayhem*'s editorial board. She lives in Raglan.
- **Johanna Emeney** recently gained her doctorate in New Zealand poetry on a medical theme. She works for the Michael King Writers' Centre, delivering the Young Writers' Programme with Rosalind Ali.
- **Michael Farrell** lives in Melbourne. Recent publications include *Cocky's Joy* (Giramondo), *Long Dull Poem* (Stale Objects) and *Writing Australian Unsettlement: Modes of Poetic Invention 1796-1945* (Palgrave Macmillan). He is also the coeditor of *Out of the Box: Contemporary Australian Gay and Lesbian Poets* (Puncher and Wattmann).
- **Sue Fitchett** – Conservationist & Waiheke Islander. Co-author or editor of several poetry books. Authored *Palaver lava queen* (AUP: 2004) and *On the Wing* (Steele Roberts: 2014). Work has appeared in various publications in New Zealand & Australia & art shows.
- **Anna Forsyth** is a poet and singer songwriter (Grace Pageant) from Auckland, currently residing in Melbourne. Her writings have appeared in *Landfall*, *Cordite*, *FourW*, *Blackmail Press* and *Enamel*, among other publications. Her first collection, *A Tender Moment Between Strangers*, was released in 2013. She is currently working on a radio play and a short film.
- **Kim Fulton** writes: "My poetry and short fiction has appeared in *Takahe*, *Hue & Cry* and *JAAM*. I work as a reporter in Auckland and studied English and ecology at Massey University."
- **Rhian Gallagher**'s first poetry collection, *Salt Water Creek* (Enitharmon Press, London, 2003) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for First Collection. Gallagher received the Janet Frame Literary

Trust Award in 2008; her second collection, *Shift* (Auckland University Press, 2011; Enitharmon Press, 2012) won the New Zealand Post Book Award for Poetry in 2012. Gallagher is also the author of a non-fiction book, *Feeling for Daylight: The Photographs of Jack Adamson* (South Canterbury Museum, 2010).

- **John Geraets** was born and educated in Auckland, where he gained a Ph.D. in English in 1982. From 2000 through 2002 he served as editor of *brief*, a quarterly magazine of innovative writing produced by The Writers Group.
- **Susan Green** is a psychotherapist, writer and gardener. She lives in West Auckland and has previously been published in *Poetry New Zealand*.
- **Matthew Harris** has a PhD in English from Massey University, and works as a Senior Tutor in the School of English and Media Studies. He is a writer of poems, fictions and short films: *43000 Feet* (2012), *Snooze Time* (2014), and *Madam Black* (2015), have travelled the international film festival circuit from Rhode Island and Tribeca in the US to Clermont-Ferrand festival in France, accruing various awards.
- **Siobhan Harvey** is the author of 2013 Kathleen Grattan Award winning poetry collection, *Cloudboy* (Otago University Press, 2014) and, as co-editor, *Essential New Zealand Poems* (Penguin Random House NZ, 2014). She's shortlisted for the 2015 Janet Frame Memorial Award, won New Zealand's richest prize for poetry, 2013 Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry, and was runner-up in 2014 New Zealand Poetry Society International Poetry Competition, 2012 Dorothy Porter Poetry Prize (Aus), 2012 Kevin Ireland Poetry Competition and 2011 Landfall Essay Prize, as well as being nominated for the Pushcart Prize (US). The Poetry Archive (UK) holds a 'Poet's Page' devoted to her work.
- **Felicity Heaven** writes: "Thank you for reading my work, I am Felicity. For many years I have been writing poetry in my own time; taking my feelings and writing them down. Observing my surroundings and being in the moment has led me to this very moment. With much happiness I present you 'My Love'."
- Originally from Dunedin, **Sue Heggie** taught English in Christchurch for many years eventually moving to Auckland where she worked in the school partnerships area with universities. Sue is now semi-retired and spends her time blogging, reading and writing.

- **Alice Hooton**'s first book of poetry, *Shamfeign*, was published by Brightspark Books in 2011. She lives in Mairangi Bay, and is involved in the eternal struggle between family and finding time to write.
- **Gail Ingram** writes poetry and short stories, which have appeared in *takahe, Fineline, Poetry NZ, Cordite Poetry Review* and *Flash Frontier* among others. She has been placed in various competitions, including the 2013 *takahe* Short Story and *BNZ Literary Award* Flash Fiction competitions. She is the immediate past president of the South Island Writers Association and is currently doing her MCW at Massey University.
- **Sophia Johnson** grew up on Waiheke Island. She published her first poem "moonlight sonata" at age 12 and has contributed regularly to literary magazines ever since. Her favourite poets are Pablo Neruda and William Blake.
- **Leonard Lambert**'s most recent collection is *Remnants* (Steele Roberts, 2013), and he is working towards a *Selected Poems* with the same publisher. Lives and works in Napier.
- **Jon Lepp** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in the Language and Literature Honours program at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada: "I find it necessary to relay to you my self-awareness of being a tourist and stranger in New Zealand. My poetry comes to you in the perspective of a Canadian, a tourist, a cyclist, a busker, a woodsman, a vegetarian and an environmentalist."
- **Simon Lewis** is a former Government clerk, who was published in *Poetry NZ* 48 and *Poetry NZ Yearbook* 1 (no. 49).
- **Bronwyn Lloyd** completed a PhD in English at the University of Auckland in 2010. Her first collection of short stories, *The Second Location*, was published by Titus Books in 2011. Bronwyn teaches Academic and Creative Writing at the School of English and Media Studies at Massey University in Auckland, and works as a freelance art writer and curator. In 2006 she co-founded Pania Press, a bijou publishing company specialising in New Zealand art and literary texts.
- **Olivia Macassey**'s poems have appeared in publications which include *Brief*, *Poetry NZ*, *Blackmail Press* and *Landfall*. Her second collection of poetry, *The Burnt Hotel*, has recently been released by Titus. She currently lives in Northland.
- **Carolyn McCurdie** is a Dunedin writer. Her poetry has been published widely in NZ, including previously in Poetry NZ. Her first

collection of poetry, *Bones in the Octagon* was published in April by Makaro Press, as part of the 2015 Hoopla series.

- **Andrew McIntyre** lives with his partner and two sons in Havelock North. He works in the orchard industry, and is currently working on a book of poetry he hopes to have published by the end of 2015.
- **Dawn McMillan** lives north of Thames, on the Coromandel west coast. While she enjoys her success with writing for children, she considers poetry to be the most powerful tool in making sense of her life.
- **Mary Macpherson** is a Wellington poet and photographer. Her work has appeared in many New Zealand and Australian print and online journals. www.marymacphoto.wordpress.com.
- **Vana Manasiadis** is a Wellington-born poet who has returned to live in Auckland after eight years in Greece. Her writing has appeared in numerous literary journals, and poetry from her first collection, *Ithaca Island Bay Leaves*, was included in *Essential New Zealand Poems*, and in *99 Ways into New Zealand Poetry*. She has an MA in writing from Victoria University; and she is co-editor of the Seraph Press poetry-in-translation series to be launched next year, and translating for the Greek-English edition.
- **Owen Marshall** is a writer of fiction and poetry. His poetry has appeared in such magazines as *Landfall*, *Sport*, *Listener*, *Takahe*, *JAAM* and *New Zealand Books*, and in anthologies edited by such as Bill Manhire and Paula Green. Collections of his poems have been published by Hazard Press, CUP and OUP.
- **Margaret Moores** was a bookseller for many years but now works as a publisher's sales representative. She is studying toward a Master of Creative Writing through Massey. University. Her poems have been published in *Shotglass Journal*, *blackmail press* and in *Poetry New Zealand Year Book* 1.
- **Martha Morseth** is a Dunedin writer whose poems have been published widely in literary and other magazines. She has had two collections published: *Staying Inside the Lines* (2002) and *There's a hippopotamus in the room* (2012). Her most recently published poems have been in the *Listener* (March, 2012) and *Landfall* (2013).
- **Elizabeth Morton** is a writer and dabbler student from Auckland. She has been published in *Poetry NZ*, *Takahe* Magazine, *JAAM*, *Blackmail Press*, *Meniscus*, and *Shot Glass* Journal.

- **Janet Newman** is studying towards a Master of Creative Writing at Massey University. Her essay "LIstening Harder: Reticulating Poetic Tradition in Michele Leggott's 'Blue Irises'" won the 2014 *Journal of New Zealand Literature* Prize for New Zealand Literary Studies.
- Auckland-based writer **Heidi North-Bailey** has won an international award for her poetry (Irish Feile Filiochta International Poetry Competition in 2007), and also awards for her short stories and essays. She recently completed an international distance learning writing programme at the University of Iowa. Her debut poetry collection *Possibility of Flight* will be published by Makaro Press in November. When not being kept busy with her one-year-old, she squirrels away time to write.
- **Keith Nunes** (Tauranga) was a newspaper sub-editor for more than 20 years but he now writes to stay sane. He's been published around NZ (*Landfall, Takahe, Trout, brief, Poetry NZ, Catalyst*) and increasingly in the UK and US, was highly commended in the 2014 NZ Poetry Society international poetry competition and is a Pushcart Prize nominee. He lives with artist Talulah Belle and a coterie of nutters.
- **Stephen Oliver** is the author of 17 volumes of poetry. Travelled extensively. Signed on with the radio ship *The Voice of Peace* broadcasting in the Mediterranean out of Jaffa, Israel. Free-lanced in Australia/New Zealand as *production voice, narrator, newsreader, radio producer, columnist, copy and feature writer, etc.* Lived in Australia for the last two decades. Currently living in NZ. His latest volume, *Intercolonial,* a book length narrative poem, begun in Sydney in the mid-90s and finally completed in NZ. Published by Puriri Press, Auckland, NZ (2013). The poem is as much about Australia as it is New Zealand. A *transtasman* epic.
- **Alistair Paterson,** ONZM, is a long term poet, editor, essayist, anthologist, critic, one-time novelist and occasional fiction writer. He has edited *Mate, Climate* and *Poetry NZ* for a total of 31 years, was co-winner of Auckland University's John Cowie Memorial Award for Longer poems, has won the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award, been shortlisted for and won several other awards and was recently included in the six shortlisted poets for The NZ Heritage Awards and Writing Competition. He has toured the USA and visited the UK several times promoting NZ poetry, is a former Fulbright Fellow and known internationally for his literary work.

- **Milorad Pejić** was born in Tuzla, Bosnia, in 1960. Since 1992 he has lived in Sweden. His books of poems include *The Vase for the Lily Plant* (1985); *The Eyes of Keyholes* (2001; 2012); and *Hyperborea* (2011; 2013), for which he received the "Slovo Makovo-Mak Dizdar" Prize in Bosnia in 2012. His translator, **Omer Hadžiselimović**, formerly a professor at the University of Sarajevo, is now an Adjunct Professor of English at Loyola University Chicago. He has published works in American Studies, English literature, and travel writing. In recent years he has been translating poetry from Bosnian into English and from English into Bosnian.
- **Sarah Penwarden** lives in Auckland and works as a counsellor educator. She has had poems published in *Poetry New Zealand* and *Meniscus* (AUS), short stories and poems for children published in *The School Journal*, and both poems and short stories published in *Takahe*.
- **Mark Pirie** is a widely published New Zealand poet, editor, publisher and archivist for *PANZA* (Poetry Archive of NZ Aotearoa). Recently his poetry was published in the *Cricket Society News Bulletin* (UK) and the *100 Years From Gallipoli* project and *Otoliths* (blog magazine), in Australia.
- **Kerry Popplewell** lives in Wellington. Her first collection, *Leaving the Tableland*, was published by Steele Roberts in 2010.
- **Joanna Preston** is a Tasmanaut poet, editor and freelance creative writing tutor. Her first collection, *The Summer King (OUP, 2009)*, won both the 2008 Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry and the 2010 Mary Gilmore Prize. Her poems have been published widely, most recently in *JAAM, Best New Zealand Poems 2014,* and *Landfall.* She is the poetry editor for *takahē* magazine.
- **Vaughan Rapatahana** is a New Zealand Māori who is a long-term resident of Hong Kong with homes also in Philippines and Aotearoa-New Zealand. He has been widely published internationally across several genre, including fiction, language critique, poetry , philosophy and was both a semi-finalist in the inaugural Proverse Prize for Literature and highly placed in the 2013 *erbacce* poetry prize. *Atonement* is his fourth collection of poems.
- **Nicholas Reid** is an Auckland historian, critic and poet who four times guest-edited *Poetry New Zealand* in its older format. His poetry collection *The Little Enemy* was published by Steele-Roberts in 2011. His second collection is currently with the publishers.

- **Dikra Ridha** is a poet, writer and literary translator. A collection of her poems entitled: *There are no Americans in Baghdad's Bird Market* was published by Tall-lighthouse, 2009. She has an MA from Bath Spa University and is working on her forthcoming collection: *Exiled Flowers.*
- **David Romanda** lives in Kawasaki City, Japan. His work has appeared in *Ambit Magazine*, *The Frogmore Papers*, and *Poetry New Zealand*.
- **Brittany Rose** hated poetry up until the age of 22. Then she spent a year avoiding all other assignments to complete weekly submissions of poetry and prose for creative writing papers at the University of Waikato. She now finds it difficult to find time to write anything personal, although she does contribute to *Nexus* as the Deputy Editor. Brittany Rose has had 'Four AM' and 'Strip' published in Issue Two of *Mayhem* (UoW's online literary journal).
- **Jack Ross** is the managing editor of *Poetry NZ*. He works as a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Massey University's Auckland Campus. His latest book *A Clearer View of the Hinterland: Poems & Sequences 1981-2014*, appeared in late 2014 from HeadworX in Wellington.. More details of this – and other publications – are available on his blog *The Imaginary Museum* (http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/).
- **Dagmara Rudolph** was born in Auckland 12 years ago. She loves books, dolphins, and believes we should all petition to ban unsustainable palm oil. This poem was one of many written as a school assignment at Birkdale Intermediate School.
- **Ken Ruffell** writes: "I was born in 1960. I live in Nelson by the sea. I have had stories published in local anhtologies, and in 2008 won a 'miniature story competition' held by the Nelson library."
- **Nurul Shamsul** writes: "I am a Malaysian and Indonesian by blood but a kiwi at heart. Ever since I was five, I've been living in New Zealand but kept dearly to me are my traditions and my faith. Now at seventeen, poetry has become an important part of my life as I can't get through the day without reading or writing poetry. So far, I have been published in *Blackmail Press*. 'Let the beauty of what you love be what you do.' – Rumi."
- **Kerrin P. Sharpe**'s first book *three days in a wishing well* was published by Victoria University Press in 2012. A group of her poems also appeared in 2013 in the UK publication *Oxford Poets 13* (Carcanet). A second book *there's a medical name for this* was published by Victoria University Press in 2014. She has just completed

her third collection of poems, *rabbit rabbit* with the assistance of a Creative New Zealand grant and this collection will also be published by Victoria University Press.

- **Emma Shi** writes: "I was the winner of the National Schools Poetry Award 2013 and am currently studying at Victoria University of Wellington."
- **Jaspreet Singh** is the author of *Chef* and *Helium*, both novels published by Bloomsbury. He lives in Canada.
- **Elizabeth Smither**'s latest publications are *The Blue Coat* (Auckland University Press, 2013) and *Ruby Duby Du* (Cold Hub Press, 2014). She is judge of the University of Canberra's Vice-Chancellor's poetry prize for 2015.
- **Kenneth Steven** writes: "My 13th collection of work is due to appear here in Scotland later this summer. I've a new novel appearing from a London house at the beginning of next year."
- **Michael Steven** is happy to be living near Grey Lynn park again.
- **Marc Swan** lives in Portland, Maine. His third collection, *Simple Distraction*, selected poems from 1989 to 2009, was published by tall-lighthouse, London , England. Poems out this year in *Poet Lore*, *Chiron Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Ottawa Arts Review*, and *Straylight*, amng others.
- **Richard Taylor** is an Aucklander published in various including some previous *PNZs*. Has 2 main books *RED* (Dead Poets), and *Conversation With a Stone* (Titus). It is said of Taylor that his mind is like an enormous ice-cream.
- **Vivienne Ullrich** has been distracted from writing by a legal career but is now breaking free and coming out as a poet. She has previously been published by *Takahe* and *Poetry New Zealand*.
- **Richard von Sturmer** was born on Auckland's North Shore. His latest collection of poetry, *Book of Equanimity Verses,* was published by Puriri Press in 2013. He is currently the songwriter for The Floral Clocks, and his film work can be viewed at CIRCUIT, http://www.circuit.org.nz/, a website featuring New Zealand film and video.
- **Jen Webb** is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. Her work includes the poetry collection, *Proverbs from Sierra Leone* (2004, Five Islands Press) and the short story collection, *Ways of Getting By* (2006, Ginninderra Press). The two poems

included in this issue have also appeared in the chapbook *Stolen Stories, Borrowed Lines* (Castlemaine: Mark Time Press, 2015).

- **Sue Wootton** lives in Dunedin. Her work includes three collections of poetry (*Hourglass, Magnetic South* and *By Birdlight*), a children's book called *Cloudcatcher,* and a short story collection called *The Happiest Music on Earth* (Rosa Mira Press 2012). Her most recent publication is *Out of Shape,* a letterpress portfolio of poems hand set and printed by Canberra letterpress artist Caren Florance (Ampersand Duck, 2013). Her website is suewootton.com.
- **Karen Zelas** is a Christchurch writer and former psychiatrist. Her poetry and short fiction have been published and anthologised in New Zealand and Australia, most recently in *Essential New Zealand Poems* (Random House, 2014) and *reclaiming the sky* (NZ Poetry Society, 2014). She was shortlisted in the Kathleen Grattan Award 2013, won the Poems4Peace competition (Printable Reality) in 2014 and was HC in the 2015 Caselberg Award. Her first book of poetry, *Night's Glass Table*, was selected as the 2012 IP Picks Best First Book by Interactive Publications, Brisbane, who also republished her novel *Past Perfect* (Wily, 2010). Karen is fiction editor of *takahē*. www.KarenZelas.com.

POETRY NZ, New Zealand's longest-running poetry magazine, showcases new writing from this country and overseas. It presents the work of talented newcomers and developing writers as well as that of established leaders in the field. This issue features the poetry of Robert Sullivan, of Māori (Ngā Puhi – Ngāti Manu/Ngāti Hau – & Kāi Tahu) and Galway Irish descent. He is the Head of the School of Creative Writing at Manukau Institute of Technology in South Auckland, and has published seven poetry collections to date.

Essays:

John Geraets:	*Retrospective: briefly, briefly …*
Janet Newman:	*Prose Poetry: A Series of Abandonments*
Alistair Paterson:	*Poetry, Science and the Real*

Reviews:

Mary Cresswell, Hamish Dewe, Rachael Elliott, Johanna Emeney, Matthew Harris, Bronwyn Lloyd, Elizabeth Morton, Jack Ross & Richard Taylor

Books and magazines in brief:

Jack Ross

MASSEY UNIVERSITY:
School of English and Media Studies
Albany Campus, Auckland, New Zealand

Issue #50
Featuring the poetry
of Robert Sullivan
Edited by Jack Ross

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