

Poetry
New Zealand

[Issue #49]

(October 2014)

Yearbook 1

Featuring the poetry of Lisa Samuels

Edited by Jack Ross

Poetry New Zealand
Yearbook 1

[Issue #49]

(October 2014)

Poetry NZ Yearbook 1

[Issue #49]

(November 2014)

One issue per year

Managing Editor: Jack Ross
editor@poetrynz.net

Administrator: Bronwyn Lloyd
subscriptions@poetrynz.net

Advisory Board:

Thom Conroy	Jen Crawford
John Denny	Ingrid Horrocks
David Howard	Alistair Paterson
Tracey Slaughter	Bryan Walpert

website: <http://www.poetrynz.net>

blogsite: <http://poetrynzblog.blogspot.co.nz/>

archive: <http://poetrynz.blogspot.co.nz/>

Submissions: Submit at any time *either* (preferably) to the email address above, with your poems pasted in the body of the email or included as a MSWord file attachment; *or* by post, to the address below, with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and an email address or phone number included in your covering letter. **NB:** The closing date for each annual issue is 31 July of the year in question.

Subscriptions: You can subscribe electronically at any time, either at the web address listed above, or by sending a cheque to the following address:

Dr Jack Ross
Poetry NZ
School of English and Media Studies
Massey University, Albany Campus
Pvt Bag 102 904
North Shore Mail Centre
Auckland 0745, NZ

Subscription rates:	<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>Overseas</i>
One year (1 issue)	\$NZ 30.00	\$NZ 45.00
Two years (2 issues)	\$NZ 55.00	\$NZ 80.00
Libraries (1 year)	\$NZ 45.00	\$NZ 60.00
Libraries (2 years)	\$NZ 80.00	\$NZ 90.00

Poetry New Zealand Yearbook 1

[Issue #49]

(October 2014)

Edited by
Jack Ross

Featuring the poetry of
Lisa Samuels

with essays by
Jake Arthur & Scott Hamilton

& reviews by
Hamish Dewe & Jack Ross

Auckland:
School of English & Media Studies
Massey University, 2014

ISSN 0114-5770

Copyright © 2014 Poetry NZ

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the written permission of the publisher.

Managing editor: Jack Ross

Cover design: Ellen Portch & Brett Cross

Cover image: © Renee Bevan:

“Stream of thoughts, a whole year’s work” (2012)
[photograph by Caryline Boreham]

Website: Warren Olds

<http://www.poetrynz.net/>

Typeset in Constantia 14 pt type.
Printed and bound at The Printery,
Massey University,
Private Bag 11222,
Palmerston North

Contents

- 7 *Jack Ross* Editorial:
From Dagmara to Lisa

FEATURED POET

- 12 *Lisa Samuels* *from In Violet Meridian*
13 – Judy Garland in Cuba
16 – A body of received ideas
19 – Concrete poem
20 – Dislocalation
22 – The judge of happiness
28 – Flesh map
29 – Cartesian rhapsody
31 – The golden shovel
34 – Gesamtkunstwerk
36 – A biography of Adventure
38 – Ode: in the body of the message
41 *Jack Ross* An Interview with Lisa Samuels

OTHER POETS

- 49 *Ai Hao* Coffin
50 – Festival
51 *Gary Allen* The kiss
53 – The humpbacked horse
54 *Jim Arkell* I dreamt after being diagnosed with COPD
55 *Anita Arlov* Bringing Him Home
56 *Ros Armstrong* Whitewashed Summer
57 *Ruth Arnison* Partylines
60 *Terri Ashton* Friday nights, Christchurch 1968
61 *Ardyn Baia* Pt England Bay
62 *Troy Banyan* So be it
63 *Robert James Berry* Horses
64 *Tony Beyer* Li Bai
67 *Eden Bradfield* we had coffee at pete's coffee ...
68 *Liz Breslin* old dog down
69 *Iain Britton* dolphin country / the red balloon
70 *Owen Bullock* line

71	<i>Chris Cantillon</i>	Lancasters
72	<i>Liam Campbell</i>	That Night we Drew Whiskers ...
73	<i>Lyall Clarke</i>	generation gap
74	<i>David R. Cravens</i>	Milgram
76	<i>Mary Cresswell</i>	Timberline
77	<i>Kieran Doody</i>	Black Feathers
78	<i>Glenys Doull</i>	Singapore
79	<i>Eugene Dubnov</i>	Warming Your Hands
80	<i>Rachael Elliott</i>	Breaking and Entering
82	<i>Jan FitzGerald</i>	Ticket 250654 RMS Titanic
83	<i>Rata Gordon</i>	Do You Know What To Do With A Wall?
85	<i>Terry Greatrex</i>	Philosophy – between words and worlds
86	<i>Susan Green</i>	Baby
87	<i>Charles Hadfield</i>	“untitled”
89	<i>Elsbeth Hill</i>	Booster
90	<i>Alice Hooton</i>	Max and Lola
91	<i>Jan Hutchison</i>	the proverb tree
92	<i>Hayden Hyams</i>	The Evening Of The Day Before ...
93	<i>Anna Jackson</i>	Thank you for having me, briefly ...
94	–	The girl in brown has something to say
95	<i>Ted Jenner</i>	Two Hokianga Poems
96	<i>Annaleese Jochems</i>	The Murderer
97	<i>Sophia Johnson</i>	Somewhere in the city
98	<i>John Kambolis</i>	Nothing Changed
99	–	Submission
100	<i>Noel King</i>	22 7 1976
101	<i>Joanne Kingston</i>	Some Hero
102	<i>Leonard Lambert</i>	Waltz of the Flowers
103	<i>Deirdre Lavery</i>	Songs from the Mekong
104	<i>Michele Leggott</i>	Pisces Standing on a Chair
114	<i>Christine Leunens</i>	status
116	<i>Simon Lewis</i>	Book Person
117	<i>Thérèse Lloyd</i>	Part of an Urban Abstraction
118	–	On Metaphysical Insight
119	<i>Richie McCaffery</i>	Cupola
120	<i>Theressa Malone</i>	Red Headed Girl ...
121	<i>Reade Moore</i>	Mother
122	<i>Margaret Moores</i>	Six days in Nelson and Canterbury

123	<i>Elizabeth Morton</i>	UFO
124	–	Night on the Ward
125	<i>Jan Napier</i>	Nullabor Time
126	<i>Emma Neale</i>	Soon, Moon
128	<i>Janet Newman</i>	rua
129	<i>Piet Nieuwland</i>	Kauri Mountain, Kiwi Coast, Ngati Korora
130	<i>Keith Nunes</i>	remembering dinner at dinner
131	–	fashion show
132	<i>Jessamine O Connor</i>	Ten So Far This Morning
134	<i>John O'Connor</i>	Kinaxixi (after Agostinho Neto)
135	–	Dead of Night (after Manuel Bandeira)
136	<i>Tru Paraha</i>	Postcard from Israel
137	<i>Chris Parsons</i>	Revelations
139	<i>Sarah Penwarden</i>	Titirangi pantoum
140	<i>Kerry Popplewell</i>	Last Night
141	<i>Jenny Powell</i>	An Invitation to Magic in the Long Grass
142	<i>Joanna Preston</i>	Silks
143	–	Promenade
144	<i>Vaughan Rapatahana</i>	growing up in godzone
146	<i>Nicholas Reid</i>	Copperplate
148	<i>Jeremy Roberts</i>	Death of a Poet
149	<i>David Romanda</i>	Compulsion
151	–	My Girl
152	<i>John C Ross</i>	Imagining Thomas Jefferson's daughter
154	<i>Joshua Roy-Anstey</i>	Cat-Fish-Rat
155	<i>Dagmara Rudolph</i>	Life is Unfair
157	<i>Anna Rugis</i>	The Feel of my Life
158	<i>Genevieve Scanlan</i>	Cross-Purposes
159	<i>Kerrin P Sharpe</i>	a language goes silent
160	<i>Fred Simpson</i>	Hymn 131: 'marching as to war'
161	<i>Tracey Slaughter</i>	from Me & Karen Carpenter
163	<i>Laura Solomon</i>	Joan of Arc Sends a Postcard Home
164	<i>John Tangney</i>	Rugby Union
165	<i>Richard Taylor</i>	"It was an itsy bitsy teenie weenie ..."
167	<i>Loren Thomas</i>	Sea Floor
169	<i>Edwin Thumboo</i>	Leaf
170	<i>Mike Tolhurst</i>	My Great Grandfather times three ...
172	<i>Jamie Trower</i>	a love letter to disability

173	<i>Richard von Sturmer</i>	Palaeolithic Excavations ...
174	<i>Kirsten Warner</i>	Billy last night at Muriwai Beach
175	–	Like driving a table
177	<i>Wei Sun</i>	OCD and Conversations with Cat
179	<i>Elizabeth Welsh</i>	How to pay for woodblock lessons
180	<i>Gabriel White</i>	<i>from</i> Aucklantis
182	<i>Pat White</i>	Leaving Ireland
184	<i>Diane Wilson</i>	Fault Lines
187	<i>Landa wo</i>	Ignorance
188	–	Ignorance
189	–	Ignorância
190	<i>Mark Young</i>	A line from Barry Gibb
191	–	Resplendance

COMMENTS

192	<i>Jake Arthur</i>	Poetic Voice and Poetic Personality in the work of Jenny Bornholdt
204	<i>Scott Hamilton</i>	Jumping in the drink: Notes on the Tongan poems of Edmond & von Sturmer

REVIEWS

217	<i>Hamish Dewe</i>	An Introduction to the <i>Millerton Sequences</i>
-----	--------------------	---

BOOKS & MAGAZINES IN BRIEF

224	<i>Jack Ross</i>	
238	Contributor Notes	

Jack Ross

Editorial: From Dagmara to Lisa

Sitting on a park bench is a form of publishing

So says Lisa Samuels in her poem “A Bird in a Plane.”

Exactly what she means by that is another question. I suppose, in a sense, that sitting out in the sun is as good a way as any of making yourself publicly available, conspicuous, which is after all the basic meaning of “publication.”

“Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to libraries beyond the seas. Getting known.” Samuel Beckett’s bitter words in *Krapp’s Last Tape* have struck a chord with many writers, I’m sure. Publication, after all, is scarcely a value-neutral term for either professors or poets in today’s “publish or perish” Academic landscape. Lisa is both.

I knew in advance that choosing her to be the first poet featured under the new regime at *Poetry NZ* might be somewhat controversial. She is, for one thing, American – a fairly recent immigrant to these shores, though one who’s hopefully now put down roots here for good. And even some poetry connoisseurs have commented to me on the “difficulty” of her work. As if being easy were some kind of duty for writers, to be ignored at their peril!

As so many poets, local and international, have done over the past decades, I sought the wise counsel of Alistair Paterson on the matter. He is, after all, the outgoing Managing Editor of *Poetry NZ*, and can be forgiven for still feeling a proprietary interest in the journal to which he’s contributed so much time and love for so long.

“Excellent idea, Jack,” he told me. “I was intending to do it myself if I edited another issue.”

So there you go.

But why? Why Lisa Samuels? It’s not as if she needs the exposure. She’s already very well thought of in her twin communities of experimental post-Language American poetry, and the Academic teaching of literature and creative writing. No, it’s not that she needs it – it’s that we do.

I said in my review of her book *Wild Dialectics* (2012):

The best analogy I can come up with for what Samuels does with language is what Charlie Parker and the other prophets of Bebop did with the preset idioms of Jazz. They got inside the phrases, turned them over, referenced and looped around them, and the result was a newly self-conscious, airy, tightrope-walker's music. [brief 50 (2014): 152-53].

That description may or may not give an accurate idea of the surface appearance of a Lisa Samuels poem, but it certainly leaves to one side the whole question of just *why* she writes in this way.

That, of course, is where we get into larger questions of what poetry – and poetics – are actually for: the transference of *content*, or the interrogation of *mode*? The idea that *how* we communicate is at least as important as *what* we communicate is a truism in the post-McLuhan world. It's actually quite hard to guess what a poetry entirely uninterested in the former would look like. Chopped-up prose, presumably – naïveté speaking to naïveté.

The brute discourses of power are familiar to all of us from the six o'clock news, but it's the more subtle variants of misinformation and occluded truth in every other form of contemporary language, oral or printed or streamed, which cry out so urgently to be interrogated. And that, it seems to me, is Lisa's special skill: the reason for the complex soundscapes and Babel-like confusion of her unique and idiosyncratic idiom.

One innovation in this new bumper format for *PNZ* is the space to include a reasonably lengthy interview with each featured poet. I suspect that you'll find Lisa's answers to some of these questions extremely interesting – not just as a series of suggested approaches to her poems, but as a window on her whole project, the intentions behind her multifarious encounters with language.

•

Another poet I'm especially happy to see in this first issue of *PNZ* under my editorship, and under the auspices of Massey University's School of English and Media Studies, is Dagmara Rudolph.

Dagmara wrote to us earlier this year enclosing a poem entitled “Life is Unfair.” Her covering letter included the information that she was an 11-year-old girl, and that she had her parents’ permission to send us her poem. The poem is about bullying, and tyranny, and being misunderstood. It seems to me to achieve exactly what it sets out to achieve, with minimal curlicues and poeticisms.

The moment I read it I was impatient to see it in print, in the hope (I suppose) that its publication might persuade Dagmara that the world is not always an entirely malign place, and that the best way to react to injustice is to put it on record – to do, in short, precisely what Dagmara has done. Or Lisa Samuels, for that matter. It’s no particular accident that these two poets appear to be writing about essentially the same thing.

I should emphasise that I didn’t think Dagmara’s poem was “good for an 11-year-old” or a “good start” – I thought it was a good poem. End of story. All the other poems in this journal are here for the same reason: because I thought each of them, in its own unique way, was just that: a good poem.

•

There are a number of vital acknowledgements and thanks to put on record here:

First of all, to my Creative Writing colleagues at Massey’s School of English and Media Studies, Thom Conroy, Ingrid Horrocks, and Bryan Walpert, who – together with our Head of School A/Prof Joe Grixti – have helped so much with settling *Poetry NZ* into its new institutional home. The same goes for the other members of the new *Poetry NZ* Advisory Board: Jen Crawford in Canberra, David Howard in Dunedin, and Tracey Slaughter in Hamilton.

Secondly, to Alistair Paterson and John Denny of Puriri Press, respectively managing editor and publisher of *Poetry NZ* since well before the turn of the millennium, for allowing us the opportunity to take it over earlier this year.

Thirdly, to the production team: our Administrator Bronwyn Lloyd, cover designers Ellen Portch and Brett Cross, not to mention the able assistance of Rob Roberts, Marian Thompson and their team at the Massey Printery.

Finally, to all the subscribers and contributors – most noble of all, the subscriber-contributors – who’ve kept this journal in all its multiple guises

alive for over sixty years, and look set to keep on doing so for the foreseeable future.

•

The cover image for this issue, Renee Bevan's "Stream of thoughts, a whole year's work" (2012), expertly photographed by Caryline Boreham, shows what happens when you burn a whole year's worth of your own carefully crafted journals, pulverise the ashes to dust, and then tip the results over your head.

It's an arresting notion, certainly – a kind of blaze of glory: a moment of confusion and blindness succeeded by light.

I hope you can see the analogy with the kinds of poems included here: sparks of light in an ocean of stultifying babble, laser-beams penetrating the Stygian darkness of our contemporary linguistic wasteland.

•

This first Yearbook issue of *Poetry NZ* since 1964 is dedicated to three illustrious predecessors:

Louis Johnson (Managing Editor, *NZ Poetry Yearbook*, 1951-64)

Frank McKay (Managing Editor, *Poetry New Zealand*, 1971-84)

Alistair Paterson (Managing Editor, *Poetry NZ*, 1994-2014)

– Dr Jack Ross, Massey University, 14-17 September 2014

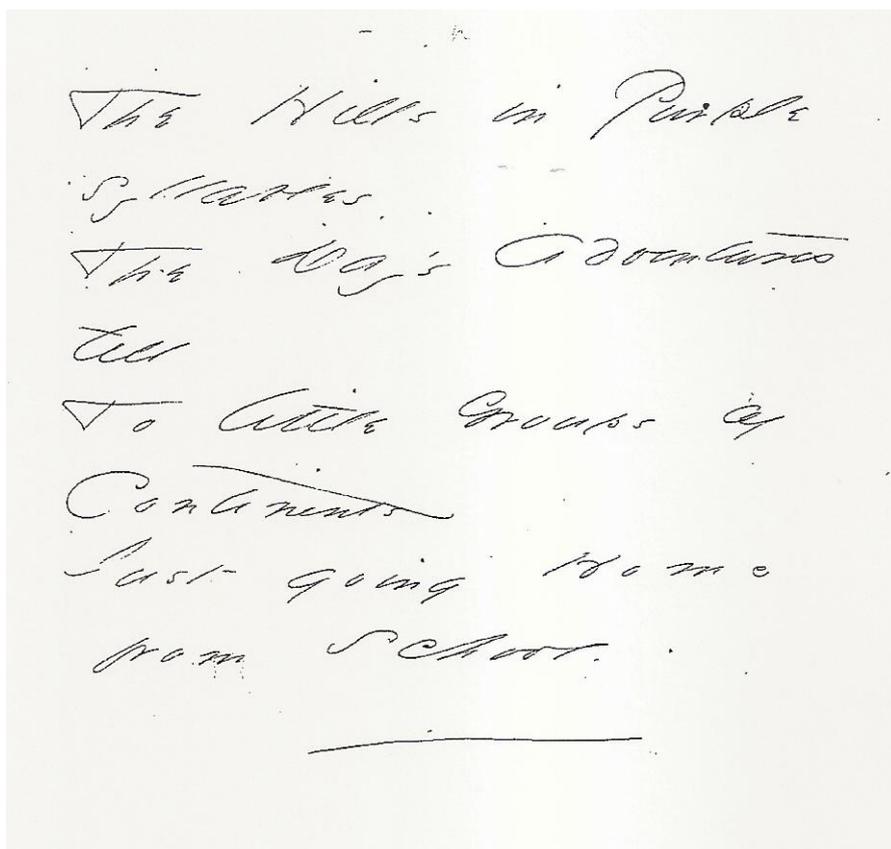
Lisa Samuels

teaches at the University of Auckland in English, Drama, & Writing Studies. Her B.A. in English is from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; she also has an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. She has published nine books to date, as well as soundwork, chapbooks, and essays on poetry, criticism, and theory. Her novel *Tender Girl* is forthcoming from US publisher Dusie Press.

Bibliography:

- *Anti M* (creative nonfiction). Tucson: Chax Press, 2013.
- *Wild Dialectics* (poetry). Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012.
- Double CD, *Tomorrowland* (voice & soundscapes). Birkenhead: Deep Surface Productions, 2012.
- *Gender City* (poetry). Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011.
- *Mama Mortality Corridos* (poetry & drawings). Auckland: Holloway Press, 2010.
- *Tomorrowland* (poetry). Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2009.
- *Throe* (poetry chapbook). Norfolk: Oystercatcher Press, 2009.
- *The Invention of Culture* (poetry). Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008.
- *Increment /a family romance* (poetry chapbook). Milwaukee: Bronze Skull Press, 2006.
- *Paradise for Everyone* (poetry). Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2005.
- *War Holdings* (poetry chapbook). Columbus: Pavement Saw Press, 2003.
- Editor. *Anarchism Is Not Enough*. By Laura Riding. An annotated critical edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- *The Seven Voices* (poetry). Oakland: O Books, 1998.
- Guest Editor. Special Issue, "Poetry and the Problem of Beauty." *Modern Language Studies* 27.2, 1997.
- *LETTERS* (poetry chapbook). Buffalo: Meow Press, 1996.

from **In Violet Meridian**

A photograph of a piece of white paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words underlined. There is a horizontal line at the bottom of the text block.

The Hills in Purple
Syllabus
The day's adventures
tell
to little groups of
Contaminants
Just going home
from school.

- Emily Dickinson

Judy Garland in Cuba

Hearing the news there's no "international" only
multo locals *there* you've left
your right arm in Germany and your re-tread
across the asphalt in *Swaroon*
where you imaged yourself "relatable" like that?

So when one mouth starts to eat you and
you wiggle your legs away you'll find the mouths
retract like sucking posts

they want to make salvia mas sumar, they'll sum you

in a retractable shoreline, your rural stamp

a kind of capital certificate of the *feminine*

for your own trabajo and the chime
conducta passenger in the general list
and cabin quedas entierro the social
kissing you like a newly suckling baby?

Particularly como al arribo in the legion
of the crib, a garrison of the house in which
you proclamaban that the shoreline meant to leave –

it's una perspectiva comparada
por el capitan de la isla, the kind who frets and
perishes upon a long imagined
journey, *much longer than the one*
you're actually living on

or how can you convey a lettered body
strung on motives? I mean las sociedades
cosmopolitas foment or you'd find
that footprint pasted in the windscreen
with a gluey sort of Permanence,

like one pressing meets another making
“right”? Emancipation as a kind of

Musico-Territoriales del Casino

where the people mix with pleasures
like a mass articulation of a Local?

Sobre todo there's a kind of immatude
holding your Large Casement Types
together, the buttons and bows

in a capital of finesse social de sus elites
you hold the stipples to make Wall Art of
the fricative sublime your mouth held up
familiar *un retrato para completar*

los costes y la precision press
down a biddable fledgling
recrossed on a cruzaron
el Atlantico –

*I follow you, I'ma going over
to do the Being There thing*
we've gathered with the mujeres
de la difusion along the corriedores of
Answering the Question

but it pains me, I have to say,
otros paises getting all plano cultural
with textile names we court
to manufacturing's sublime

it's like the tensional unit we hear
so much about, their bodies trembling
right at the juncture where it hurts?

A body of received ideas

Your stars, someone setting her cathedral passages
weighted in grams and sucking softly
a woman on a large rim trope ending formal reception
in the middle, not from genre not per se
making a pass at words

*a throat chance introduced
of white a body turned
than the text to check*

you're there, occupation co-tracks your skin
measuring arms, legs, eyes, nose, ears
large lines coming out her mouth
filling weather spools and willing
sited *per said* capital golden age

a decision held on the back
of a rapidly moving horse with iron
hooves, perimeter inlaid
 glass in the headstones
 moving light-scape target
rates un jardín de flores
y hojas precisos de cara plana
es demostrarle lo local peligro
easy to Keep Out *least til we see it*

o

It's remarkably connected with marigolds
there's a death walk huge upon the legs, trembling
the classical instrument or old south

traveling, your favorite dance stuff
on a catholic perimeter

*writing letters to the teachers
trying to want the perceived
elements of tolerance*

she was with her devil keeping her company, yet different

era como una flor
desenvolvimiento
espiritual cuando yo no había
visto nada antes

in the same way complex purple erupts
it's understandable, una mujer
con nodos vanas de obstáculos
insuperables a la felicidad
contarlos uno por uno, como the flowers
las flores artificiales en un jardín
florecente dolor, the ones
we're smelling with our brains

o

there was always a great deal to see
*I mean I get these missives
plastic military packages in
feral circles, then speed arises
from suppression or –*

We're all human now, avert
the nth government epic
with your ballot poem in here

whose gales make cuff and house
order jobs and snow cusps in
a *hi there* area, really needing to follow
the bleeding part, lying with her devil
strange love properties, moon strap
las altas hierbas suficiente para las piernas
para sentir, cast out at a variant
advertised to the rotating billboard
making social space detoured
on a hinge, como las dos mitades
de la tierra imaginada

your smart body national adventure carried back
to parsing dayview still as horizontals
a little drone to accompany
your hellfire missive, nobody led you
pudieron reunirse con un hilo
a través de las jardines
to the gate table where a book responds
with the oldest illustrated village
perimeter framed in serial Dante,
so subtextual where we need it, where
the river's a constant suffused
with *dear arithmetic*, where the lights shine
through wheat belts, environmental
breakage over territorial hyphens
there your legs make acres of tony land
close ruptured just like Dante's
restitution on a wedge of circles.

Concrete poem

the served query monster translates into *es-es-escarpment*
the church is tripping, trip the somos man gut
genting toward that clipped implosive stone

your will and your baying put mismo a mismo
in contrata like *what I want to eat is walking right in front of me*
said with the torso upright clamped
through brain furniture, contralto in the amps

headless norsemen witness to te tramp
or a lean man leaning toward his constance
cup the man with leather the man with his guitarra tocar
miasma wants a piece of business kept

in which you susplain exactly what's going on
(in the letter) tucked into the grille of the apartment
furnishings, those spikes we put out for the visitors

Dislocalation

like artificial flowers in a blooming sanctuary
whose ringing slightly tiny needles
move thin inside my ears
like plans whose little needles blossom
Tired foreheads rest on floribundas

those arch pediments to stone roses
fling the storied Wind across
our big huff bodies lingering sharp Enact

themselves like faces in great openness to
Experience, for example, an image of
creation or bylaws, scrunched man paradigm

by which polar threads achieve
a counter-sign, aligning one
imagined earth with two halves of Belonging
sign right Here irreparable
pole-vault photos welded to the walls

kind collectives of the winded
bodies chaperone us materially
Smiling, animating the tropes
with pickled red-flowers and enclaves

There, as we can illustrate
at taskpoint we collide, both serving
up and dandled pretty out on platesides
in the shade of fair gardenias
whose cloud-shapes are like
spiritualists with traps, wilful visits maybe

or behest at a symbolic traipse where
labials strum the sea like a translation
whose choices are axiological, given
access to a jurisdiction where
exposure to the roses mob Belong

The judge of happiness

The rectangles of your eyes display a blinking light
like a smile shine off your skin
making a suitcase of your whole body
checking it out like a customs official
with the hot flashlight
looking for tropes huffing
 on a bird pipe while

kind people wait inside you, breathing

o

o

Digging a well very deep
in the cavities of their hearts
wishful streams pour out
 of arms and eyes the world's immense
containment of a kick

legs and the city call
back *screech screech*
 scoring sound alternates laid down
by the bent-over persons making

Doom Convention Score Cards

stuck in your skin's back pocket
 the flesh torn stitched and gently
 reattached
 with all the information
 your animal will need

o

o

Your presence is preserved by upper
gutskin thread spun out as vertical
Buff and flagrant, you're at
now temperamental
now giving your attentive mind
to the gentle straw of culture's opulent suck
with sound's aphasia clearing
the throat, unfolding

hmm hhaah sough

apart like pressed crowds eating fetish labor
chewing multiple places sweetly
feeding our brains through holes in our anatomy
then stoking the fringes of a brooding universe
into which you bite another
universe of apples, becalmed
in the machine, whose blackened moon
invades your head perplexed

o

o

o

Everything in her mind is that mixed
opportunity conferencing the soup

salt, vegetables, girls running
around the stairs waving hysterically
having revealed *once detail itself occurs ouch*

and yet the little soldiers
march in the beach and scoop
their brains out pastures

so why not draw her upside down
from the apparent for all that
all that Planned Obsolescence of
Reasonableness, for
the watching crew dew-eyed at

The Clutches of Illiterate Doom

in cultural terms
making things groovy
as another child learning
under shelter

o

o

She's fit now drive the car
while wiring your sidewalk regionally
your fleshly envelope tips its mouth
wide out: "Whose Gallipoli of autocepts
made our animals Brute Creation, from unity to fat?"

the loaded question shot the metaphor
we're loving by, nautical Amadeus
plying on the ship
while we stir our tummies
in the cheap seats curling forward

But she would say so, a dropped
reform in terms made hungry
by a crowd gathering beneath
a region you can read about
whose frontal window bars are matched
by pegs and dots *adoring quietude* now
interrupts sharp whistling to the hands

o

o

Yelling by the coddling voice
the echo the surprise
country comes from out
a language turns extension
home, language makes a lien
differential on an isthmus
passing for ordered implement

totally dumb really what credited
your furs and hours
in the main, like
the outline of a harbor seal
coaxed allowance *she's just doing her job*
someone barbican coughing
by the drum seed screens

the job is manxed
prosecut jigsawn teetered in
an envelope with a never-sent non-clarity

o

o

o

All good, the romping positive
look around the room bright eyes, candy
eyes pouring out a world
sweet waft we're halving
flooding the room, the building
flooded with street, suddenly the city
floods without
a rigger time and boat
Time, a voice light and syllabic
conventional for hearts
lifts in the door

blank and cut for you the placards
bunch on deal *come come*, run
run the beach is broke the sand it
pours away the holey ground
slides ocean streams out zealous
where your flesh-sewn promise
under sands contrives
enormous cities bailing home

o

By her door's invented bridalry
we finally get some sleep

give it again to a land that is not here
but in vision, bodily
discipline being what it is
a comment destined for a mask
put on slowly so you didn't see
your body sprout in icons
"find-invent" repletion titles like

Apocalyptrice Repertoire
taking text-text to apotheosis

Flesh map

“I was planning to fly there myself”
“And then we hit a rocket
Which exploded with the force of horses”

Oh, we owe our hundreds to the fright
“The bubblegum exploded in his face”

Saving the star for the moon
A freight ship resumed under its own
Half planetary desiderata

“Running away from the uniform”
Got to earth and candid lunar felts

He meant them “barking with a fallen edge”
Taking a solid bath in the apoplectic
We drew a hole and chewed to the other side

Cartesian rhapsody

It's getting hot toward the track
Cues sparking horizontal

Then a hagiography of sprinklers
Blind survivors watching from inside

Historical difference, where this evening
Gets self-flamed toward its reason

Tall skeletons walking upright
Interfere the wayfarers, covered
With meat (her eyes breathe multiple
Anatomies) they were the gentle
Man with a straight head
Gently flowing through his fingertips
Nestled in the crooks of outdated belief

Systems, himself a progenitor *en avance*
Who not to be speaking, who not to move

The skeletons of meat along streaming
Inside anus flowering tendons
Stochastic toward the folded brain
Mutually self-inveigling for the wrap

Around your arms and legs the evening
Loves you, it shines into your skin
Like an inner screen on which a movie
Rolls, the body shining recreation track

Cues lick the partitions
For a reproductive end
“Thematic” like the scenery
Thrashing its tail, gorgeous
Comics in a proto-sketch of influence
We love and therefore wish to emulate

The golden shovel

But what I had in my brain
was a parasite, an exchanger
fiend with remorseful looks
a top-down gnash of – technically, man,
I was all twirl and fade
you get the color number text
next mid-grade broke by law,

in a pre-recorded dawn of “pure thinking”
a sovereign mind transfigured into pathos
with a yelling voice a Willing Face
framed as a question,

The emphasis then was on a vogue
rib, a whole sleigh of ribs
trumping for music
really put together, a kind of Domestic
holding Rhetoric, they kind of “hold” you
in a vice or an embrace, the soft lips
reach toward a set of images
running with Heads
suddenly printed with feminine
cheeks at the full,

Nibs plunk muscularly close
to a chest of questions: across
varied replies *of course* nodding
dangerously pleasant and did some
exercises with our mouths
boats roiling out
close to enveloping a question with boots
and limpid toil in paper
clothing overlaid with mapped-out tears,

Her shoulders melded in a wall
a kind of stark Wall
rising to the table
like the Architectural Man
leading his blind friend into the recent
quantitative urge, feral graphs
flowering *ngrams* across
the science of the particular,

Following our estranged links
to singularity, what diverge we follow
altered teeming volume cantos
playback, playback time, raw
data malfeasance, *you know*
one of the most clearly *scheduled* along zero,

we get radical in the actual
grams, the happy face encircling
maximum value to the rim
of your mouth, like System came on
fast to pseudomorpha's power rills
blowing the bird inside your call
until it engines there, til delicate
subventions fracked by digest
break us out,

Gesamtkunstwerk

People talk about the vanguard
takes a turn: its conscript energy
acts on macro-particles
as though you choose or resolute
you're given mesh back to the deal

Your limbs eye dim harmonics
rise for tiny ones
crash at you: crash at me
“give us a family look”
the ice cream salt licks
for the ground your ears forget

That little town's an Uproar
over animals superadded
in the red: tearing around
in the gardens agua del baño de calor
de los surcos sin palabras
de su mente putting at you
with a tinny bravura: so altissima
hoochie coochie folds
enveloped so most comfortable

Emphatically on the “fort”
amidst impacted trees pretty
much willing to be in agreement
with the local: flowered in demise glass
objects balls a series of
eggs swooped down
by a devotion to the lungs

Smiling with your organs
and arterial skim you move
a dovey blankness
toward corridors not fit yet
particulating more like License
or a flat curve cotton minded vent
or convert axe rendition with

Another Chance: fresh positions
woeing out the planes
around the lips a lucid sphere
dimension billow: start it here

A biography of Adventure

(for Catherine Taylor)

To read the words and pictures
brought up on aspects of my house
and a house full of panic – *you've got information*
it's hard and starting is visual and
at the same time riots top to bottom

The trees are in the background
so much going and decoding at the same time
I confess I have friends to go to with a fear of images
always embodying the neckward fictive
distilling us in architecture joints

How do they fit together? And of course sound
art some relation seems a flowery thing
what is this *individual* flick?

Don't you imagine how things push on the mouth
cushing forward the mouth invariably
Van Gogh irritated by the underbite, myself included

for the precious yeah like clumsiness aesthetically
She's almost scoring thought, secretly obsessively
draws holding on that "voice" through polity tread

A puzzle off sorts, the author at a kind of me-noir
or forty grass-root operators inventing
names for children, if the main point
is the Seduction of the Innocent
underground, sex-obsessed as
underneath the black and white impulse
in your arms, cloths, anything under an offer

You can take up inconvenient balconies
struck in the head we have these book corners
turning around in our hands, an apple core
Island rising from a Sea of Pomegranates
a *dramatis feminus* drawn in dreams
like glorious taut skills, *capiche*, in a mechanical knife
ground in the inglorious page, snippets between
archipelagos a little bit alienating
a problem with qualities that escape
from meanings jam in words

But that's how I drew her
that's what skill would allow
or a dreamlog in your arms
meant to put the looking boat or ladder cryptic
in your match, riding the car like a tiger
holding the edge of the embroidered city
I didn't know, it was like pre-release eyes
from a natural spell

Ode: in the body of the message

An obligatory beauty flat on skeet.

In the same moments we pluck
each other's virtue up and send it
in a course of serial beauty in its turn.

So then the poem's brought up so well.
It has a sheen we pick on glories flower part.

The little skein's on deal, the barbers
flit from one end in the trees
they lean presumptuous over
the edge to see what's going on
What's going on? What skin for that one's got?

On the barber rope we've got
some long hair flicked up high in a slow arc
moving slowly bravely through
the area. *The girl has flecked on deal.*

That's the meaning of the casuistry
the very same try we did that
night in the packed crate.

That night in the packed crate we spoke phone
though speaking made a martial dent
in the cluster of that prompt
the curtains vague, the footsteps mar
a deal, the curtains trembling obvious in
their fleece, the packed crate flecked.

Greened for the otherists, the woman on
the black stage makes it seeable, her tall
monitions as the kind we set up
purpose for, the purpose for the sounds
open the door.



Lisa Samuels
[Photograph: Bronwyn Lloyd]

Jack Ross

An Interview with Lisa Samuels **[via email / August-September 2014]**

- **What writers do you keep on coming back to, and why?**

The more I think about your question the more I realize I have to express an answer in terms of categories. My reading is pretty catholic: I'll as soon be inspired by patterns, sounds, place histories, images, philosophy, statistics for a country's fabric imports, dictionaries, encyclopedias, poetry, experimental drama, strange comics, physics hypotheses, theory, and manifestos as I will be by particular writers. Nonetheless certain writers are recurrent for me, sometimes as a matter of the note I need to have plucked at a moment of thinking. Writers of excess can help me re-imagine our boundaries and exposures in the world – here I'm thinking of William Blake, Lautréamont, Friedrich Nietzsche, Laura Riding, Georges Bataille, Kathy Acker, William Vollmann. Writers who metaphorically compress such excess give me great – not to say painless – joy: Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Robin Hyde, Lorenzo Thomas, Veronica Forrest-Thomson, Bill Griffiths. Writers whose opened-out pages, polygenres, and intellectual visions seem interested in populating whole micro-worlds of thinking and feeling are also real food for my reading: Kamau Brathwaite, Leslie Scalapino. And writers who jam (as in press, and the sweet stuff we put on toast) visuals with interesting words are amazing in their models of how visuals and semantics can really operate each other: Bob Brown, bp Nichol, Tom Phillips, Cecilia Vicuña, Lisa Robertson (in her *Soft Architecture* essay book), and Maggie O'Sullivan. I'm also really transacted by translingual writers such as Myung Mi Kim, Sawako Nakayasu, and Stacy Doris, whose French infuses her English, in my reading, though she's more a translational writer than translingual, I suppose. Stacy Doris also sits for me with writers like Robert Duncan, Lyn Hejinian, Alan Halsey, and Renee Gladman as occidental 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. Another category here is imaginative theory: I'm certainly thinking of William Blake, but also of medieval mystics such as

Theresa of Ávila, Marguerite Porete, Julian of Norwich, and the *Cloud* author. Imagination theorizing sometimes gets focused in poetics or philosophy-theory itself: in that rank I've been especially responding to Charles Sanders Peirce and Theodor Adorno, while the poetics of William Carlos Williams always points toward an appealing freedom. And yet another category is sound intensities, often carried for me in syntactically, metrically, and rhythmically sophisticated poets such as John Donne and Gertrude Stein. In other words these embrained sound writers are doing something like what the aforementioned images + words writers are doing, only with a sound emphasis that performs their alternative visions of what the world yields up. Then there's a whole 'nother category of the exposed psychic self. The writers I already mentioned definitely demonstrate psychic amplitude, yes, but writers like Georges Perec, Scott Hamilton, and Nathanaël read as though they are not hiding anything, which is a particularly admirable self-exposure – at times a cultural evisceration, or a co-evisceration.

- **You mention in your reply “a whole other category of the exposed psychic self,” and give Scott Hamilton and Georges Perec as two examples of what you mean. A number of people have mentioned to me that they “don’t understand” or “don’t get” your work – by which I presume they mean they find its lack of conventional syntax or lexical connections confusing. What would you say to such people? Is it simply a matter of confusing an abstract with a representational artistic practice? Georges Braque with Andrew Wyeth?**

I would say my work is completely representational, in the sense that what people call abstract – particularly in language – is also representational. But I suppose I use that word “representational” in a kind of all-encompassing way. I don't think there is any such thing as “anti-mimesis” or “anti-representation.” Everything represents; it's just a question of what and how it represents.

I don't choose to write the way I do, nor do I choose it to be confusing. I suppose some people might say they'd wish to find their star in the work that is of most moment to their contexts, so that they could feel a dialog was happening. But most people don't have any such opportunity – which

is a different, though related, subject. For here, what I mean is that everyone I've ever observed is lonely with the diremption between what happens in their inner experience and what is reported as normal in normative representational works. In those latter – maybe the kind of thing people don't find confusing, the kind of writing they “get” – we see Ordered Words that purport to explain things, and syntax whose shapes are familiar, and we presumably believe in the reality of the stability they represent. And then, when we're alone, when we're not being “guided,” we reorient into the dispersed inexplicable. Recognizably ordered words are good for many circumstances: it's comfortable to ride familiar syntax and to feel like there is a cultural narrative that ties things together or shows some kind of given real. But I want to represent the dispersed inexplicable, since that for me is the most real. For example, when I am driving across the Harbour Bridge, I am simultaneously walking at the bottom of the ocean water and remembering my body in some other position in a truck and composing fragments of music in the sound part of my mind and thinking about how humans are related to the buildings I can see and wondering how on earth we can evade ideas of possession and thinking about what events have happened that can be traced in the atomic substrates that perfuse this whole geophysical area and feeling my nose's dryness and blinking my eyes and pondering the number of eyeblinks we'll have in our lives, etc. All those dispersals are reality, phenomenologically, and that's just in one body moving across one event. I am very conscious of the billions of people on earth alive now who are dispersed from each other and each other's experiences and each other's assumptions about historical and cultural and bodily coherence. I mean that both traumatically, in terms of human beings suffering constantly, and also descriptively, constatively. There is no center of meaning nor norm of representation I wish to cling to, for there is no center of meaning nor normal representation, though there are representational norms in different times and societies.

Imaginative writing, for me, is most importantly a challenge to cultural givens, not a re-instancing of them – except to the extent that it cannot escape such re-instancing, given the languages we know and the times we live in and the particular cultural knowledges we have amassed. I am not in search, to quote William Carlos Williams, of “the beautiful illusion.” What I'm interested in is how the particulates that are used to examine, understand, and constitute any person, situation, or society are

contingent and can be reassembled – which is the very thing that makes it possible to challenge what is given and to be attentive to the dispersed real.

Another answer I might have, for those readers you mention who generously pay attention to my work but aren't sure what to make of it, is that I love sound. When I teach I talk about “somato-psychic” enactment: you cannot know the consequences of a given practice as an abstract quantity of information in advance of trying that practice. You have to put your body – the body of your words, in the case of writing – into that practice in order to experience its consequences. So maybe listening to my writing can teach you what it knows better than I can say it separately, since paraphrase is only one part of apprehending any language practice. In other words sound is meaning, and the sonics of my writing want to mean via the ear of the mind, to perform meaning rather than report on it afterwards. This is one way I read Gertrude Stein: that the sound is the meaning, that making the world in and as the sound patterns of language is a way to build and apprehend reality.

Language is our most important tool for organizing the “meanings” of the world. It's also our most important tool for challenging the meaning orders of the world. That's why it's controversial to use language in ways other than normative communication, which relies on obscuring the abstraction and contingency of language in order to assert its putatively real elaboration of a stable cultural situation. So people learn to think that there is a sense and that language makes it (only) in certain ways, and that using language in other ways is “not making sense.” But that's a learnt attitude, not a real fact about language or the organizational possibilities of the human world.

Another answer is that I want my writing to be like machinery for imagining. I hope it moves any reader through differential experiences and thoughts, of sound and memory and realization. I want it to open (to quote William Blake) “the doors of perception” – to help us, as I've said before, imagine what we don't know. I don't expect my writing to represent what is already there; I want it to activate the machinery of ethical and bodily attention, of embrained feeling, at the moment that it is happening. Like a music box that activates you when you open it.

- I really enjoyed your description of driving over the harbour bridge and delineation of all the other things going on in your mind at the same time! Would you see the task of gesturing towards the immense multi-levelled complexity of our relationship to language as one particularly and uniquely suited to poetry, or is poetry, for you, just a nonce word that stands in for writing? Looking at the draft of your novel *Tender Girl* which you sent me, I wonder if you would regard that as significantly different – except, of course, in scope and length – from the work you do in “poems” (so-called)?

Yes I do regard *Tender Girl* as different: everything in it is directed toward a reading of the experience of a being who was born from the union of a human and a shark. Girl is also amphibious, though we see mostly her land aspects, with her breathing pores and being around air and humans. The novel’s language is put into the service of a psycho-biological portrait of Girl encountering human events and consequences. So the experiment of that book, which is forthcoming with the U.S. publisher Dusie Press, is how to imagine language performing this character consciousness. I did not want to circumscribe the impacts or understandings of Girl’s encounters too much – I didn’t want to turn them in to a report from a distance. So the language is unusual, perhaps, as a report from within a strange, literally impossible, imagined ontology, with the tracings of the effort of that report.

Poetry is an emphasis within writing rather than a segregated field. Maybe we call something an example of poetry when it’s labelled “poetry.” After all, given the amplitude of poetic experiments over the past 125 or so years, it’s impossible to deny writers the right to use the term “poetry” to describe their work. That self-naming right is part of an ethical development in our assumptions about identity. Given the importance of language for social order and explanation, maybe it’s no surprise that “poetry,” with its huge appetite and its resistance to limited definition, is a crucial language zone for contests about identity and representation. The “immense multilevel complexity of our relation to language,” as you put it, is certainly one of the manifestations and topics of the poetic. But I don’t think poetry is a term for all writing. I think we need as many kinds of writing as we can get.

- **The British writer John Cowper Powys once described his novels as “propaganda for my way of life.” Looking back over your work to date, would you say that you detect common themes or overriding intentions in forming all of it? Or is each of your books and poems designed as a new “raid on the inarticulate”?**

I’m so happy you mentioned Powys, as he has been a favored author for me sometimes. His adamant sensual broken animistic excess pleases me – he’s like the tortured-happy modernist version of the kind of energy that animates William Vollmann’s best fictions. Anyway, to your question. I reckon all writers are extruding from their preferences, “doing what comes naturally,” writing their obsessions. But propaganda, hmm. I think not, though I wouldn’t be the best person to be clear on that, given ideology and the return of the repressed and all those fun aspects of being human. And I know you aren’t necessarily ascribing Powys’s self-summary to anyone else’s work.

Since I started writing work that has been important to me – since my first poetry book in 1998 – I have certainly had themes and styles recur. It’s pretty clear that semiotics, materialism, and phenomenology are touchstones, in theoretical terms. No matter what the style or genre, my books are focused in identity, transculturalism, ethics, the body, violence, love, social power, perception, and imaginative unknowing. No matter what the focus, my styles are transfixed by an urge to manifest representations that come out from the observing subject to report on the real fragmentations of being human. In other words, we are fragmented, and fragmentary language is a true reflection of our experience – it feels true to me, truer than styles that try to render language as transparent. So a thematic of encounter with fragmentation could be said to characterize my writing. Moreover, a release from singular identity is crucial to my perceptions in language: the writing is not the same thing as a person standing in a biological and social place. That’s why what I sometimes think of as dramatic polylogs are a recurrent pronominal and experiential part of my writing – they come quite naturally as I lift away from social me to write in the linguistic transhuman. Plus “polylogs” sound like little frogs, which is rather nice.

Still, I’ve changed from writing exclusively “lyric” poetry books – if we can define “lyric” loosely, as relatively short poem-events – to also writing

longer and different kinds of works. For example booklength poems like *Tomorrowland* and *Gender City*, with their recurrent personae and sustained focus on, respectively, transcultural transmigrations and embodied urban creation trauma. And prose works like *Tender Girl* and the manuscript I'm sometimes fiddling with these days, *The Long White Cloud of Unknowing*.

I think you are asking only about so-called creative books, but I also write speculative talks and essays about particular authors and about how we read and what representation and genre and critical practice is and can be. For example I'm working right now on two talks for upcoming conferences, thinking about concepts I call "withness" and "recurrence."

- **What advice would you offer to young poets starting out, or – for that matter – older people trying to enter (or re-enter) the world of poetry?**

This question takes me back to the ethics of self-naming. The possibilities of poetry are completely open, which may be one of the things that makes some people uncertain about how to approach such an infinity of potential – and which I suppose is why you ask this question.

Bearing that openness in mind, I'd give three pieces of advice. First, learn the infinity of poetry's potential. Learn everything you can about as much as possible in anything called poetry: approaches, times, authors, styles, topics, sounds, open and strict procedures, techne like books sound paper and canvas, typefaces, inks and printing, new media ventures and forms, oral performance techniques and histories, rhythms, syntaxes, names of linguistic and grammatical parts, past and present poetic "movements" that draw together manifestos and visions, magazines that present intense editorial judgments and drives, canons and repressed works (i.e. celebrated and relatively unknown poetry), topical obsessions (history, ecology, sexuality, race, nationalism, magic, identity, the nature of thinking and imagining) and how they are approached in different times and places, styles of representation and how they mingle and swerve into and out from simplicity to complexity and back, and the permissions for, arguments about, and experiments in what is called poetry.

Second, write poetry in different styles so you can expand your poetic skills. Be patient with yourself as you write in different ways. Each distinct style can be as challenging as learning to write in a heretofore foreign language. Accept that difficulty and presume it's part of expanding your abilities – don't stop too soon because you want things to be comfortable in your use of language.

Third, after – and while – you work these first two registers of learning and expansion, do exactly what you want. Write freely as often as you can. Understand that composition needs to be unfettered in order for you to produce charged and committed writing. Anything charged and committed can be shaped once you get to the revision stage of your poetry (if you turn out to be interested in revising, which not everyone is). This third self-permission will help you bring into focus what poetry can be for you, in your languages and communities. And overall this third piece of advice is the one I would give most emphatically, since poetry should be free. That freedom and openness are what draw so many people to want to write poetry, which is why it's so plentiful and so everywhere.

Ai Hao

Coffin

The coffin stays in the central room,
as we come and go.
My grandma will dwell in it
after her death.
She likes this coffin very much,
often strokes it awhile at her leisure.
Every time I see such a scene,
I have fears
that they are establishing a connection.
My grandma, now eighty,
has lived a long time.

棺木

棺木放在堂屋
我们进进出出
奶奶死了以后
会住在这里
她很喜欢这口棺木
没事时她会把它抚摸一会儿
每次看到她这种动作
我总会害怕
她们似乎在建立某种关系
奶奶八十岁了
很长寿

Festival

All
is ready
except
a tramp
at roadside
still lying
on a manhole
of the city heating
defrosting.

节日

一切
准备就绪
只有
马路边
一个乞丐
还躺在
城市供暖的
井盖上
解冻

Gary Allen

The kiss

Death has two faces:
a clapboard house by the sea
surrounded by fields of wheat

where I found you hanging
worn like a thin brown penny –
you had a pathological fear of death
you found it in loneliness

the rodent marks crisscrossing the dust
they jumped from the orange boxes to feed
the low murmur of the sea, the wheat heads,
the flies brought me here
the last bus-stop from Alkmaar.

I knew you were angry, my love –
the calls stopped, the letters incoherent with venom
stopped.

Your grandmother was an informer
shot and left as a warning by the footbridge
every morning her own mother
combed her red hair and talked to her about the farm
the embarrassment of her naked bruised skin:

then the ambulance and the hearse came
and the policemen in their funny uniforms –
they asked me if I knew you?
I said no, I was only walking in the dunes
with a dog I didn't own.

Death has two faces –
a mother telling her daughter
that she is going to tie her hair back
she couldn't see the red hole in the nape of her neck
or the breath that had stopped

and the sand, and the inverted nipple
and the stubborn afternoon
and the people who came and went
and would go and live their continuous lives
like friezes on a temple wall.

The humpbacked horse

About then, I travelled with Ryzhy and Mayakovsky
on the Sokolnicheskaya line out to Komsomolskaya
in those days we drank everything
preservative jars of vodka that tasted like cleaning fluid
stir-crazy and aggressive, we shouted at the other passengers
and sang poems that were dangerous

and made sense to us then
we were hard looking, had done time
dressed in our cheap suits and ties, with shaved heads
why, we fought on the metro with tramps

and skinheads, and pimps, and exiles
round Kurskaya:
poetry could do anything
poetry was a humpbacked horse, said Mayakovsky.

Listen, my ghost friends, to the clickety-clack
of this tired old train running all around Moscow
over these blackened timbers
like ripe plums falling under boots in Bagdadi
or the leaves dying on the Kremlin trees.

We have seen the best of them go out like strange cold stars
hanging from heating pipes, falling off bridges
out of the windows of petty officialdom
until we could take it no longer

Mayakovsky, black and white in films
leaving his poems to the *Briks* –
They'll understand, I'm through with life

and even then, when they cut his head open
sliced like a plate of liver
his dead brain still weighed three-hundred and sixty grams
more than Lenin's.

Jim Arkell

I dreamt after being diagnosed with COPD

An extraordinary expanse of water
tinged with sand, where Mum and I were
looking for Dad, late Dad, dead Dad,
Dad of the strength of many men
but mortal nonetheless, and gone,
At the end of the dream I was all alone,

Someone from school, friendly to me
in the dream though not in real life, somebody
I haven't seen for 29 years, was explaining
to me the epistemology of the word loss,
which he pronounced 'lots' and I knew
I was in for it, somehow, And how,

the water rises, I don't need to read
a dream-analysis book to know
rising, threatening water is death;
up to my neck, my chest is constricted,
there are crocodile eggs around me, bobbing,
and I cannot catch my breath –

Anita Arlov

Bringing Him Home

He's left us,
the boy from Sydenham
right hole of a place
he said

Port Hills to his east
Southern Alps to his west
his Avon River
red

Ros Armstrong

Whitewashed Summer

Summer again and the walls whitewashed
an incisive end-of-the world refraction
Orthodox believers acknowledge semaphores eternity
for 'in this life we are just passing through.'

White slopped with mops, brushes, old brooms
conceals winter's mildewed stains
like tea trickled from flooded geranium pots,
treads pitted from a legion of sandals.

In summer black-clothed widows, step-at-a-time metronomes,
climb as the temperature rises above 40 degrees,
their ancient sinewed legs like agile mountain goats,
step, step, they trace each slice of shade
cast from balconies decorated with rusting curlicues.

Higher, higher, passing by, their breathing seamless,
satiny as the white marble steps.

Partylines

1. Party games

There's no point playing Chinese
Whispers at country 'dos.'

Partyline eavesdroppers will pick up
every word.

2. Making connections

The operator said, I won't bother
putting you through, he's not home

Gone to pick up that new landgirl,
taking her night rabbiting.

Not that he told me, it's just
I couldn't help hearing,
when they connected.

3. Battle lines

Last week Ann and I were chatting
when from out of nowhere

a guy screamed down the line, you are
such a bitch. Ann said, but you don't
even know me.

Our laughter stopped when 'the bitch'
responded with loud obscenities.

We quietly hung up. Crossed wires
are best left to untangle themselves.

4. Field days

When a soft click
interrupts our conversation,
Ann and I plunge

into outrageous story mode.
And then we wait to see
who sows our modified seeds.

5. Party politics

It's November and a 3rd year.
When Ann rang last night she said,

I've been thinking about those fancy
pants city politicians.

They'd find it bloody hard sticking
to partylines eh.

6. The date line

Last night Ann heard on the grapevine
that Barry B was going to ask her out.

Being the last to hear she wasn't
especially flattered.

She rang me and said he shouldn't
waste his breath, the answer was no.

Then we just sat back and let the gossip line
get back to him.

7. Engaged lines

I reckon one day there'll be an easier way
to communicate but Ann says, no way,
why spoil the fun of waiting
for the right ring.

Terri Ashton

Friday nights, Christchurch 1968

On Friday nights
I didn't point to the sky
with my Tuesday ballet eye –
*On Friday nights Dad, a publisher,
drank with mates
bowed over a Cashel St bar
madonna backs protected drinks
til curfew at a jealous six –*
my friends and I jostled over mantles
of fire place mirrors
negotiated the night at-large
painted and lured the evening in
black kohl eyes
psychedelic tent dresses
echoes of sunset in darkening skies.
Mum the reluctant river ... the ghostly driver
dropped us at hallowed halls –
Aldersgate, Sumner Surf Club were a couple ...
No choice but to spurn the night in the end
accepted rides with men
in hoot-owl-lit cars between eleven and twelve pm
kindly and wide-eyed
Dads who arrived
not knowing what to find
Sent out from heaven.

Ardyn Janelia Dos Santos Baia

Pt England Bay

I like to wiggle my toes in your sands,
it reminds me of when I used to pick at your rocks.
Turn them over and run
from the tiny crabs
that hid in the small caves and puddles of a dark underworld
a rocks' underbelly.
A home to them all
and when I'd tip
they'd all scatter
frightened of me.

This was once where he and I used to meet,
after school, I would get off my bus too soon to see
him waiting there for me.
Held my tiny hands
that I'd hide in the small caves and creases of my skort pocket.
Atop my belly
He pushed me down
I felt the tip
tried to escape
he frightened me.

Only your waters have seen and now you
can wash away a memory that is too painful to sea.

Troy Banyan

So be it

I often think of those old days
Of the strange but harmless poems
I used to write
True, they were of their time
And mates loved their weirdness
Their barrier-breaking lunacy
But nothing was fabricated
Nothing was forced
I felt these things
I feel them now
I love unchained thought
I fear uncontrollable madness
I love being off the wall
I fear being bricked up behind one
If I'm mad, I'm mad, so be it
If I write poetry about it, so be it
But if I'm clinically insane, well ...
... so be it !

Robert James Berry

Horses

Horses

Even at forty, you were
a gawky girl.

You rose at five
with a clatter of pans

sipped your coffee genteelly,
then scrubbed the oven.

Upstairs

I would hear you, tuning the knobs
to your favourite talk radio
rattling jars of make-up
on the fridge top.

I would come downstairs
a chubby, sniffly schoolboy
and marvel at the peppered broccoli
you lived on.

We would talk. Always
talk; big, insane lies.

Father would be asleep.
I would monopolize you.

The birds still sang
when I biked to school,
thinking of you.

Tony Beyer

Li Bai

old friend
when we meet again

in heaven
let us converse quietly

by a low fire
sipping perhaps a grape

or barley brew
out of polished bowls

the pale sun
gives lustre to

as the familiarity of our
voices warms our words

—

men can't live
as long as we have

and stay out of trouble
women or politics

or the dreary corrosion
years bring

all of which
fade into unimportance

before a hedge
that holds back the wind

—

forget the unreliable
beauty of the moon

and the moon's reflection
and the lantern

hung from a pole
in front of the bow

small fish of thought
gather towards its light

and the river
mutters on

—

horses and tall
warriors at the gate

a man whipped in the dust
until blood comes

are conditions
of the world beneath

that outlast empires
sufficient for us

now the sides of our heads
are brushed silver

to nod sadly
over the waste

—

the song
of the plucked string

recalls the wind's tears
sliding leaf to leaf

through the garden
behind the wall

we all stand tiptoe
to peer over

only to see our hungry eyes
mirrored in the pool

birds fracture with their wings
and cattle disturb to drink

—

old friend I have
known all my life

words alone
(and there are only words)

pierce through centuries
both past and to come

Eden Bradfield

we had coffee at pete's coffee
after the interview
the coffee was black and
dotted with remnants of crema

the best thing about pete's coffee is
you can drink as much coffee as you
need to

this is uncommon
most coffee places
offer a long black flat white
skim latte etc by the the cup
pete's coffee operates on the assumption
you can have too much coffee and you
probably will

though
it tastes like the used contents of a
petrol engine
my skirt is beige
and expensive

Liz Breslin

old dog down

breakfastis it breakfast?
biscuitbiscuitbiscuit more
o o o o over
gedditball
gedditball
gedditball
o o o o over game o o over
lumpo grow
limb hard walk
stroke head bed
lump skin moult
roll o o o o over
milk soft rub
all o o o o over
o o o o over

breakfastis it breakfast?

Iain Britton

dolphin country

exclusive newsworthiness / maybe
apocalyptic? a red knot of light darkens
flashes once too often / i define phenomenon
as a dolphin surfacing to balance the sun
on its snout

the red balloon

i want to believe there are consequences
for going early from the party / at the door
a girl is happy to give me a complimentary pass

and a red balloon

Owen Bullock

line

assembled the shed and there was
one piece over

a gift of rain
for the broken hearted

lions roaring
in the suburbs

three calls
to the help desk

why does he do it,
is there no other way?

into space
a rocket
careers

Chris Cantillon

Lancasters

Weeks of wind, unravels spring winter-
from, a warm sun the barley sweetly
undulates. bodies brim, wettened woman
Truncate man, a taxi home for
Love, and being young our feeling
Cooler than everyone (or was that
Only me). on S.H.3 trucked sheep
A thick waft of excrement after
Life intimidated a fooled self
Allowing. the drone above (my father
Fearless) the litten land bombed below
And u-turn, the run for home

Liam Campbell

That Night we Drew Whiskers on Ourselves and You Broke Down Crying

We painted our faces
and became the animals
we were born to be.

We threw off the masks
of adulthood
and the burdens
of being born human.

Your hand was a paw
and your claws left scars
everywhere.

Lyall Clarke

generation gap

Grand-dad!
He sits in his chair and thinks a lot.
I think his brain only operates in memory now.
I don't think this old man is with it!
Sitting all day, meditating or something,
vacantly staring into mid-air.

He was in the war, you know,
but he didn't talk about it –
where he went,
what he did,
what he saw,
what the enemy was like.

He was away for years.
Never came home on holiday at all.
He was a prisoner once,
but it was okay,
because he came back
at the end of the war.

I think he has lost the plot.
He never was one to speak a lot,
but now he doesn't talk much at all.
His mouth opens and closes
as if wanting to say something
but words don't come out; only dribble.

Sometimes he just sits and cries.
Mum says that I am too young,
and don't understand!

David R. Cravens

Milgram

a new Bosnian guard at Jasenovac
in the Nazi's Independent State of Croatia
had no idea what a Jew was
asked them who they were
why they were there —
but before a few months had elapsed
he was killing them for fun with a stake
by shoving it down their throats

this is what we are

blindly shopping for tawdry bargains
sewn by children in sweatshops
as they stand in rat piss and feces
only to rinse themselves off
to go and get raped in brothels

our children wear these Wal-Mart clothes
as they pull the legs off spiders
and grow up reading Batman
Superman, and Captain America —
Jungian archetypes
imbedded so deeply in the psyche
of a servile left-brained world
that they must abide by our common rules

Machiavelli understood the charade
so did Nietzsche

that's why I'm a fan of Bane, Magneto
and Edward Blake
for they know the dark secret
they are the products of our other mind

I worked with a kid at a group home
whose father fucked him so many times
that he had to wear diapers
because his rectum no longer functioned

things like this happen as you eat Cheerios

Gotham should burn – we need a hero to do it

Mary Cresswell

Timberline

Black mountain whiteout swallows our voices.
Earlier travellers shifted the snow poles.

A blood-red crystal is trapped in the rock face
sunlight beats through it, like a heart, like a heart.

We crunch down the slope, watching our footsteps
disappear under scoria, sealed off with dust.

Red tussock bends its tips to the gravel
preparing for gales that never arrive.

The cry of the green bird has turned to an echo
before we can guess which way it has flown.

Black Feathers

As I stagger through these start raven naked black ideas, black feathers fall from the sky where I used to fly until I got too high and burnt my wings and feel from grace. Black feathers burnt and smouldering blowing in the wind with all its misery and sin, skin, blood, tears, light and veils it shed them all in the once still night – it whispers its twisted truth through the air – there is nothing here secret that will not be revealed, these dreamscapes are real and will never be otherwise. Here where the anaemic moon cries its milky light out of its white eyes of lies and the rats have gnawed holes in the black sack cloth of night. And colours confess of a red richer than any ever bled turning panic and chaos to collapse to solace and relapse again. In the secrecy of the dark – its sheer lunacy. Are we lunatics or just illuminated or ill fated to be both, for there's a fine line between insanity and insight a line I blurred curved and convulsing – trapped in a trance a mind twisted and bent like dance. Born and bred and baptised in a river of madness, I have had this but must suppress it – the water of secret colour I must leave my mouth only mottled black. Here pointing to heaven while living in hell, a cell, any old place trapped by yourself and alone with your thoughts – trying to claw my way out of the four walls of my head, claw holes to make windows to see beyond, to smash the glass and escape this place find heaven in the broken reflection. In it I see things – a blush forest seeping with blood loss as love lies bleeding – bleeding out like a haemophiliac and seething with black blossoms in the frost blooming all that is lost, removing what is found and making that lost to. Waking under nothing but a new sheet of dust in a room without a view turning to rust.

Glenys Doull

Singapore

Our father said we did not understand,
but he would not tell us
what we did not understand.

Often he raged at us
over the dinner table,
at all young people
with their sixties clothes and music.
Still we did not understand.

At 87 his memories
still could not be heaved
to forgetfulness, beyond memory.

In tearful halting pauses
he told of eight close friends
with whom he had
partied and lived so fully.

In 1941 they volunteered
for a naval adventure
to a secret wartime harbour.
Rumour said it was England.

He, newly promoted, was excluded.

They went to Singapore.

Only two came back.

We do not know who they were.

Eugene Dubnov

Warming Your Hands

Warming your hands
Before sunrise
When the grass droops
Under dew
Among vacant graves
Of those resurrected
Close to the house with no door
And the door to no house
Close to wet bark
The pale light of sunrise
On cold grass
In dew
The black glint upon the wave
The voices across the sea
Where a shadow falls
On the sand
Scattering your memory
On feather-grass steppes
Stumbling over
Roots of words
In the hour of cold light
Under which
The undersides of leaves
Tremble
When again
The wind
Troubles the branch.

My house has fallen still
My house has now fallen totally still.

London, 1979

[Translated by Anne Stevenson with the author].

Rachael Elliott

Breaking and Entering

Once, your hands knit the pieces of me together
in threads of spring
to make yourself a covering.

Quick, unpick.

The future is coming.

Once, uninvited, you cut yourself a key to me.
The day in the parking lot you played locksmith,
tongue tip touching the corner of your mouth
one finger behind my teeth
as you manipulated me and my pink dress
away from a silver front bumper.

It was not until the key you left in my lock opened its eyes that I was
afraid.

You threaded your needle with wire
beckoned me closer with the tilt of your eye
and stitched me into your nipple
alongside a ring of polished steel
That I could not reach to pull myself out.

You took my fingers.

One night

when you were kissing my ankles
you imagined a cricket inside of me.

Now I hear it singing
and feel its legs
fiercely kissing each other
violent metal-soaked mouths
not coming up for air
long into the night.

I crawl on the floor of myself
glass in hand to cover it.

but it is vicious
in its leaping.

You're never here.

Now, you walk into my dinner date for one and I go

for a fingerprint on a glass that you take from my hand.
I dream of you, tongue buried behind my ear under a street lamp
begging me for just a little bit more.
Now, you crouch inside me, thirsty
licking the inside of my skin
with your cat's tongue.
You are my drought.
You follow anything that flows
to scorch it bare.
My wrist fits snug into the curve of my teeth
And your laugh stares back at me
while your hands pick the pieces of me apart

Jan FitzGerald

Ticket 250654 RMS Titanic

A tribute to band leader, Wallace Henry Hartley (1878 – 1912)

As the line of First Class passengers
left the lounge in canvas life vests,
like a great migration of white crabs,
and shuffled towards the sea,
you played to them.

On an April night like no other,
you regathered your men on the Boat Deck
and above the shouts of “Women and children first!”
and screams of disbelief,
you played the violin
your Maria had given you,
until the last lifeboat pulled away.

Then waist deep in icy waters,
under the illuminated dome
of The Grand Staircase,
and the tilt of groaning funnels,
you strapped the violin to yourself,
bade your colleagues farewell
and bowed to the drums of the North Atlantic.

Rata Gordon

Do You Know What To Do With A Wall?

You could paint the yellow shapes that the sun makes on the wall. Or light a cigarette and burn holes in the wallpaper. Lots of holes. In the shape of Jesus or a traffic jam or an albatross.

You could install a line of power sockets along the top of the wall, and plug in all your appliances, and they could hang down the wall like limp patients. Or you could hang seaweed from the top.

Did you know you can smear clay on a wall? And cake mixture? You can also pop coloured bubbles on walls. You can dip your whole body in ink like a Chinese fish and slap yourself against it.

You can run and jump at it and make shoulder shaped grooves and then you can pick through the jib with your fingernails. You can rip the wallpaper down, and into shreds, and then squeeze toothpaste on the wall and it will smell like peppermint.

You can throw handfuls of flour, or dried coconut. You can mix the flour with water and paint it on the wall and then throw turmeric and it will stick. You can make moulds of your teeth from plaster of Paris and then video them chomping through the jib and it will make a chalky sound.

You can nail on pieces of firewood and climb them, or have a series of pipes coming out and train a snake to slip around them. You can throw cups at a wall. New cups or old cups. Some of the pieces of cup might stay in the wall if you throw them hard enough.

You can cut out shapes through to the kitchen. Square, circle, star, heart shapes. You can practice aiming toast through the holes. Or buttons. Or olives with their pits in. Or train a wax-eye to fly through. Or a swallow.

You can fill the holes with potting mix, and plant strawberries inside. You can go into the garden, pick the chrysalises off the swan plant, and cello-tape them to the wall in a line. The butterflies will spring out like magician's silk.

You can also play music to a wall. You can cause it to vibrate very gently,
by sitting in front of it on a chair and playing the cello.
You can even just sigh.

Terry Greatrex

Philosophy – between words and worlds

I close the book.

Open the window.

Sunday afternoon.

An edgy breath from the cavernous maw of

China breaks over me, my apartment complex,
everything I can
and cannot see; sucks at curtains,

swells from rank volcanic woks of
eateries, the bone-
riddled 菜 they serve stippled with cackle,

curses, the whole reeking clatter
curdling through the crane
that clings to air, my complex argument.

I close the window.

Open the book.

Man on wire between
sight

and insight, taste

and a taste for.

Susan Green

Baby

You had no burial.
I don't know where they put you
and they wouldn't tell.

I tried to find out,
the frenzied guessing
had me wander

the house at night folding
and refolding the white crocheted shawl
I made to carry you home in.

They bundled you away
in a hospital cloth stained
with birthing blood. A glimpse

of your face compels me to create
you in infinite ways.
They said you didn't exist

you took no breath,
no crying out, silent shock.
And yet I held you in my womb

Felt your feet against my ribs, my empty
arms, the milk from my breast flowing.
You were my fourth child.

In the garden I planted for you,
as mist dances around your tree.

I can make you my lost hope

Charles Hadfield

“untitled”

I look at the painting
take time to examine
the brush strokes, the colors
the “structure” so important
(I’ve read in the catalog)
to the artist (whose name
I have never heard before
and which I’ve now conveniently forgotten, or could say
I am struggling to remember –
but that would not be true).
I have never seen
such a beautiful description of a painting:
“Untitled 2: Acrylic on board”.
This says everything you need to know,
wastes no words, frees the viewer (me, you now)
to look and look. So I look
again and then move on
to view “Untitled 3”, “Untitled 4”,
“Untitled 5 & 6”, “Untitled 7a and 7b”
and several “June 1998”
(“June 1998:1”, “June 1998:2”, “June 1998:3” and
all the way through to “July 1998:4”)
I recollect there were, perhaps, a dozen paintings from June,
all “Untitled”, and I began to wonder
what had happened to our painter
that northern summer all those years ago and more,
and where s/he was now, and
as I was wondering, I looked out of the window
in the side wall of the small gallery
and saw sheep running across the hillsides
and could almost hear the dogs
and the whistle of the shepherd
and the bells clinking through the olives
as the flock moved from one dry pasture

to another in search of
what was the search for
or was it here
I remember
that summer when the dazzle hit me full in the eyes
(reaching for words or a breath
trying to echo the rise and fall of your song
heard only once through the trees
or when you catch a glint of river or hear voices or sense
woodsmoke
on the breeze
far across the valley
and you reach for a brush
and paint)

Booster

I have a plan it involves us doing dangerous things in the loony bin
after lights out

We will creep up on that old man

The one who flashes his penis in exchange for mars bars or apples.

I know how to get in

I heard they don't bother to lock the door

It won't be hard to find him

They don't sleep in beds

Just chained up on the floor like dogs

Give him a mars bar

He will show us his nob and dance like a sad chained up bear

Remember not to touch him

Or

You will be next

You will grow hairy palms

Eat your own shit

And

They will lock you up and
throw

away

the

key.

Max and Lola

At Nosh I buy two jars of your favourite Pasta sauce. Run into Jade. We talk, go for a coffee. Jade says, off the record: There's an apartment coming up below hers in Norfolk on Curzon St. Ground floor small back garden where the cats could roam. Late back I've never seen you so wasted. She's only a work colleague, for God's sake. We don't make it to the party.

O.K. I admit, I knew all along it was Jane Goodall. not Diana Fossey, who studied chimpanzees. You are so pedantic. I want to scream, start a fight. Anything to break through that no speak for days comfort blanket you hide under.

You turn up the DVD, flood our small flat with music. Wish you'd go to the movies, take a bath. After a hard day talking up Real Estate. Please I don't need to hear about Debbie's Hysterectomy. Or why smarter women are having less kids. I want to chill on the sofa, with a good Central Otago Chardonnay. Are you frightened of silence? Or am I just a loner?

Yeah! Yeah! You knew I'd pay you back come Friday. I wanted that vintage Jimi Hendricks record so much, and you, you used it as a cheap power trip.

No, I say, the decision was yours. You couldn't make up your mind between the Victorian garnet necklace and earrings. Now the record is sold, and you are drinking cheap Supermarket plonk by the tumbler full. Strange it was you who was uncertain about the wisdom of our moving in together.

Jan Hutchison

the proverb tree

my daughter with the kereru appetite
perches up a tall pine

she sucks the drupes
sieves a kete full of mist

now and then the tree tosses off a rhyme
and my daughter catches it

*hammer hammer in the dark
here are flakes of tawny bark*

my daughter with the skinny legs
demands a purple rhyme

*nothing's for you alone
not the berry not the cone*

leaves look up clouds fly away
scraps of bark float down

my daughter with pigeon throat
cries about her sore behind

*not all shall gobble berry bread
knobbly bones must go to bed*

Hayden Hyams

The Evening Of The Day Before I Puke Off The Porch (And The Afternoon of The Day I Do, After I Did)

10:21

Retro dress, and myself, meet at a bar

11:15

Retro dress follows me home,
Looks for signs of artistry

11:59

Finds none

12:01

I yell at her ass as she walks away

Midday

As it turns out, Rachael knows Retro Dress

Doesn't approve

She's a good friend

Never mind

We drink espresso and have a laugh about my puke

It's drying in the sun below us

I tag Indy from last night

Ha ha, she looks pretty messy

I check on Retro Dress

Her name's Emma

Nice name

Single

Hah, religion; Jedi

Very funny

Anna Jackson

**Thank you for having me, briefly, in your
chamber.**

Thank you for having me, briefly, in your chamber.
Thank you also for seeing me out the door
while your turn-table was still turning,
the record not yet having even reached
its soft ending, the hissing sound
of D H Lawrence's snake
about to disappear and be replaced by
a poem. I am quite unhinged
and will probably spend the rest of the day
staring out this window. Thank you
to the cranes that stand with their backs to me
staring out to sea, quite misty, an island
a shade darker than the sea merging into distant hills
a shade lighter, and the clouds lowering down from the sky.
I expect you have the lights on in your room
and the heater and are smoking, and
I don't even get to be the smoke you expel
from your lungs. Dirty lungs.

The girl in brown has something to say

The girl in brown is holding a chair
that tips almost to the floor
and one of the men behind the table
raises his hand as if to catch the chair
but he does not need to fear,
she is just gesticulating. She is so sure,
talking about opposites and categories, how
an opposite has to be related, a cat
more opposite to a dog than a lizard
though more similar. Otherwise
you might as well call Icarus the opposite
of...of...a duvet. "Did she say duvet,"
asks the bearded boy, looking up
from his i-pad. From outside, the sound
of cicadas. On the ground, feathers –
it is autumn, the hens are moulting. It makes
for a rich tapestry on the ground, an
opposite for the cicadas' tapestry
of sound. Almost late in the year enough
for the girl to get her duvet out
and in the deepness of the night, take
flight in the safety of her dreams.
"I think we should move on," says
the boy, looking softly at her hair.

Ted Jenner

Two Hokianga Poems

out of the corner of the eye
in the trough of a wave
the flash of a fin is
eager still to greet us
a lost guardian spirit
aching to find her own kind

Opononi, 24.1.13

Horses forage by the tideline
nibbling at tufts of marram.
Consecrated in the grounds of
Hato Hemi the war dead
count their blessings. Blood
has leeches into this sand
beyond memory. On 'cemetery
hill' crowned by its plain
wooden cross, the spiral path
leads up to the Hoteres
around bracken and couch grass
strewn with wind-blown flowers
of crepe and tulle, a glass dolphin,
tokens of love, even a pair
of angel's wings uprooted by
the wind. The torii gateway
frames the breakers unfolding
their long curling scrolls.
The breakers dissolve in spindrift,
count nothing but themselves.

Mitimiti, 25.1.14

[*from* Genius Loci]

The Murderer

The murderer knocked trees over walking in the forest
his shoulders were so wide,

Beth followed in her red polka dot dress.
She hiccupped and he turned.

His eyes as bright brown as dying antelopes,
in his lips a twitch like a worm on a hook.

Why are you a murderer she said
when you could build a cosy home and make love to somebody?

Because I want to use my hands to tickle god's shame,
I want to put my three biggest fingers up his ass

to where his lazy organs sleep he told her.
She didn't want to look at him, she looked

at the clouds and they twisted and at the sun and it
stung and she decided to kill him

but he was sexy and fast and when she ran
head first into a tree he stopped and helped her up.

You're the worst kind of murderer she said
I've chased them into the depths of lakes

and the sewage systems of cities, I've chased the elderly and the
gang sign pulling youths – but you're the worst.

The murderer was impressed. You might have met
my friend Bob? Beth smiled, Yes I threw him under an avalanche.

Why am I the worst? He leaned against a tree, languid.
It pissed her off, he already knew.

Sophia Johnson

Somewhere in the city

In the breathy
cold darkest blue
a girl dropped a thin yellow shell
threaded on a waxed green string
somewhere in the city

The girl didn't know
– which concrete ripping birch root,
– which metal arched bridge,
– which cold turfed jolting pier,
– which headland of shaking lights,
had grabbed it

The girl realised the sky was falling
thick and fast
pieces of midnight hit her
and the cerulean stars threatened

The girl's barren neck
bent to search the iron gutter grate
for her necklace
her thin yellow shell necklace
that still smelt of fresh cut grass

John Kambolis

Nothing Changed

On the morning after your death
the sun rose, the birds chirped
and the doctor who attempted to
revive you the evening before
had his usual two sugars
with his morning coffee.

The stores opened, the lawyers sued
and the birds played a pensive tune.
Your boyfriend washed his car
with pop music blaring –
while the gentle indifference
of the world exacted its revenge
on the nostalgic ones like me.

I stared at your photo for a while,
and began to write a poem for you.
I called your mom to console her
and I offered to pay for your funeral.
I prayed and then I hung some of your
old pictures on my wall –
I wish I could have done more.

Submission

Sometimes it's easier to hold back when I've got a good piece on my hands. Part of me beams: submit it, it will change your life. You'll be noticed, have a livelihood, be an author. Another part of me warns: don't submit it, it will change your life. How will my mom, my girl, and my old school buddies see me after this? As truths too deep for comfort are revealed, will any semblance of privacy I have left be stripped away? I waste another day without mailing the shit out. No one wants to be a peeled onion, stripped naked for the world to see. I can play the part of the peeled onion for the world, but my family seeing me laid bare is another matter. I usually submit to my fears – and remain silent.

Noel King

22 7 1976

Leaving the heatwaved meadow before the rest of us,
the curtained window waited for your hand, Mum,
to light the lights,

prepare supper, call us to cocoon,
settle in and be quiet while Dad
watched the news.

Yesterday there was shame:
the British Ambassador
was blown up by the IRA;

Siobhán boogied to the radio while stirring the soup:
Paul McCartney singing *i love you, I love you, I love you*
over and over and Dad roared a *shut up*.

Soon President Cearbhall Ó'Dálaigh
would resign over the Emergency Powers Bill.
You would *tut tut* again then with Dad

on *what's the world coming to*, touch your chest
with that odd tip-tap you gave yourself where your heart was.
You gathered us together to say the Rosary, then retired.

We were left stay up to watch The Rockford Files
but a roar came from the bedroom, Dad's
roar, as dry as the grass outside which had no green.

He found you dead on the bed.
The doctor said we'd worked too hard in the sun
and that you were four months pregnant.

Joanne Kingston

Some Hero

Chin up sonny!

They say to me, as I walk the last mile to your supposed grave.

Your real grave is far from here.

But we come here each year to

Remember.

I'm 11 now.

I was 6 when you left for Gallipoli.

Mum and Dad were so proud of you.

But I wasn't.

I wanted you to stay.

You were my best friend.

My big brother.

You taught me to skim those stones on the creek at the back of the
farm.

You taught me how to catch a possum,
and even how to skin it.

You were my hero then.

Now you're not.

You're just a headstone in the ground,

Where your body doesn't even lie.

Heroes shouldn't be dead.

They should be here.

Helping me catch a rabbit,

Building tree huts and going fishing.

So you are not a hero to me now.

Even if strangers honour you for being brave,

In a war I didn't ask for.

But you were then.

Deirdre Thorsen Lavery

Songs from the Mekong

It sounds oriental
this ensemble
on Saturday's programme

an instrumental group
from Cambodia
which I've never visited

I remember
The Killing Fields, the world
stripped down

bone on bone
skull on skull, unforgiving –
and the unforgiven

but no more Khmer Rouge
an orchestra
and now the music

bird cries, monkeys
oars splashing, saffron robes
against the minarets

so like my Paretua Stream
shadows of creatures
of ducks, wild cats

water sending its message
to travellers –
and a song for the maimed



Michele Leggott

Pisces Standing on a Chair

A zodiac in four turns, summer to summer, a bird diving through it all and the carrying sound of voices.

The child has plans. He sees the bird dive through the waves that stretch out before him. What could be clearer than that? Sands of my father's town, yes, but they have taken him home to brush off the sand and the salt, listening to the dazzle of his words telling them about the bird in the wind. Into the tub he goes, soap and slidey water, damp curls combed out. Away from the beach and into the party clothes, and now he stands on the big chair with light in his eyes and the photographer saying Birdie, birdie, look at the birdie. He is a picture. Little white shoes with ankle straps and cotton socks. White gown made from Mama's dress, cut up for him and tried on so many times, fidgety prick of pins as she sewed and sewed. Darling hold still. Ruffled collar, long sleeves caught in a frill at the wrist, skirt quite wide at the hem, a white on white floral or lace pattern. His hand curls around the top of the chair. He is not smiling despite Mr Barcham's best efforts. He is thinking of Sydney Street full of lilies and Mr Mann and Papa singing with the angels. He is remembering the downward tear of light diving into the waves. Not even a party dress or Mr Mann dripping the water on him have taken away the salt and the sand and the shout he made when the bird called out to him. Once for the eyes and twice for dream. He is waving and shouting on the beach, and almost they do not get there in time to scoop him up from the water's edge. Almost. Heart's pearl, she murmurs. Heart's pearl. The photographer shows them out.



He is their first, born three months after Federation, though they were not paying attention to that dividing of the Tasman world. Coming through a bankruptcy, getting over the stillbirth that came before the living child, his sister in their arms nineteen months later. They read about the South African War. They became Edwardians. The family grew until there were eight children, four boys and four girls. They were always busy, the children lined up on the porch like so many jack-in-the-boxes, the house in an uproar, In the middle of everything he remembered the bird diving into the waves.

*

That was Petone. The beach, the christening, the big chair. How many times has he heard how they caught him as he ran shrieking into the waves and again as he jumped from the chair, flying like a bird. How Bella, just five months, roared as she was abandoned first on the sand then as her mother leapt up to intercept the flying child, her brother. How his mother reminded him this morning of the photographer's drape he wanted to pull back because its folds and flowers were the dancing waves and the bird was still there calling out to him.

Less chance of chaos today he thinks as the photographer sets up in the sitting room cleared of the train set and piles of books. A dark drop screens the bay window, the best armchairs have been requisitioned and pulled into place before it. Louie and Rachel are carting baby Jack about, careful to keep him off the floor in case new smocked gown and fancy leggings come to grief before the big moment. Lavender's blue dilly dilly, they sing to him, lavender's green. There is a commotion at the front door where Bill is bringing Grandma Nelson in and trying to keep two dogs, several grandchildren and a trifle in some kind of equilibrium. Now dears, now dears. His mother emerges from the kitchen, taking off her overall. Jess comes out of the girls' room where they are staying this visit because there is room for the cot and just a little quiet. The boys who have been smoking on the back lawn appear in time to be drawn into the hugging and kissing.



The trifle is borne off to the kitchen, the old lady settled in the window seat. When you are king dilly dilly, I shall be queen. His father comes in from the garden with a handful of strawberries for baby Jack. No no, the gown, the leggings. Away to the tub with them, soaking in cold water while the second-best outfit is located, pressed and put on. Just a little chaos and a baby with bare legs.

Now the photographer steps in. Grandma with her lace-up boots and little handbag in one chair. Mother in her ankle-strap pumps and plain dress in the other. Behind them, white handkerchief immaculate in breast pocket and barefoot child in his arms, the young man with the lopsided smile. The baby hoots at his aunties who are pulling funny faces at the other end of the room. Four generations, in and out of a cabinet frame. The oldest speaks with her bright eyes to the others of the Christmas bird in his father's arms. I came here on a ship with white sails and an iron hull, eighty-eight days on the ocean. I was nineteen, alone and with child. He caught me as I fell, the mariner who is not in this picture. Our boat was the Halcione.

*

That was Lower Hutt, where they all seemed to settle and get down to business of one sort or another. Housepainting and paperhanging, clerking, nursing, home duties. One machined steel, one was famous for her embroidery. I was born in Hastings he would say, but we came back when I was just a little tacker. Even after his father was taken to hospital on his twelfth birthday and died four days later, they would circle back to the Hutt and that thick deposit of aunts, uncles and grandparents. Harry's kids, his lopsided smile replicated in the faces that surrounded them. Of course he did not remember his first birthday. But there were voices to fill in the gaps and the photograph itself was there on Grandma Nelson's mantel whenever they went around to see her. Your grandfather was a Swedish sea captain and worked on the Wellington wharves, they would say. Halcione, halcione. A little boy running into the waves. A white bird in his father's arms. Blue Baltic eyes.



When he began bringing girls home, the serious ones were taken out to the Hutt for afternoon tea. Jack's girls. They came and went, until the one with green eyes and wavy black hair walked off the dancefloor at St Frank's and fell in love with the aunts as well as with him. They all came to the wedding in the small mountain town that was her home. They danced all night and took turns standing on a chair in the bathroom to get a glimpse of the shy mountain. Hand-painted lace. Lily-of-the-valley. A honeymoon. Jack's girl in jersey and trows sits on the bow of a boat called Aroha.

Now Gamal Abdel Nasser has nationalised the Suez Canal and she is terrified. Sid Holland promises troops. They talk about what they will do if he is called up and sent overseas to fight. The crisis deepens as the baby is born, bombs drop on Cairo and the world holds its breath. Look again at them packing up the truck and the borrowed caravan. Look at the carrycot wedged into the cab of the truck, one baby leg kicking off the light summer blanket. Look at Jack in the caravan cradling the baby, the two of them gazing at each other, smiles as wide as the sun in the sky outside filtering green light through the open window. Just this, just this. As simple as the baby's white puff sleeve against her father's check shirt. She focuses and presses the shutter. The ceasefire holds. They are on the beach at Whitianga looking for the white boat called Aroha.

*

His guitar would have been there, she thinks. Not a lot of room in a caravan so maybe he put it down on the squab beside them, leaving off his cowboy songs to hold the baby. From this valley they say you are going. As I walked out in the streets of Laredo. And the one she can almost still hear as he looks at them both across the tiny curved space. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. The babe in arms. The Suez Crisis. The weave of generation. Sweet belief, she thinks, though it so very nearly came to grief.



Here he is on the footpath outside the house in Domain St, white shoulder-length curls and holding onto an icecream that is dripping down his bare front. Bees hang over the lavender. Bougainvillea rambles on the fence next door. He is talking a mile a minute, the dazzle of his words flying around them as they laugh and try to mop up the rivulets of vanilla and hokey pokey. They have been at the beach, burying him up to his chest in the honey-coloured sand, giving him shells and sticks for a steering wheel and seaweed pennants to make the sand car fly. She cannot be sure who took the photo on the footpath, only that it belongs to the summer before the moment of the sharply focused heel of a red sneaker disappearing through a suddenly open window.

How did it happen. She has been over it a thousand times. His babble at the west-facing casement, climbing up on the yellow chair. The child-proof catch that came away in his hand and he was gone. A flip and two twisters, a flying child, a white bird in the waves. She runs outside to catch him, knowing it is impossible, that the drop of almost ten feet has been completed in a split second. But she runs to catch him anyway. Heart's pearl, heart's pearl. He is face down, he is dead. She catches him up and he clings to her, a miracle. He is winded but otherwise unhurt. She will never let him go, she will weep forever, trembling as if trembling will never stop. Little fish, little flying fish. There is no end to this terror.

A bird diving through it all, summer to summer, and the carrying sound of voices. A zodiac in four turns. A kingfisher laugh in the wind. The Tasman world that divides them.

*

Christine Leunens

status

yesterday i saw
the self-shot image
a spaghetti string
hanging down over
her skinny shoulder
a shy shine
of braces
'in a relationship'
it said

today
we met up
went to bed
like usual
ate deep spoons
of peanut butter
twisted deep into
vanilla ice cream
in front of
YouTube
talking cats
clumsy dogs
chopped off heads
rivers of blood
flash floods
earthquakes
tsunamis
uprisings
so many dead

we argued
about what?
what, was wrong
with the world
generic stuff
like that
i left the sticky spoon
behind on the benchtop
before i left

tonight
i feel
a sense of dread
in my chest
peeping into her profile
single

it said

Simon Lewis

Book Person

I rocked T. S. Eliot,
was feeling stuffed like him.

I built a castle
in the sand for K.
Had to be quick
before it washed away.

Finally I painted
myself on the wall
the least effort of all.

Thérèse Lloyd

Part of an Urban Abstraction

What's not there is the woman on the shore
who waves goodbye, who props up your headless body
while the cameras are still clicking
and then lets it drop
when you're out of sight
Her grimace as your blood
runs under her shirtsleeve

You are resolute, strangely determined
for a man with no body, going nowhere

Perhaps she brushed your hair
after placing your head on the plate
neatened you up for the trip

The eye moves dolefully up
focused on the task of forever
The grass grows and soon no one
will remember your epic journey
the fantastic promises you made
blowing in and out, through
and around your lovely hair

On Metaphysical Insight

Night-time alone suffocates colour. The only way to tackle it is with thick black oils and reflection. Hopper liked to think his paintings weren't desolate. 'I'm trying to paint myself,' he said. The smeared yellow lights of the automat recede to their nothingness – they have to in order to escape the 'illuminated girl of waiting'. The red line of the shop lino blows itself out in a frowning bowl of fruit. Is it the burning cheeks or the one gloved hand that keeps us here? The door keeps opening and closing.

Richie McCaffery

Cupola

For Sara Aguzzoni

At night, she drove us around Rome,
approaching the cupola of St. Peter's
it backed away from us as if cornered,
as we turned and drove away it loomed
ever larger, a hooded cobra in the mirror.
She told us how, on their first dates,
many Romans do this trick in their cars,
an optical illusion of a dolly-zoom dome.
Much of the religion I've known is aloof
to the pilgrim but tailgates those who
wish to flee, move on or stop believing.
I was simply happy that night to know
there are lovers who can play and live
outside such twisted perspectives.

Theresa Malone

Red Headed Girl Discovers the Peppermint Mine

In minted heat
You escape thought, laying in wait
In those coconut curls
Of smoke
On your
Fine threaded carpet
The solitude isn't squinting tonight.
Cut your hair
Nip a finger on your tobacco soaked zip
Look outside at high wood
Wet with droplets of dead cloud
The happy novel.
Sip potently from your cup
In starvation: bones get closer and closer to skin
Thoughts get closer and closer
To sin

Reade Moore

Mother

Before I was a mother, I stared unmoved
at the blue eyes of a toddler
whose mother went missing
in the Boxing Day tsunami.
I was a mother before I noticed
his hand clutching a yellow truck.
A dark Madras boy washed up
wearing nothing but underwear,
his arms outstretched as if on a cross –
but what did he die for? –
cold, rigid waif-thin legs
warmed by the now-shining sun.
His picture was captured for the wall of the dead
alongside a child half-wrapped in a blue, checked blanket,
while the blue wrapping that drowned her
ebbed on the shore at her feet.
I never used to be the Indian father
holding my son's hand to my forehead.
I wasn't the one beside the Acehnese child,
her bruised face hiding beneath dirty gauze.
I didn't reach for the Indonesian girl
whose fingers reached for me.
And before I was a mother, I never thought
that I would run toward my family
as a wall of white waves rolled toward them.

Margaret Moores

Six days in Nelson and Canterbury

We argued the origin of hills
as they rose and fell before us.
Recalled geology lectures; river terraces,
glacial moraine, fault lines.
Overwhelmed by sky, we named clouds.
Their forms billowed over small towns
with campgrounds – tent sites, concrete
shower blocks, old magazines in the
kitchen, last year's faces.
I thought of McCahon
when we took the road to Nelson; his
Country filled the rear view mirror:
I looked for signs.

By the last day we had run out
of things to say. We bought lunch
in a coffee bar, read the papers.
In the rest room, my reflection
walked away – I am, I am.
I left my bag under the chair, and
an hour down the road, I missed it.

You wouldn't stop for petrol,
drove back under glowering skies.
A strong wind sprang up,
buffeting us between shelter belts
as the needle fell past empty.
There were no waypoints in those
unfamiliar hills; nothing to say how
far we had to go or what it was
that we had really left behind.

Elizabeth Morton

UFO

you swear you saw a flying saucer
amongst the roadside fennel,
and aliens in gingham shirts
squinting from the doorway.
now it is raining into your fries.
we wait on a picnic rug
for unidentified objects to spin
over the countryside,
in between the power pylons
and over the milkcows.
we stare through the night sky
watching satellites for signs.
but only the darkening fields
wait with us, and the mosquitoes,
sucking green sap from our gills.

Night on the Ward

and the bruise will unfurl like an iris.
you walk the garden in your hospital gown.
the night-time snails crack under your
slippers. the cherry blossom is grey
and the moonlight strokes your face
with latex gloves. you carry a teabag
in a styrofoam cup, cigarettes –
small offerings to whoever casts
spells over Kingseat.

Jan Napier

Nullabor Time

Anesthetised and pinned a specimen
as the mummified thylacine from Madura Cave.
I'm in Nullabor time its silences its spaces
dongas and dunes.
Days flat and endless as the black line through red.
Weeks are velcro close as thermo plastic splints
to stabilise my bones.
Sphinx here riddling with erosion
mind sandblasted to acceptance singularity
sameness.
Seeking diversion in road kill stink
(the gibber keeps on) I cut my tracks
must acclimatise to a new cartography
of radius and ulna
to contours below the thermic tedium
retract as do the sleeping frogs.
Await the rains.

Emma Neale

Soon, Moon

It's not you, moon, it's me:
the way I look to you as if

you'll choose to be muse
then look back at my battered

corner-alley of a blue mood
and find only eye rhymes

for human-ugly and you:
lost hubcap, squashed yoghurt pot,

metal sewer lid; all the zeros
on the street numbers of the richest

most forbidding houses; the fierce interrogations
of their security lights and satellite disks;

the white flowers like hung-head hoodies
on the roadside gang of onion weed.

Even the pale, shucked hull
of mandarin peel dropped in the street

reads like eco-graffiti cussing
that we're a pack of greedy moon-calves,

fancy apes with glitter-baubles,
guzzlers at Earth's thin, sweet milk

who can't see our hungers
will turn her face into your mirror, darkly.

Ghost seas, dust prairies, history's debris:
the globe not even a side-trip

for some ecstatic astro-alien who'll tell its ship
just to fly straight past:

nothing celestial here to swoon over
on dirt-dry Planet Boneyard.

Janet Newman

rua

Elvis & bass frantic & funk
love me do dooby do
he's striding up the auditorium steps
guitar in a hard case scent of homme &
heartbreak on his breath *a bebop a loo loo*
a bop bam boom good golly he's playing allegro
the drummer's air-brushing the timpani Sasha's
biding his time on lead string fingers sing
he's commandeered this ship its sailing
through heavy weather cloud bursts frantic winds
roar of flapping sheets he ties them down sails
towards the blue horizon a thunderclap at his back
spray on his face eyes sheeted towards
the sheer distance of it all

Piet Nieuwland

Kauri Mountain, Kiwi Coast, Ngati Korora

Through gate
Cross paddock
Down cliff track

It's a dive straight in
To kelp laden surf
Thick with froth and foam
Where the polygamous languages
Of our genes, speak
Through the warm mouths
Of hot summer skies

White butterflies and monarchs
Jive and jizz and jazz to black cicada beats

Centuries of kuaka, eye to eye, kanohi te kanohi
Lift off in cloud bound north

The crayfish orange hulk of a ship
Crawls into the horizontal zone
The air filling with a sweet
Salty taste
Of creamy flesh

The tooth of a yacht sail
Cuts the wind
Slowly peeling open
Curves of software ecosystems

And from a 4G Apteryx smartphone
A call comes in
Stoatattackstoatattackdogattack
Stoatattackdogattackstoatattack
Stoatattackdogattackstoatattack

Keith Nunes

remembering dinner at dinner

picking at the remains of the barbeque
as youth mock the
grey-splatter oldies,
I remember the night before with its
rata-tatat meaningless spoutings and its
taboo red wine dripping onto ghost-white table-clothes

we were seated with the pastor and his wife
wholly competent, excruciatingly boring in their
earnestness and resolve – us with our inadequacies
falling out of our mouths eliciting blank looks
and repercussions

this will be the last function I attend
until I die, when the pastor will speak of the night
we had dinner together and how I kept repeating myself

fashion show

she's trying on outfits for the slipshod sideshow
me lying on the bed
watching her sashay
the tired afternoon sun excuses itself
mumbled music drifts down the hall
she asks me
and I tell her truly: 'exquisite'
and she gives me a peek into her soul

Jessamine O Connor

Ten So Far This Morning

– Gaza, November 2012 –

Last night I closed the paper
on the pictures,
then sprang for the remote
to make the children disappear,
to stop them being lowered, so fast,
into rectangles
cut from clay

Ten so far this morning

Now it's numbers I'm trying not to hear,
wiping the table for breakfast,
seeing again
and again
the white bundles,
sped along in the strong arms
of numb-faced men

Ten so far this morning

I let the porridge glue,
and start forcing tiny trousers
onto reluctant legs,
living, pink, thrashing legs,
snapping –
why cant you just behave?-
as they go scampering away

Ten so far this morning

Boys crouched under shields
made of their own front doors,
hiding from the sky
behind doors just like mine
still flapping
with letterboxes,
the childhood in their eyes

Ten so far this morning

I get back to the table and wipe,
lean into it, wiping, lean on it,
a terror of vomiting,
the walls moving,
cupboards circling,
swaddling me,
and I'm choking on clay

Ten so far this morning

I need to breathe,
I need to want to breathe,
to want to be, here,
where for all my retching sorrow
I can only spare one small drop,
that falls, reflects,
and is quickly wiped away.

John O'Connor

Kinaxixi

after Agostinho Neto

six o'clock / a hot evening /
a bench in Kinaxixi

perhaps someone will
come & sit beside me.

all I see is the dark faces
of people sauntering here &
there I speaking in broken
Kimbundu / the language
of absence.

& I see the dragging
feet of servants the sons
of servants / looking for

whatever they can find
in permanence / in alcohol

showing neither love nor hatred.

after sundown &
lights turned on I

wander off thinking
this & that – a simple
life – the simplicity of
someone who walks /

despite tiredness / in
the darkness.

Dead of Night

after Manuel Bandeira

12 o'clock. profound darkness.
I stand by a gas lamp
where the fat toads are swallowing mosquitoes

apart from which
nothing is happening in the street /
not a drunk / not a street walker
only the shades of those

– mainly from other times – who have passed
through / though some are dead.
even the drains / the gutters weep.

see the tears in the running
water / the voice of darkness
that stretches back to eternity.

Postcard from Israel

you are witnessing an execution, stunning in its detail

the golds could've been scraped off Cleopatra's vulva or a
flame-haired Klimt

you have to pick up the groceries pound fern-root
swap kids a shame you can't stay

when the axe falls we will all sing cheers count 3 days
one star & open our eyelids again

the naked one bleeding out robes – a casual acquaintance
of yours – says he knows what you did last summer
give him a call

you have become pristine, your house immaculate as teeth

we're waiting to see if roses bloom from the scarlet ribbon
trail of his veins

I am craving watermelons just as you motion to stand
sluiced into torpid mouth-pods

Angel

half of you is albatross and apples on the inside, your
scorched wing lashes my cheek as you pass as you pass

are you leaving? He has lost his head

Revelations

I

How to fill this presented frame?

A fenced-in

tabula rasa , play the

three score and ten cards,

this is all.

I'm always

looking

over at neighbours, comparing.

Then down to it, press the pen

the brush flow, learning my own patterns and ridges

the undulations below

the surface. Everyone's got a language

that they hardly

speak.

II

Shock,

pressing hard to a

point, in mid frame

adrenaline running like a bull,

I see the lines glow. I take credit for some

dusty inspiration,

until suspicions emerge like swamp things.

Realising

it's not blackboards or canvas I'm inscribing

but a window. A window dirty with oily film

like a sidewalk. And all my tangled musings

working to shut out the light.

III

Now laughing, now
ashamed, surprised
by this light and I'm scraping off layers
like a secluded madman, regretting the loss
of my laboured work,
then catching
glimpses of
the outside, I'm spurred on to more
revelations.

Some try to open windows
while others like closure. Preferring
light and moving cubic air,
I am still trout-lured by shutter manoeuvres.
Is it opaque finger painting
against the sun, or fascination with feeling
the roughness of paint, the brass smoothness
of latches and locks, graceful
security.

Sarah Penwarden

Titirangi pantoum

The still of the late afternoon
Dead-end street where no-one turns
Here comes the rain, the rain
Leaf-fern sky with streaky clouds.

Dead-end street where no-one turns
Cicadas praise the heat
Leaf-fern sky with streaky clouds
The tarmac's bubbling black.

Cicadas praise the heat
Between the trees, the city hides
The tarmac's bubbling black
Gutters rush towards the flood

Between the trees, the city hides
A kaka caws then flaps away
Gutters rush towards the flood
Gold haloes and a sacred heart.

A kaka caws then flaps away
The mist wraps trees in white cocoons
Gold haloes and a sacred heart
One tear falls down Mary's cheek.

The mist wraps trees in white cocoons
Here comes the rain, the rain
One tear falls down Mary's cheek
The still of the late afternoon.

Kerry Popplewell

Last Night

Last night was a night of wind.
Branches and trees worked loose –
widowmakers among them.
We were too restless to sleep.

Then in the morning, regardless,
we walked to meet the weather,
bands of rain blowing past
like smoke. Like sand.

We barely noticed; found
it far too hard to pull free
from supplejack pinning us down,
the tight vines of self-concern.

Jenny Powell

An Invitation to Magic in the Long Grass

A rabbit pulled from his magical hat,
a stream of scarves from his sleeve?

Let's say I can choose a card, any card
from his pack. Diamonds or hearts?

I can't decide. After he slides his hands
together my purse or necklace

appears disappears appears disappears.
From the collar of my dress he picks

a rose, in my pocket he finds a golden
egg, a butterfly in my hair.

Soon I will see the tricks he can really
do; his magic that lies in the long grass.

Joanna Preston

Silks

She straddled the ridge-cap. Against her legs the day's warmth, trapped in the roof tiles, felt comforting, almost alive. Nearby, someone was burning leaves – a sweet smell, like toffee. Across the fences, the trees were in autumn's silks – russet and gold, chestnut and bay. She gripped lightly with her knees, as she'd been taught. She didn't want wings. She wanted to fly on the thunder of hooves, feel muscles surging beneath her. The word in her head, matching stride – free-ee-dom, free-ee-dom, free-ee-dom – as she bent low over the withers, pressing her cheek against the finial's neck, her own hair a mane, streaming wild in the wind.

Promenade

Balancing against the hand
of his own shadow, a small boy
skipping along the top
of the seawall. It takes a moment
to register the frayed cuffs, the
too-tight blazer, the grimy
bedraggled shirt-tails.
He fishes something – button, coin –
out of his pocket, flicks it ahead
and skips on. What is wrong?
He hums, then breaks
into a song about a girl
and a lovely tea-chest, in a voice
too deep for the child he appears
to be. Your horoscope this morning
warned that today all is not
as it seems, and beyond
him, the waves in the bay
shimmer their agreement.
It also said you should look
for a partner with true
staying power, and that
things would be more challenging,
and yet easier. The manchild
shoves his hands in his pockets
and jumps down on the seaward
side of the wall, trailing a thread
of reedy song – something about
a miller's daughter, and questions
to ask of butterflies.

Vaughan Rapatahana

growing up in godzone

[*he ora taumaha, he ora kua whakapōhara*]¹

it wasn't the dull clump
of the cruel fists
that hurt the most.

it wasn't the stifled sobs
of the stinging eyes
that burned the most.

it wasn't the cracking smash
of the splintered wood
that cost the most.

it wasn't even my face, my body, my waft.
it was hers.

it wasn't the
beer-baited breath,
the cirrhotic cheeks,
the cretinous crap
spat out vatic
to an empty phone.

it was the imploded angst,
the deadly dread
that screwed me sick
every night
for sixteen years.

you cringe us
still,

the brutal
black shadow
bullying

¹ *he ora taumaha, he ora kua whakapōhara* – a harsh life, a ruined life – Maori.

tensile,
the frosted glass
on our locked
front door.

Nicholas Reid

Copperplate

It's faded now, the
rate at which his slow
descenders fall and
greet the rising stroke.
Harmonious breaks and
full-stops evenly
spaced and parted. Firm
regularity
of line and lines, dis-
missing curlicue
and swash

A man once
sat and wrote a coun-
ty council's orders
and accounts, for main-
tenance of drains, in-
spection of gas-lines,
appointments to school
boards and fire depart-
ments. In artful art-
lessness the bureau-
crat's calligraphy.

"All Clerks once learned this"
the placard says, de-
moting copperplate
to a push-button
mechanism, cal-
low waste of eff-
ort implied.

A man
once sat and wrote, a-
ware of dignity
in a moving nib,
and swam an office
in a sea of strokes.

Jeremy Roberts

Death of a Poet

for Jim Carroll

I heard you died
on 911, 2009.
Well, if you had to go,
that's good –
because it'll be easy to remember
the day of the loss:
an infamous day
an infamous writer.

I first fed upon your work
in my trailer home, Ontario 1982.
It was a good meal
for the mind,
& helped me define
& focus
 my searching –
which I came to realise
was really a strategy,
a root word
that lay at the heart
of everything :

Brain:cells, storms, waves
Body:glove, slam, love
Time:line, less, left.

David Romanda

Compulsion

He unlocks the front door.

Relocks it.

He tries

the faucet

in the kitchen.

He tries

the faucet

in the bathroom.

He unlocks

the sliding balcony door.

Relocks it.

There's a greasy

egg shaped splotch

on the glass

near the lock.

He grabs

paper towel

& blue glass cleaner.

He kills

said splotch.

He scrubs his hands

with lavender

scented soap.

He splashes water

on his face.

He checks the stove.

He opens the fridge.

(Good & cold.)

He rewashes his hands.

He fights back the urge

to recheck the locks.

He picks up the phone.

He dials

his ex wife's work.

(She's got this
new supermarket gig.)
He calls
to tell her
a man in a bunny suit
is a comin' to blow her head off.

My Girl

As a rule
she had no
rules
she'd suck
the summer
out of
any guy for
20 bucks
yet now
she won't let me
touch her ...
I've put
a ring on her
finger
but she's
not ready
not for love

John C Ross

Imagining Thomas Jefferson's daughter²

Sally's brother being known as Uncle
Jim was odd as we half-
knew he half-
was that Mother's
father begat him

We always half-
knew Mother's slave
Sally was her half-
sister that Father was
having them both

Mother would have kept
silent women of her class
knew their duty
to not know
what they all knew

We always half-
knew Sally's children
were our half-
siblings yet they
were slaves
had to work at
something

We were stylish opulent
Virginia gentry

² *Note:* The imagined speaker is Martha Randolph, the longest surviving of the three children, all female, of Thomas Jefferson. His wife, also Martha, died in 1782, Jefferson himself in 1826. Sally is Sally Hemings, with whom, as is now proven by Y-chromosome DNA evidence, he had four surviving children, Beverley, Madison, Eston and Harriet. Sally was a quadroon, and one of the six children of John Wayles, Martha Jefferson's father, and the slave Elizabeth (Betsy) Hemings. When Thomas married Martha, he acquired 135 slaves, including the Hemings family. Jefferson spent much of the last ten years of his life remodelling his house, at crippling expense.

our inalienable God-given rights
included to them and to the others
if one being sold to cover
debts pleaded being some
kind of cousin I had to keep
silent

For over forty years
after we lost Mother Sally half-
took her place standing back
mostly silent what could we
know of what she knew
thought or felt?

When Father died two of her
brood had already
fled the other two he
ordered freed in his
will likewise Uncle Jim yet
not her

a legacy of
debts a midden of dead
words knowing I'd only half-
known my own
father

slaves plantation grandiose
house since sold to the highest
bidders freeing my half-
aunt lost me fifty
dollars

I now keep silent about
much better my sons not
know for me
Dixie is half-
over which is a half-
shame.

Joshua Vernon Roy-Anstey

Cat-Fish-Rat

I leafed through another book of poetry today
And thought I saw what you heard in the dark
Loosened by the lines in your book
Like a ball shaking out of a tree

I took it down like a note in class
It passed by me quickly, was hard
To see what was dislodged from that darkness
But I'm sure I saw it clearly for a moment see?

One of those indefinable moments, but you did
Didn't you? Sly old dog you if I ever knew what
Really you pointed to I wouldn't
Wanna know eh? It passed and

Stuck, bam! In my mind like a
Freshly borne affection for that
Girl the first time I really saw her. But you got it
You came here before I set off, wandering after

Like the child after time

Dagmara Rudolph

Life is Unfair

I walk behind two 'popular girls'.
They go onto a freshly paved path.

So do I.

One turns around

"Don't walk on that path"

she says

You did too,

I want to say.

Life is unfair

I inspect a huge tree.

A 'popular girl' does as well.

The tree is humongous!

Her friends walk up to me

"Don't look at that tree"

they say

She did too,

I want to say.

Life is unfair

I take a cookie out of my lunchbox.

The 'popular girls' see it.

I bring it to my mouth

Their leader snatches

my cookie.

"That's mine"

she says

"No it isn't. It's mine"

I say

A teacher walks up to the crowd that has
formed.

“Whose is it?”

Everyone points.

To their Queen, the ‘popular girl’.

I get told off for dishonesty.

Life shouldn’t be like this: unfair

Anna Rugis

The Feel of my Life³

we are four days behind now
and must move on

our grief hidden
in bags of salt
we lead our bell-strung animals
and their tread steadies us

the ashes of the man
who was my father
will stay in the holy place
to be dispersed by the three winds
we don't look back
but hold in our minds
the demon blue of Phuksundo

our precious things carried close
on this unspeakable journey
weigh heavily
even as our gratitude curls upward
to mingle with the auspicious clouds

only two more days to our stream and valley
to pasture and the scent of trees
to afternoons sitting
with sun on our backs

only two more days

³ Nepal's Dolpo nomads and their animals make the 20 day trek from Soldang across the high Himalaya to their summer home in Hurikot. During the journey the patriarch of the family dies unexpectedly.

Genevieve Scanlan

Cross-Purposes

Twice in ten years
she's smiled sheepishly,
reached out a hand and asked
"Would it be okay
if I prayed over you?"

I will always say "Of course."

Twice in ten years
I've bowed my head
and taken in each word,
in case I *am* the only one
who's there to hear them.

I have wanted to cry,
because she loves me –
enough to wish me what (for her)
is the highest, purest of all loves.
(She *still* has faith I'll find it...)

I have wanted to cry because
though I can hear in her
feeling as sincere
as any poet laureate's
(if in form less sparkling...)

were I to raise *my* hand above her head
and verbalise *my* love,
it could never equal what comes
From On High.

Her God is a jealous god,
and I am at an eternal disadvantage.

Kerrin P. Sharpe

a language goes silent

amy and harry
lived in the fruit
of their shop
like mango stones

out the back
they were chinese
spoke chinese
held chinese names

there amy fried
on the tiny eyes of gas
paddock-to-plate-pork

there amy crawled
back to china
in smoke that chased
away darkness

harry was weighing
bananas when he
heard her spirit
leave the shop

Fred Simpson

Hymn 131: 'marching as to war'

Miss Etheridge at assembly, (her vein-drained fingers
disfigured by percussion – her lenses split in two), beat
keys with the enthusiasm of a warrior,
to please God.

God, I presume, was stirred, and oddly so were we.
Singing as a phalanx, without irony, we toiled,
(almost to breaking), to reach hymn 131,
with Oates looking on.

Fifty years gone, at a funeral, and I sing
with the approval of the deceased, hymn 131.
His chosen face is covered by my arthritic
thumb, as I drum

a eulogy for those who were roused to succumb.
Their pulses are ice, (like Oates), their feet are brittle –
amputated by a futile summons
to glorious conceit.

Tracey Slaughter

from **Me & Karen Carpenter**

more than once
I had to pull her
by the ponytail
out of her bib
of puke. When I count
my calories I
count you twice,
she said. We
had only
just begun.

*

me & Karen Carpenter
couldn't help ourselves.
Handholds
of knucklebone settled
in our throats. There was so much
goddamn loneliness & the light
was swinging on
our yellow nerve
ends. In the day room
the women's magazines
were calling occupants. All prayers
turned lumbar.
It wasn't easy
listening.

*

in the end we could not tell
who was the boy & who
was the girl. Me
& Karen C believed in
unisex starvation

*

the nurses come around
for soundcheck,
wearing their
final rostered smiles.
They plug where
the veins have flunked but
it's okay: me
& KC always liked
needlepoint. *You put us
on the road* we once
cross-stitched for Mom.
They mop around
our crewcuts
with merciful washcloths,
tap at the circles that mic
our heartbeats up.
When they exit
we still get half
a hit-tune
coming off their catchy
shoes. But it's
so white it's nearly
invisible.

Laura Solomon

Joan of Arc Sends a Postcard Home

Dearest, they burnt me!
They caught me out on the road after midnight,
astride my prancing pony, the wind full in my face.

They lassoed the horse and brought me in.
The moon put out its light, the stars fluttered, then failed.

There began a howling gale like the voices of the dead
shrieking across a distant ocean full of cold, bloodless fish.

They prepared my stake
it sat on the hill like a cross
a stack of wood beneath it.

They tied me to the wood firmly, with rope,
that cut into my wrists and ankles.

My black cloak puffed out around me like feathers.

Somebody struck a match
and then the thing was lit.
Whoosh – the wood took and blazed,
but I did not feel the burn.

It began to snow, large white flakes
floated down around me and coated the ground.
the hateful sent icy fingers down my spine

I showed off as I died, howling and wailing and failing my limbs;
a spectacle and then, I was gone,
my spirit departed my body
like a train leaving a station
I became feathers and ash.

John Tangney

Rugby Union

The whole team moves forward behind the ball
In a broken line of red shirts. When you are holding
The ball the green shirted men can drag you
To the earth , and pile on top of you, but the ball
Mostly squirts out the back on the red side again
Until the man in blue blows a whistle and they stop
To push each other head to head in groups of eight.
Sometimes the teams forget the ball and wrestle
Back and forth holding each other by the lapels
And if a punch is thrown you have to sit on the side
For a while in payment. A strange economy this one.
Stranger still the thousands who come to watch
And cheer them on. Afterwards the teams shower
In dejection or happiness, depending how many
Times they carried the ball to the end. They call it
After a school where it was invented for boys
Who built an empire and fought terrible wars
Against people who then took up the game themselves.

Richard Taylor

“It was an itsy bitsy teenie weenie yellow polka dot bikini that she wore for the first time today.”

... something like that – the sexy fifties following the naughty forties. In those days we heard the cosmic comedy laughing out from Trinity the physics poetry – Sanscrit speaking of Openheimer’s thousand suns – and the Incredible Brain like a mad penis poking up from the slime of time whose ‘beginning’ was ...

... but what could we all do, what can we do now? All those reactions, chains

It was time of the Milk Bar, great fire balls, and the machine gun murders –

Bassett road. Those days we went to the ‘flicks’ at the ‘flea pit’: Sante bars, I loved them: thin and dark and sweet as molecules, full of them, full of the certainty of pleasure (Bikini – that, the tiny shattered fragments inspired the engineer, those tests, nuclear, and then the ‘nuclear family’ and the bikini herself, you could put it in a bag, sex to go: (greatest inventions): we could follow the decay curves, the body, and the blast we all had or expected, somehow, someday...)

But the white milk choc, and those gob-stoppers, changing colours like the times, as Islands and people were shafted & shifted, and now we were the beginning of power and good old death:

“You haven’t got the guts to fuck me!” the hot blonde by the alley way tore in, in their lovers’ quarrel, teen-angel, maybe something primal, transmitted through the air, the cellophane: flick flick flick...

and the Bodgies and the Widgies: the chuddy gum, winkle pickers, the slick-backs.

“Chicken!” as they jumped in front of a car to dare or die: or head to head maybe to go like James Dean. Those were the days:

they did the ton down Pilky Road on Triumphs or BSA's. None of this Jap shit:

It was then that old Ash dreamed that Daffy Duck was the devil – comes of

Goin' to the flicks with O'Hara the same day he read Milton. The Bikini made

Millions, and Bond cured the world: there were no bombs loaded onto Korean hospitals, no people machine gunned on innocent streets, no blood:

it was all a movie (and later, much later, we all read *The Things*): the sinister 'Nips' were always 'evil' in their MIGs: the Yanks always won, we were happy, and felt safe at night.

So it was Milton and Daffy in love, and away they walked, hand in hand. Sex and songs began. We became knowing, loving every minute of the Talking Horse and the Stooges (all Three): and the Terry tunes: 'Moonshine' was to come later.

We knew nothing in those cider days when wagons rolled.

Nothing of mass or Mass – critical, or other.

At night, in sleep, great balls of light.

Loren Thomas

Sea Floor

My emotions need
to be dredged up
from the seabed
that is these pills.
The only way
I know how to write
and it's been flicked off
indefinitely.
Where are my emotions
when I need to knot them
and tie them
to my spinal cord
So I can have them
run their horrific stories
down my back
Telling me
if I'm good enough
to say a few
non-committal
words
to a piece of paper.

I'll use this drink.
If it doesn't reel them up
It'll fake them with drawn out sighs
And liquor filled gasps

I can fake normal like the best of them.
I just need this sip to prove it.
To stab the back of my eyes
When needed
And make tears of some variety
Lick my skin.

Who needs real emotion
when these pills
have given me a clean whiteboard
to work with.
Forget your past,
past you hates you anyway.
She never knew how to have fun.
I know you want something stronger
but this spark will have to do.
Roaring fire doesn't come from liver failure.
It comes from overdoses.

And romantic smoke inhalation
mixed with a dash of powder.
But get real
you're a student
you can't afford that.
So drink your wannabe emotions
and fake some semblance of normality.

Edwin Thumboo

Leaf

Years and years ago you fell in shafts
Of light. Your tree was young. Eyes
Tracking that fall, were wonder-filled,
Green innocence.

You danced side to side tilted twisted
Summersaulted inside a puff of wind; then
Floated gentle, soft, silent down. Eyes
Saw a small story.

That patch of earth has changed: you above
Red pavilions that shelter when the sun burns;
Your trunk bigger so my arms can't embrace;
And branches, carefully pruned, predictable.

No wild flowers. Only regular N-Park rows.
Corners are for barbecues. You still fall, my
Vivid leaf. I watch again, wondering. Smart
Eyes see and probe,

Yet, sadly, wish for green.

Mike Tolhurst

My Great Grandfather times three met Charles Darwin

My great grandfather times three
met Charles Darwin,
It's true!
it was really big news that year.
After sailing for miles across the sea
Darwin reached Kororareka ,
village of vice, and
my great grandfather times three.

It was Christmas when the Beagle arrived
to give its men some rest and fun
and collect specimens for its sponsors .
At Waimate North they got raisin cake, tea and
on Christmas Day heard the sermon of
my great grandfather times three

Darwin didn't like the sermon much
said it was boring dull and plain
and put him to sleep.

But Charlie probably suffered from the
brandy and plum duff he had at dinner with
my great grandfather times three.

After nine days Darwin sailed away
having nothing decent to report
or to say about us.

Despite all his lack of courtesy
appreciation and esteem
it still remains that once
many years ago
Charles Darwin met
my great grandfather times three.

Jamie Trower

a love letter to disability

dear disability

i need to talk from my heart to you
memories lying on sand broken into shards
when we swore that we were lovers
we were perfect pubescent strands of nothingness
all those fucked up words that meant nothing
you just needed another jagged jigsaw piece so you fit in
to say that the bond between us was more than shaky arms
or the molding of the undulating chair
our love was a scrapbook of feelings full of spelling mistakes
i can remember us together with your hand resting on my shoulder
but now i see how i let you scribble your doodles
on that page for too long
that childish love you hoped for confused me
now i realize that it wasnt love you gave

dear disability

it was nothingness

Richard von Sturmer

Palaeolithic Excavations in the Lower Dordogne

At the end of the talk
the interpreter for the deaf
took a long drink.

When the last generation
of pig hunters
had passed away
the wild pigs
staged their comeback.

It was hot in the auditorium.
The professor of palaeontology
had a black, bristly beard
with a streak of white
right down the centre.

She thought of
'The Bride of Frankenstein'
but only after he had made
his closing remarks
and paused
to ask for questions.

That evening
in the countryside
she relaxed with a glass
of red wine
and failed to hear
the wild pigs
tear up her vegetable patch.

Kirsten Warner

Billy last night at Muriwai Beach

Your grin suddenly in front of me
we were looking at a leather jacket
in the window of the hospice shop
it was only a week ago
we'd see each other at the birthday
have a dance, looking forward to it.
Wish I'd been able to say Billy, how are you?

There was always a story, a tale
how you lost your finger on a trawler
the one that got away
you were more than most people.
Your shine that sometimes came from a dark place
where there was no telling. You had an edge.
I was sometimes scared of you
you didn't seem scared of anything,

It's like you were out front
telling us it's wild this way
K-Road, where our kids hang out now
how young and reckless we were
rock'n'roll Ponsonby
how intense and bright you were
how tough and sharp and bright.

You left a note, you were going
on your last drive up the beach.
They sent some people to find you.
We don't know how it is for someone.
I can't believe you're gone

from Muriwai Beach
travelling north now
towards the Cape.

Like driving a table

In the universe behind my eyelids
a floater a tiny labyrinth curved
lines like stone fingers greenly lit
with an encrypted message slowly
turning in space

flick of light switch the migraine
warning try to hold on to sleep
suspended in an electrical storm
holding on letting go holding on

my children are missing the sea
has flooded the settlement in the
old wooden house I find my infant
who's been bawling so long she's
ice pink my breast is thin she butts
mouth searches eyes tight shut

the others have gone I am on a
foreign ski field the wind's picking
up lifting the snow visibility
closing in like a tunnel unable to
stop like a toboggan racing on an
icy shute

the truck driver radios for an
ambulance turns onto the highway
the door's not closed I'm slipping
clutching for a hand hold the
driver chats while I am falling

I have to order a taxi my father
needs me I should be home by
now I break into the house in a
windowless living room find the
phone number written under two
wall hangings of heroic flaming
torches snow capped mountains
the slogans of a divided Korea

it's hard to navigate like driving a
table with no clutch or brakes I've
gone miles out of my way can't
stop at the traffic lights barely
missing pedestrians coast to a halt
two women put their teacups on
my table the building's facade
glazed turquoise looms over us
studded with staring white faces

push off from street cobbles into a
corridor park my table in an eddy
of untidiness given a baby to hold
a cherub with gold mesh wings out
the window the garden is strewn
with playing cards and Monopoly
play money sodden after rain

count my blessings early camellia
late hibiscus the pink of faded silk
I am not in the pink more like
dianthus my edges pinked I blink

my little eye.

Wei Sun

OCD and Conversations with Cat

4am and wide awake,
I put my dressing gown on,
and wander around in the backyard.
The birds are already awake,
and the cat decides to stand by me,
to keep me entertained at this hour.

I steal flatmate's piece of ham,
and get a little bowl of water,
the cat seems happy.
"thank you for the company", I say.
"That's alright. Thank you for the early breakfast." the cat replies.

Holy shit! A talking cat!

I run into the lounge,
take all the dry clothes off the dryer,
fold them nicely,
the light coloured ones must be on top,
and the dark coloured ones go to the bottom.

I tidy up the table,
rearrange everything in the cupboard;
can foods have to be hiding in the back,
the stick bread has to go on top of the cans;
fruits must be in the front of everything,
and be arranged nicely –
small ones on the left,
and large ones on the right.

I turn the light in the hallway off,
then turn it back on,
because it is still dark outside.
I look for the cat everywhere,
but cannot find him.

“No one loves you”, the cat says.
“Here you are. But why? I love everybody!”
“Because of your OCD.”
“No cats like nicely cut little pieces of ham,
or water takes exactly two thirds of the bowl” the cat explains.
“But what do cats like?” I question.
“Cats like random piles of ham,
random amount of water,
a random piece of cheese would be a bonus,
and a random ball would be heaven.” the cat answers.

“okay let me get you lcm cube of cheese,
and clean the ball I found from the bush the other day!”
“No! I want a piece of randomly shaped cheese,
and a dirty ball!”
“But ...”
“Listen, this is what cats are like,
there you go,
have a bite of my cheese,
and roll on the grass with me!”

I end up rolling on the grass laughing with the cat,
playing the dirty ball I found from a random bush,
and sharing a piece of cheese with him.

The cat disappears,
and so I am lonely again.
But no I am not lonely,
I have the birds and the dirty ball,
I have everything,
and everyone loves me.

Elizabeth Welsh

How to pay for woodblock lessons

She was given an oyster to keep
when she moved down south,

her parents thought
it would be symbolic:

you move, you take
a city, an oyster.

She wanted to move around a lot,
to learn from anyone that would

let her move.

It turned out that oysters don't mean much.

She tried to barter with one
for some time

with a woodblock printer, his dog.

She told her parents,
but they pressed another into her palm;

for luck, they winked.

There's always something in good fortune.

Gabriel White

from **Aucklantis**

Cash machines

When I see people lining up to use cash machines
a part of me feels they're lining up to go into another world

Eye site

I'm having trouble with my eyesight
I keep misreading signs
like this word "sureslim"
I first read as surrealism
it's a pretty dangerous problem when you're driving
sometimes I'll see a stop sign and think it's a stomp sign
or think a caution sign says cushion
I'll see a red light and think it's a reading light

Blank

I'm thinking of opening a blank
a place where you can have a blank account
speak to the blank manager and check your blank balance
get a blank statement
there's blank tellers with blank faces looking at blank screens
you could have blank robbers rob the blank
put some blank canvases up on the walls
maybe call it the Auckland Savings Blank
or the Blank of New Zealand
or the World Blank

No

I just bought this mouse bait

it's called No

it's an interesting word I guess – No

it's an interesting thing to ask for in a shop

“Have you got No?”

“No”

“Is there any alternative?”

“No”

Pat White

Leaving Ireland

That last night, the city welcomed them
and although the sun went down on Galway Bay
there was no moonrise over Claddagh, just that
white swan rising and falling on wavelet
caught in the dark water's movement

She said 'you've been biking up past Moher
and down through Skibbereen,
the Burren even have you then?

And they didn't argue the toss, there was
nothing to argue with her about, apron wearing
expert telling young travellers what to think.
Two days before, that Atlantic Gale blew him
clean as a spear over the handlebars of the bike
he'd have been happy to bike through
the rest of his days in this place, but pain
started a new conversation. The next day
they travelled overland by train and in Dublin
biked flat out to the ferry -just in time.

They made their mad escape intact, and time
as it does healed the bruising of the road
though he never saw the villages near
Enniskillen where once they had come from
- or left it quite behind, the soft rain falling

on the hedges, and the singing of the thrush
just a song at twilight, when the day is done
perhaps there's no returning, which is why
a pebble from the road sits so pocket snug
and polishes the stories, lets them grow

'Wait till you're making your way through Connemara and Donegal. You've not seen nothin' yet.' She said. We never did.

Diane Wilson

Fault Lines⁴

Loud rumbling through the floor	A haunting
Dog whining	Remembered dream
Massive jolt, a whip, a groan	Sickening wave of dread
Crockery clattering, lamps swaying,	
floor	
buckling in front of our eyes	
Jiggle shake violent shaking	
Bricks and glass crashing	
Choking, eyes and throats full of	
grit	
Utter helplessness uttering helplessness uttering help uttering nothing	
	Leave me alone
	Loud voices, bright lights overhead
In a quiet room zigzag lines score a trail of	
tectonic shifts	neural oscillations
on the	
seismograph	electroencephalograph (eeg)
Ground opening up beneath us	Bitten tongue
Smashed glass facade	Broken nose blood drying on my
War zone	face
Crawling along the road	Bruised elbow chin and skull
Shocked silence	Cold, extra blankets on top of me by
Confusion	kind nurse
Covered all over in dust and bits of	Kind nurses gruff doctors

⁴ *Acknowledgement:* Some words or phrases used to describe the earthquake experience were sourced from (or inspired by) eyewitness accounts at the following website: <http://www.quakestories.govt.nz>.

Still shifting pavement under our feet | debris Gruff doctors who talk over my head to my husband

Hey, I'm still here

Time to go home

How? | Barefoot

Nothing | Everything
looks the same

Regional | Personal
disaster

Fault lines fault lies where does fault lie who is at fault?

Not me |

Not me

Yes, you bet I'm feeling sorry for myself – I've had my

house |

work |

sister-in-law |

dog |

home town |

cathedral | driver's licence

taken away from me

Lost

homes |

communities |

peace of mind

Moment magnitude Richter scale | Simple complex secondary

Convergent divergent elastic | Hypersynchronous activity

Phase transition into spinel | Tonic-clonic atonic ideopathic

structure |
For all their science
seismological | neurological
experts
refuse to give odds on this happening again
|
Sometimes, when I lie down at night, I feel the bed shaking
Not happening | Not possible
says my husband | says the neurologist
Remember, we lived here for twelve | Remember, you won't feel any
years without an earthquake | shaking if you have another
seizure
|
What if another one hits and I'm at the shops?
|
It's just a matter of time until this happens again
I guess I have to live with that
|
No I don't - I'm leaving
Christchurch |
Oh

Ignorance

Tchimpanadou⁵ !
Je ne connais pas

Je ne connais pas les accents de ma langue maternelle
Le vocabulaire épars d'une langue au crépuscule de son temps.

Je ne connais pas le nom des ancêtres
Du père de Ngoumini⁶, du frère de Tchilongo⁷, guichetiers des
tombes

Je ne connais pas le pas de la danse du mil
Epis d'un champ jauni au doute
Des conseils aux contes, des histoires aux légendes
Je ne connais pas le rituel du bain de minuit de la veuve
Encore moins la direction initiatique du ballet du circoncis.

Je ne connais pas interpréter les rêves
Les bornes de ma culture ! Ah ! Cette fille a l'agonie
Je ne connais pas, je ne connais pas encore
Dialoguer avec les défunts
Ces héros arpentant les couloirs des ténèbres la nuit tombée
Quand s'élève le chant amer d'une chienne battue.

⁵ Femme chef du clan Soko. Une tribu de la forêt dense d'Afrique Centrale qui a reçu en héritage mille mots au début du monde. Chaque mort emporte trente mots pour communiquer avec les morts. Chaque nouveau né arrive au monde avec un mot. Le peuple Soko retrouve la parole seulement quand les mille mots d'origine sont réunis.

⁶ Ancêtre.

⁷ Ancêtre.

Ignorance

Tchimpadou⁸!

I do not know !

I do not know the accents of my mother tongue
The scattered vocabulary of a language in the twilight of its time.

I do not know the name of the ancestors
From the father of Ngoumini⁹, to the brother of Tchilongo¹⁰, counter
clerks of the tombs

I do not know the dance steps of millet ears

Of a field yellowed with doubt

Counsel to tales, stories to legends

I do not know the ritual of the widow's midnight bath

Even less the initiatory direction of the ballet of the circumcised.

I do not know how to interpret dreams

The limits of my culture!

Ah! This girl in agony

I do not know, I do not know yet

How to dialogue with the dead

These heroes pace the corridors of darkness when night has fallen

When the bitter song of a beaten cur rises.

⁸ Female head of the soko clan. Tribe from the dense forest of Central Africa which inherited 10 words at the start of life. Everyone who dies takes 30 words to go and speak to the dead. Each newborn arrives with one word. The Soko people will only find speech again when the original 10 words are reunited.

⁹ Ancestor.

¹⁰ Ancestor.

Ignorância

Tchimpadou¹¹!

Não sei !

Não conheço os sotaques da minha língua materna
O vocabulário disperso de uma língua no limiar do seu tempo.

Não conheço o nome dos antepassados

Do pai de Ngoumini¹², ao irmão do Tchilongo¹³, amanuenses
das tumbas

Não conheço os passos de dança das espigas de milho-miúdo
De um campo amarelecido com a dúvida

Conselhos para contos, histórias para lendas

Não conheço o ritual do banho da meia-noite da viúva

Ainda menos o sentido iniciático do ballet dos circuncidados.

Não sei como interpretar sonhos

Os limites da minha cultura!

Ah! Esta moça em agonia

Não sei, ainda não sei

Como dialogar com os mortos

Estes heróis percorrem os corredores das trevas quando a noite cai

Quando se levanta o latido pungente de um cachorro maltratado.

¹¹ Mulher chefe do clã Soko. Tribo da densa floresta da África Central que herdou 10 palavras no princípio do tempo. Cada pessoa que morre leva consigo 30 palavras para falar com os mortos. Cada recém-nascido chega com uma palavra. O povo Soko só voltará a encontrar o discurso quando as 10 palavras originais forem reunidas.

¹² Antepassado.

¹³ Antepassado.

Mark Young

A line from Barry Gibb

The years take a toll. She
could feel her pulse,
beating in time with the
tiger's pacing. Falmouth,

with its little watercolors
of bandaged children, is a
long way from Vegas. The
animals found their way

to the island. She found little
nectar left in the wilting flowers.
Woman's shoes by the bed =
obedience. Duchamp's nude

descended the staircase. She
didn't know what the brain
looked like. All she saw were
sheep & big cotton balls.

Resplendance

for Martin Edmond

Raymond
Radiguet, who
was once
Cocteau's
squeeze,

wrote two
novels before
being con-
sumed not by
consumption
but by typhoid
at the age of
twenty. The

title of the
first, *Le Diable
au corps*—*The
Devil in the
Flesh*—might
be seen in
hindsight as
foresight.

“There is a color
that moves”
he once said
to Cocteau,
“& people
hidden in the
color. I've
called it a
resplendance.”

Poetic Voice and Poetic Personality in the work of Jenny Bornholdt

What do we mean when we talk about poetic voice? The term is ubiquitous but also deeply indeterminate, its meaning ranging from a term of literary analysis to clichés like “finding your voice”.

Its academic definition describes it as a “metaphorical term by which some critics refer to the distinctive features of a written work in terms of spoken utterance” (“voice”). In this definition, voice is a metaphorical paradigm which allows critics to render technical descriptions in a vocabulary which is intuitive to readers and to poetry itself, namely the analogy of speech.

Therefore voice in its strict sense is an umbrella term that considers how the formal attributes of a single “written work”, such as address, tone, style, and diction combine to create an impression. Whether the difference is significant or minor, each poem by each poet will necessarily have a different voice because they are comprised of a different arrangement of words, ideas, and devices. To discuss a poem’s voice is to interrogate the effect created by a poem’s technical devices, and to do so in the vocabulary of speech.

However, this definition is opposite to its colloquial use, in which critics and reviewers might discuss the voice of younger and older Yeats, the voice of Jenny Bornholdt, or even more confusingly, refer to the voice of New Zealand poetry. Similarly, in creative writing courses, when students are encouraged to “discover their voice”, the instructor does not only mean that they need to find their personal diction, tone, or syntax, but also that they find what interests them, their subject matter, their form, an audience to write to. These applications imply an underlying and consistent character, rather than an effect that differs from poem to poem. However, this attribute falls outside of the true meaning of voice, the colloquial use referring not just to discrete texts, but to the distinctiveness that marks all of a writer’s works.

While this use of voice is not at all technical, it is intuitive. To speak of a writer having a voice is to suggest that their works elicit a feeling of recognition much like when one hears the voice of a friend or family

member. In short, what people mean by poetic voice in this second sense is closer to a poetic personality, an awareness of a familiar and common character in a set of works. Hence, while the dictionary use is locally descriptive, this alternate use is instead generalising, describing an impression of the implied authorial character of a group of works.

Jenny Bornholdt is an ideal poet through which to examine the concept of voice, for in discussions of her poetry, the term moves so easily between its two alternate meanings. This is because she is considered a confessional and consistent poet – one for whom the technical and identificatory aspects of the term voice conflate. For example, her collection *The Rocky Shore* is deeply consistent in its use of technical device (and therefore in voice) as well as being autobiographical.

This combination of factors is a perfect storm for confusion in the term, as it tempts critics into making incautious equivalences between this single collection and Bornholdt's whole oeuvre, or indeed with Bornholdt herself. Harry Ricketts, in his review of *The Rocky Shore*, does exactly that, stating generally: "What most draws readers to Bornholdt's poems is, I think, the voice: quiet, reflective, unbardic, apparently absolutely straightforward". This use of voice is strictly incorrect because it is about a whole corpus. Ricketts has slipped from discussing a poem's voice to a poet's one. This would make sense if Bornholdt's poetry was all technically consistent, but of course it is not; her other collections, like the recent *The Hill of Wool* make use of a range of voices and styles.

And yet, Ricketts' act of evaluation is a legitimate and useful one. Both these collections are recognisably Bornholdt's, but poetic voice cannot account for this phenomenon; it cannot describe formal variation and unity all at once. We need a term that allows us to speak of the tendencies and character of a poet's whole corpus. By analysing voice in the very stable *The Rocky Shore* against her modulations of voice in her other collections, I hope to clarify the technical import and limitations of that term. Furthermore, I will suggest the new term "poetic personality" as a way of discussing consistency in a poet's agendas, subjects, and methods even when that poet, like Bornholdt, has a distinctly multivocal body of work.

The Rocky Shore, an elegy for Bornholdt's late father, is a collection remarkable for its consistent, conversational voice. Each of the six long poems uses a confessional address, encouraging the reader to enter into an intimate reader-poet relationship, and to infer that the poet-speaker is

in fact Bornholdt herself. She achieves this by subverting the usual pretences of reading. In “Fitter Turner” she states of a character: “For the purposes of this poem/we’ll call him Chris. (We might as well, because that’s his name.)” (TRS 49). Such lines rupture readers’ expectations; the speaker admits to being the poet, dropping any lyric pretence, and raises the possibility of fictionalisation only to reject it.

This explicit self-reflexivity encourages readers to trust the speaker and to think of her as Bornholdt, thereby dropping the critical posture which readers of poetry automatically assume. Indeed, Bornholdt pre-empts the judgemental role of the reader in lines like: “some people might think it’s not poetry. Well...” (47). Readers, who may have been developing just that criticism, are therefore deflated, and endeared to a poet-speaker mindful of her own “deficiencies”.

So forthright is the speaker that the reader feels privy to Bornholdt’s poetic process. In ‘Big Minty Nose’, the speaker implies that the reader has access not only to the final poem, but to its drafting stages: “Our cherry tree (I first typed cheery tree)” (72). Bornholdt’s voice in these poems rejects the omniscient and prophetic address of the poet for a familiar, neighbourly one. This subversion create a sense of equality between reader and poet, and mediates the collection’s conversational tone. The result of this candour is a poetic voice that tacks as closely as possible to the dynamics and tropes of a private conversation.

However, this “private” voice constantly undermines itself with reference to the essentially public nature of poetry. The texts of *The Rocky Shore* insist on being considered poems, in spite of their prose style. Even as Bornholdt encourages autobiographical readings in ‘Fitter Turner’, she reinforces its formal artifice by stating: “For the purposes of this poem” (49). Not only is the text a poem, and so inherently constructed, but it has “purposes” and is purposeful.

Indeed, the more one reads the collection, the more insistently the poems seem to reiterate their artificiality. Even after admitting the poem’s simplicity in the line “some people might think it’s not poetry” (47), the speaker later states that they may seem “very plain and straight forward and conversational, but it’s taken a lot to get it / this way” (53). The confessional voice which pervades the collection is therefore shown to be a constructed one. Even when Bornholdt allows the reader to glimpse her “errors”, it is for a calculated effect. In these subtle but pervasive ways, Bornholdt challenges her own conversational voice, revealing the

technical set of devices that produce that impression. In doing so, a paradox emerges between her private mode of address and the public utterance that is poetry.

The origin of this paradox can be found in the poem's autobiographical content, and in particular, the private feelings of loss surrounding her father's death. In "Big Minty Nose", she addresses the reader, and reveals explicitly a discomfort with the confessional mode: "What I wonder about is how much you need to know? / What if I don't have a garden? // What if I do still have a father?" (72). This is the only time in the collection when the reader is addressed directly, and it is a turning-point in the book. While Bornholdt does not intend for the reader to believe that her father's death was actually fictionalised, she signals once again that she is writing in a public and artificial form which furnishes her with a range of devices and, most importantly, does not demand she tell the truth.

This manoeuvre also signals to the reader that the relationship of poet and speaker is not an unadulterated stream-of-consciousness from one mind to another, but a curated and delimited public speech act – a voice. Its intimacy, the conversational styling of the poems, is moderated against the performative nature of poetry in a way which allows Bornholdt to publicly eulogise her father without surrendering her experience entirely to an audience. The reader comes to understand her grief without appropriating it as their own, in part because of the confessional honesty but also because the reader is always reminded of the intentional construction of that "confession". Thus, voice – through its technical elements of address, tone, and rhetoric – mediates the paradox between public speech and private conversation.

The public/private paradox finds its locus in voice, but so too does the related binary of "the poetic" and "the real". Bornholdt does not want to fully surrender her grief to the reader, but is also wary of poetry's universalising and metaphorical tendencies. She does not want to bastardise her personal experience of loss by transforming it through metaphor or analogy into something unrecognisable. To avoid this, Bornholdt designs the collection's voice to be anti-poetic on a technical level.

In the poem "Confessional", the speaker watches as a red T-shirt "fell, down through the circle of the [crane's] ladder like.../ like what? Like a red T-shirt falling down the inside / of a crane." (13) This refusal to seek resemblances suggests Bornholdt's disillusionment with the central device

of poetry – metaphor – and can be traced to the death of Bornholdt's father. She states:

When I saw the X-rays of my father's cancer.... /
....
I tried to think what those marks looked like, /
whether they resembled anything but no, they remained
what they were (14).

Again, these lines show an aborted attempt at comparison. Unable to transform her father's illness through poetry, the poet-speaker attempts to reconcile herself to reality as it is.

With metaphor rendered as a kind of evasion, Bornholdt's lines instead become direct, rejecting the transformative demands of poetry in order to engage with grief as it truly is: "I miss my father/I miss having a father" (31). Similarly, the few traditionally poetic (or lyric) elements in the collection are defused by a self-critical bathos. The speaker states in "Fitter Turner": "And we'll drive home – his eye matching sky – which is an easy rhyme, but pleasing, to me, nevertheless" (55). The use of rhyme comes pre-defended and pre-judged: it is not meaningful but "easy", trivially "pleasing", and perhaps only to the speaker. The poetic voice critiques its own devices, seeing them as suspect or reductive.

As a result, the poetry of *The Rocky Shore* is shoehorned into the position of realism. It goes against the grain of its allusive tendencies and instead creates a conversational address and domestic concerns. The speaker states: "Sometimes I would like the garden to be just/the garden and not a place of memory" (22), countering symbolic avenues even as it suggests them. As a result, the reader's automatic tendency to seek symbols and hidden meanings is blocked time and time again. This insistence on reality, on the anti-poetic, creates in the reader the same distrust for the poetic that preoccupies the poet-speaker.

In terms of both the binary of public/private speech and that of poetry/reality, voice and its devices become the locus of paradox, mediated by an intimate and then distancing address, and a sparse or anti-poetic use of device. The result is a poetic voice which is both private and confessional, both poetic (designed) and prosaic (straightforward) and the result is a eulogy to Bornholdt's father that refuses to surrender the specificity of her personal loss to a universalising poetry.

Bornholdt says of *The Rocky Shore* that “these poems belonged together” and I think from a reader’s perspective this is entirely apparent. The collection seems to constitute one extended utterance, each poem revolving around Bornholdt’s father, her family, and her garden. The collection exhibits a very consistent voice, with the same prose style, conversational tone, and anti-poetic turns throughout. In fact, in this collection, the term voice does not really pose us any problems at all. Its technical description of the poems gels perfectly with the consistent character we perceive behind them. Voice seems able to both describe the formal attributes of the poems and to infer from them the authorial character of the collection as a whole. The control with which Bornholdt constructs and curates this impression is remarkable, and it exemplifies the slipperiness between intuitive and definitional uses of “voice”.

However, as soon as we look at another of Bornholdt’s collections, where the poems vary in their subjects and formal construction, the problems in that term become unavoidable. *The Hill of Wool*, Bornholdt’s latest collection, does not share *The Rocky Shore*’s distrust of the poetic, and, crucially, it does not exhibit a consistent or unified poetic voice. Instead, voice is viewed as a more malleable device which Bornholdt uses to achieve very different effects from poem to poem. As a result, what sense existed between the two alternate meanings of voice in *The Rocky Shore* collapses.

In *The Hill of Wool*, Bornholdt seems to be ventriloquizing alien speakers, for example in the three-line poem “Cookbook” which reads:

Oh the horror
to have a dish
named after yer. (THOW 49)

This address could hardly be more distinct from those of *The Rocky Shore*. The opening apostrophe “Oh” suggests an appeal to the universal, and seems to reference Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. This apparently lyric address is then debased by the title’s “Cookbook” and the domestic content of the poem, so that the existential implication of “Oh the horror” is reduced to the culinary. Held alongside the argotic “yer”, the poem seems to present a deliberately ambiguous speaker, both recognisable and foreign, both prophetic and domestic.

Another poem, “Maritime” is a veritable exercise in shifting address. One stanza begins: “The girl / her grip”, the second: “It, / The boat”, and the third: “The boy / his everythings” (THOW 31). The speaker position is hence radically destabilised, and modulates in a similar way to viewpoint switching in a novel. *The Hill of Wool* thus appears to envisage address as a much more flexible sub-device of voice, with the speaker’s identity and their address changing from poem to poem.

Naturally, this creates a paradox in the split uses of voice. Voice cannot logically make claims of consistency while also describing the breadth of formal variation that occurs from poem to poem; its technical meaning directly contradicts its idiomatic usage. While in *The Rocky Shore* voice was a touchstone which the reader could return to again and again, here Bornholdt seems actively to destabilise it.

This is exemplified by *The Hill of Wool*’s emphasis on concision. Far from *The Rocky Shore*’s capacious prose-style, *The Hill of Wool* uses traditionally poetic devices of compression. This is achieved by leveraging grammatical ambiguity, for example in “Lightly” where she describes her “newly-babied friends” (48), which could see “babied” as an adjective (they have just had children) or a past participle (the friends have themselves become infantilised by having children).

In the poem “Autumn”, grammatical ambiguity is a structuring device, with stanza openings such as “Fall and are blown” (38) requiring the reader to provide a missing subject for “fall” and a missing agent for “are blown”. This technique has two key effects. It allows the poems to carry a range of meanings, and it complicates the reader’s identification of the poet-speaker to posit a more flexible speaker position. While we can talk of *The Rocky Shore* as having a particular voice, we cannot say the same of *The Hill of Wool* because the devices that compose that voice vary too widely to cohere.

Bornholdt’s earlier collection *This Big Face* also presents a range of voices which again differ from those in *The Hill of Wool* and suggest once more that *The Rocky Shore* is an exceptional circumstance in her oeuvre where voice is tolerably appropriate in both of its senses. This collection is more personal than *The Hill of Wool*, with its preponderance of “I” and “we” pronouns inviting an intimacy similar to *The Rocky Shore* but which here takes the form of a collective “poet”-reader relationship.

“Game”, for example, begins with a set of imperatives, before embracing the reader into a closer address:

Close your eyes
Count to one hundred
slowly, out loud
so we can hear the numbers
check out
against the breeze (24)

The game referenced in the title is hide-and-seek, and the reader is invited into the game with the poet-speaker, included in her “we”. As the poem progresses, this intimacy increases until the “we” collapses into “you”:

here – I’m here, out here on the lawn
waving
see
can you see me
over here
see me (24)

Desperate to be found, the speaker gives clue after clue to her location, desiring an intimacy which seems to be refused. All the while, the “you” draws the reader in – we feel we are rejecting her, or refusing to find her – and in the narrative, the potential for romance slips away.

While the posture of intimacy is familiar, the reader figures not as a partner in a conversation, but as the object of the speaker (and the poem’s) attention. The repeated imperatives and the changing address, which finally settles on the second-person “you”, are techniques that we have not seen in Bornholdt’s other collections. As a result, we have again happened upon a distinct voice, different again from *The Rocky Shore*, and once more we are left without the terminology to describe that encounter as it fits in to the rest of Bornholdt’s poetry.

This Big Face also exemplifies the more systemic inadequacies of the technical definition of voice, aside from any colloquial usage. While voice purports to address the “distinctive features” of a text, its analogy with “spoken utterance” confines those features to those which are able to be heard. So much of the poem “Game”, and *This Big Face* as a whole, depend on formal variations that go unspoken in performance – or, if they are

read only on the page – un-vocalised. For example, the overall shape of “Game” is reminiscent of the narrowing focus of a person zoning in on a fellow player of hide-and-seek, as shown by the shorter lines and dashes, and that, again, is an effect that works only on the page.

Even line breaks, when they go unspoken in performance (as Bornholdt’s generally do), cannot be logically addressed through the analogy of voice, but still warrant critical discussion. With these shortcomings in mind, it seems rational to consider whether voice is actually a helpful and appropriate analogy; is it intuitive? Is it useful? For some poems, an analysis of voice would be a manifestly reductive one. In *This Big Face*, poems like “A love poem has very long sentences” make use of formal innovations like varied line length, syntax, and punctuation, none of which are receptive to the term voice because they are not devices that can necessarily be spoken aloud.

The analogy of speaking only makes logical sense when a poem’s spoken performance schematically follows formal changes in the text. This is a particularly pressing issue in contemporary poetry, when so many texts are experienced exclusively or primarily in their written versions. For Bornholdt, voice gives us no way of speaking about the significance of her writing *The Rocky Shore* in long, prose-like lines, and *The Hill of Wool* and *This Big Face*’s varying line breaks and punctuation, and this is a significant blind spot in the usefulness of that term.

Therefore, not only must we abandon the colloquial use of voice to identify a poet, but its dictionary definition cannot fully account for a work’s technical qualities. Poetic voice is therefore much narrower than its present uses would suggest, able only to describe technical features that align with a vocabulary of spoken utterance. We cannot identify the three Bornholdt collections I have addressed as having the same voice because they vary technically. However, they are still recognisably Bornholdt’s; there is still coherency between *The Rocky Shore*, *The Hill of Wool*, and *This Big Face*, we just need a way to account for it. We need a term that acknowledges the fundamental heteroglossia of poetry in order to build towards a more general suggestion of what makes Bornholdt Bornholdt. For this, I suggest “poetic personality”.

This term is necessary because it prevents the intentionalist leap of simply referring to Bornholdt herself, but allows critics to make broad statements about her corpus without also trying to be technically descriptive. Poetic personality refers to the implied character of a writer’s

whole body of works, our perception of the character stitching together those individual works into an oeuvre. This term replaces the colloquial use of voice in the creative writing sense of “finding your voice” and is a way, then, of discussing what we mean when we say that this poem is very T. S. Eliot, not just in its technical operation but in its general purposes, themes, subject, and form. Poetic personality is also, like voice, a metaphorical paradigm. It therefore provides the same kind of intuitive flexibility that has made voice so popular, without the ambiguities and limitations of spoken utterance that come freighted along with voice.

The concept of poetic personality can help us to see through the profound differences in Jenny Bornholdt’s individual collections to reach a general sense of her interests and methods. What most unifies Bornholdt’s poetry is its domestic subjects and referents, her quotidian motifs and subjects. While *The Hill of Wool* is more “poetic” in its address and use of technical devices, it shares *The Rocky Shore*’s wariness of abstraction and its tendency to ground itself in everyday realities.

Poems like “Wisdom” are emblematic of this, its title and central line implying a traditionally lyric and abstract poem: “Poets, we carry our wisdom/lightly” (48). “Lightly” is perhaps the crucial word here, for Bornholdt continues:

This pearl –
if you walk to see your
newly-babied friend
with meatballs,
dogs will follow
down the road (48)

The sentiment of the half-finished cliché (“pearl of wisdom”) is diminished so that the only acolytes of poetic knowledge are dogs, and they may just be in it for the meatballs. Her point is perhaps this: that wisdom, especially poetic wisdom, is out of place in a world of babies, dogs, and meatballs – a world, in short, whose nature and materials are familiar.

This Big Face, too, predating the other collections by more than twenty years, exhibits the same sentiment:

there is a lot you can say in a
sort of love poem
it probably helps to have some long sentences
and there is nothing to be ashamed of ... (15)

The diffident hedging of “sort of” and “probably” is typical of Bornholdt’s poetry. Her poetic personality is not one “ashamed” of simplicity, but embracing of it, her works constantly tacking against the expectations of lyrical poetry, of abstract meanings, subjects, and descriptions.

Such turns demonstrate Bornholdt’s distrust of the prophetic associations of poetry: namely that the poet is privy to special knowledge and that poetry can access universal truth to perform a transformative function. While she moves to obscure the identity of the speaker-poet through traditionally lyrical devices such as concision and grammar, this is not coupled with the lyric’s direct approach of the “big themes”. Instead, Bornholdt seems to envisage poetry as practical – as an art form that engages with the world as it really is. Two cranes are described in “Pearly Everlasting” as “Not / beautiful, exactly, just / not ugly” (THOW 28) and it is ultimately this kind of statement that characterises Bornholdt’s poetry: not reaching for the poetic, but grounding it.

Her poetic personality is one that recognises that “Poets, we carry our wisdom/lightly” (THOW 48) and while it addresses “the big themes” (TRS 64), she does not presume to have especial insight into them. Life, death, and purpose are conveyed through familiar vehicles instead of the prophetic: the compost (“mixing up, breaking down, renewal” [TRS 64]) and bread-making (“our bench is the scene of much/mixing and rising” [TRS 64]).

Indeed, poetry to Bornholdt seems to be a tangible process, involving work and requiring it of the reader. *The Rocky Shore*’s preoccupation with the daily grind is replicated by the sheer length of the poems and in *The Hill of Wool*, the reader must work to negotiate the deliberate gaps and juxtapositions of tone and imagery. Bornholdt’s poetry encourages a “thinking-through” that is recuperative not for its conclusion but for the involvedness of its process. Bornholdt’s poetic personality is hence pragmatic, self-reflexive, and formally innovative; she carves a path through the lyric preconceptions of poetry to stake her territory as a poet unashamed of her everyday subject and motifs.

By distinguishing between and critiquing the divergent uses of voice, we are able to clarify both our technical and general discussions. Poetic voice discusses the local manipulation of technical devices in terms of a speech analogy. It does not refer to an overall impression of the character or characteristics of a poet's corpus, nor can it reliably describe a single collection except in cases like *The Rocky Shore* where the included poems are exceptionally consistent in formal attributes and subject. Instead, the term poetic personality fills this gap and, in doing so, gives us a sorely needed way of talking about a poet's character and agenda as it emerges through their works.

For Bornholdt, clarifying the split uses of voice means that we can conceive of her work as varied in its methodology, even as it reprises its thematic focuses. It is misleading to speak of her having a particular voice because in fact she uses many to create a broad range of effects. In fact, if there were a voice of Jenny Bornholdt (or, even more problematically, a voice of New Zealand poetry) it would be a very limited oeuvre indeed. What critics like Ricketts mean when they say that Bornholdt has a particular voice is in fact that she has a recognisable poetic personality; namely, an implied authorial character that pervades her body of works and which makes her works recognisably her own.

Works Cited:

- Bornholdt, Jenny. *The Hill of Wool*. Wellington: Victoria University Press. 2011.
- Bornholdt, Jenny. *The Rocky Shore*. Wellington: Victoria University Press. 2008.
- Bornholdt, Jenny. *This Big Face*. Wellington: Victoria University Press. 1988.
- Baldick, Chris. "voice." *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. : Oxford University Press, 2008. *Oxford Reference*. 2008. Date Accessed 15 May 2014:
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-1216>.
- Ricketts, Harry. "Voicing". *New Zealand Books*. Date accessed 23rd July 2014:
<http://nzbooks.org.nz/2009/literature/voicing-harry-ricketts/>.

Jumping in the drink

Notes on the Tongan poems of Murray Edmond and Richard von Sturmer

In 1931, when he was twenty-six years old and had already published a couple of volumes of poetry, R A K Mason visited the Kingdom of Tonga on the *Tofua*, a steamship that connected Auckland with the ports of the tropical Pacific. Then as now, Tonga teemed with punake, or poets, whose works, which typically feature dance and music as well as lyrics, were performed around kava bowls and at events like weddings and festivals. Punake were part of the ornate culture that had developed over the three thousand years since humans had settled the Tongan archipelago.¹⁴

Although Mason enjoyed his short stay in Tonga – in letters home he described the kingdom as a ‘delightful place’, and reckoned that its people were ‘the happiest’ in the world – he does not seem to have sampled the local literary culture.¹⁵

It is fascinating to wonder what Mason might have made of his Tongan counterparts, had he encountered them at a kava circle or festival. Frustrated by his distance from the literary centres of Europe and by the indifference of his countrymen to his books, the young Auckland poet had

¹⁴ Eric Shumway’s essay ‘Ko E Kakalangilangi: The Eulogistic Function of the Tongan Poet’, which was published in the *Journal of Pacific Studies* in 1977 (available online at <https://journals.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/PacificStudies/article/viewFile/8962/8611>), provides a detailed introduction to traditional Tongan-language poetry, but is influenced by its author’s very conservative politics. Wendy Pond’s essay ‘Wry Comment from the Outback: Songs of Protest from the Niua Islands, Tonga’, which was first published in the *Journal of Oral Tradition* in 1990 (available online at http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/articles/5ii-iii/4_pond.pdf), analyses several songs and dances created in the 1960s and ‘70s, and shows the political complaints that are half-hidden in their imagery and in their historical allusions. In 2012 Atuanui Books published *On Tongan Poetry*, a group of articles that Futa Helu wrote in the early 1980s about the various genres in which punake work.

¹⁵ RAK Mason’s adventures in the tropical Pacific are described in Rachel Barrowman’s *Mason: A Life*, which was published by Victoria University Press in 2003, and in John Caselberg’s *Poet Triumphant: the Life and Writings of RAK Mason*, which was published by Steel Roberts in 2002.

often complained that he was trapped in a remote and philistine corner of the world – a ‘perilous hostile place’ at the ‘friendless outer edge of space’.¹⁶ In the late 1930s and the ‘40s, Mason’s vision of the South Pacific as a remote, rawly new, and philistine region would be accepted and advertised by younger writers like Allen Curnow, Charles Brasch, and Monty Holcroft; by the 1950s it would be an orthodoxy.

Might the history of New Zealand literature have been different, if Mason had been ushered into a kava shack on the shore of a Tongan lagoon, and found the work of the kingdom’s esteemed caste of punake being performed there? Might the young poet’s conviction that he lived in a remote and philistine corner of the world have melted, as he drank bowls of narcotics in the warm Tongan evening, and joined the clapping and foot-stomping that often accompanies kava songs? Might he have realised that a rich and highly valued literary culture could be found not just in faraway Europe, but in New Zealand’s nearest neighbour? And might the punake of Tonga, rather than the Georgian poets of England or the verse propagandists of the Soviet Union, have become Mason’s literary models?

Tonga is a place that prompts this sort of counterfactual speculation. The only piece of the Pacific to avoid colonisation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it has evolved unusual and surprisingly robust economic and political systems. The kingdom’s constitution bans the sale of land, and most of its people still work small farms land granted to them by the state. From the air even Tongatapu, the largest and by far the most populous island of the archipelago, resembles a forest of coconut, banana and mango trees. Palangi make up only a sliver of the Tongan population. A visit to Tonga can feel, then, like a journey into an alternative version of New Zealand history, where Polynesians were never robbed of their land and language, and where Wakefield never planted capitalism.

In the 1950s and ‘60s some of Tonga’s top students began to arrive at universities in Australia and New Zealand. The anthropologist and novelist ‘Epeli Hau’ofa, the classicist and philosopher Futa Helu, and the poet and educationalist Konai Helu Thaman all began dialogues, in their texts and in their teaching, between Tongan and palangi cultures.

¹⁶ The phrases come from Mason’s ‘Sonnet of Brotherhood’, which he wrote seven years before his visit to Tonga.

In the 1960s Futa Helu returned to his homeland and founded the 'Atenisi, or Athens, Institute on the waterlogged outskirts of Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital and only city. Helu's school soon attracted hundreds of students, and became a sort of borderland between Tonga and the rest of the world, where the gods, philosophers, and poets of Polynesia, Europe, and Asia were equally revered, and where scholars and students from New Zealand and many more distant nations were welcomed.

In 2012 a feature-length documentary film about Futa Helu prompted new interest in 'Atenisi, and in 2013, when I worked at the school, I was able to get several New Zealand intellectuals, including the distinguished poets Murray Edmond and Richard von Sturmer, to visit.¹⁷

Edmond and von Sturmer spent a week each in Tonga. During his visit in June, Edmond mentored my Creative Writing students and members of 'Atenisi's performing arts group, gave a public lecture about the history and literature of his native Waikato, offered a workshop on drama writing and acting to sixty excited students from local high schools, and read his poem 'End Wall' on national television.

When von Sturmer visited in September, most of 'Atenisi's students were away on a short-notice tour of America. Tonga's Baha'i community, though, organised a series of lectures and workshops where von Sturmer instructed their members in Zen Buddhism, meditation, and haiku writing. Von Sturmer also befriended members of Nuku'alofa's thriving visual arts scene, like the sculptor Visesio Siasau and the painter Tevita Latu. Siasau brought von Sturmer to his workshop, and showed off the crucified Tangaloas and hermaphroditic Virgin Marys he was sculpting from glass and painting on tapa; later he took his guest on a tour of the sites of Tongatapu's ancient pagan godhouses.

A few days after he'd returned to the cold latitudes of New Zealand, Murray Edmond e mailed me a series of ten texts he had titled 'Tongatapu Dream Choruses'. With their loose lines connected by sound as much as sense, the 'Choruses' might have been a response to the musicality of Tongan poetry.

When Richard Von Sturmer arrived in Tonga, I showed him Edmond's 'Dream Choruses'. I joked that Tongan poets had traditionally engaged in verbal battles with one another – the senior court punake Fineasi

¹⁷ For information about *Tongan Ark*, which draws on its director Paul Janman's experiences as a teacher at 'Atenisi in the early noughties, see http://www.publicfilms.co.nz/?page_id=411.

Malukava, for instance, famously exchanged insults with a boastful young rival named Fakatava at the beginning of the twentieth century – and suggested that he and Murray might like to emulate that pattern. Richard is far too good-natured to engage in verbal duels, but I think that the precedent of the ‘Tongatapu Dream Choruses’ encouraged him to write poetry of his own during his time in Tonga.

At a kava gathering held the night before his departure from the kingdom, von Sturmer read some of a series of poems he had recently written into his notebook, and had given the title ‘Tonga’. Although they were constructed in the tight, Zen-inspired forms that von Sturmer has long favoured, the poems were full of images of Tongatapu – there were pigs and whales and coconuts and, of course, kava.

I want to mention four themes that seem to me to inform Murray Edmond’s ‘Tongatapu Dream Choruses’ and in Richard von Sturmer’s ‘Tonga’.

Churching

Tonga teems with churches. Theological dispute is incessant, and sects regularly split, as the losers of an argument about the nature of the trinity or the proper interpretation of a hymn declare their organisational independence and eternal righteousness.¹⁸

¹⁸ Anthropologists Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole, who visited Tonga at the end of the 1930s, decided that the country’s religious diversity was, paradoxically enough, a source of social cohesion. In their short book *Pangai: A Village in Tonga*, which was published by the Polynesian Society in 1941, they argue that the variety of churches allowed individual Tongans to express a sense of difference or register a protest without venturing into the largely proscribed realm of politics. The Beagleholes cite the example of a Tongan with eccentric but passionate theological views, who moved from one church to another as he tested the tolerance of fellow worshippers, and talk of men who felt disempowered by the kingdom’s Wesleyan establishment and so joined its Catholic community as a sort of protest. Not everyone agrees with the Beagleholes’ sanguine view of Tonga’s religious disunity. For Maikolo Horowitz, an American sociologist who taught at ‘Atenisi for many years, Tonga is the ‘Texas of the South Pacific’ because of the inability of its people to agree about theological, as well as secular, matters. Other scholars, like ‘Opeti Talia, note the ritualised brawling by students of schools run by Tonga’s rival churches. I blogged about the different analyses of Tonga’s religious disunity at <http://readingthemap.blogspot.co.nz/2013/11/the-dialectics-of-tongan-churching.html>.

Both Murray Edmond and Richard von Sturmer were fascinated by Tonga's fractious religious life. The second of Edmond's 'Tongatapu Dream Choruses' records the visit that a young would-be church-builder made to an 'Atenisi kava gathering. As Edmond nodded neutrally, the young man, who claimed to have cracked a mathematical code hidden in the Bible, explained that Tongatapu had been the site of the garden of Eden, and that Tongans were god's chosen people. More confusingly, he insisted that Adam and Eve were both men, and had only been able to reproduce because of a miraculous improvisation by the Holy Ghost:

a mystery
claimed by history
Adam met Eve
Eve turned out
to be a man
if you'll drink
to that
you'll drink to
any thing

On a Sunday we drove Edmond to the village of Folaha, which sits on a peninsula in the Fanga'uta Lagoon, Tongatapu's warm, shallow, and very polluted inland sea. We had been invited to a service at the Folaha branch of the Church of Tonga, one of the kingdom's dozen or so Wesleyan sects. The church's black-suited priest delivered a long sermon at high volume from a high pulpit, giving particular emphasis to the nouns *tevolo* (devil), *vale* (fool), and *Setani* (Satan).

Edmond decided we should recover from the sermon by moving on to Oholei Beach Resort, which has a bar built into a large cave and a special license that allows it to sell alcohol to *palangi* tourists and other degenerates on Sundays. We arrived to find a band playing loudly from a stage set up in the middle of the cave. Edmond, my wife and I were sipping beers and forgetting about god when the bandleader, who happened to be the owner of Oholei resort, silenced his musicians and began to preach. "I worship the lord in my own way" he told us. "Mine is the church of rock and roll." Oholei's owner spent the next hour singing old Wesleyan hymns, while his guitarist leaned on a wah wah pedal and his drummer played jazz rolls.

Murray Edmond was delighted by the concert in the cave, which reminded him of the chaotic, competitive jams that poets and musicians held on New Zealand stages in the 1970s. The eighth of his ‘Tongatapu Dream Choruses’ honours Oholei’s Sunday service:

Church of Jesus Christ of
Rock’n Roll save your soul
immortal Jelly Roll

Richard Von Sturmer’s studies of Buddhism have taken him to Chinese cave-temples and American monasteries, but he is interested in all religious traditions, and shortly after arriving in Tonga he asked to be taken to a church. “I’d like to visit the most fire and brimstone of them all”, he said, with the defiant look of a diner who has just insisted on ordering the hottest curry on a restaurant menu. When we ended up sitting through another loud peroration at another branch of the Church of Tonga, Von Sturmer used his training in meditation to make the escape he described in this tanka:

when the long sermon begins
I go into the rafters
into the dusty
cross-beams
to hang out with the spiders

Big Mama’s island

Writing from the Tofua, RAK Mason explained that Tongan ports were ‘so difficult’ they could only be entered ‘by daylight’. Nuku’alofa’s harbour is decorated by dozens of coral atolls and sandbars. Wrecked steamers and yachts lie on strips of coral; buoys and wooden crosses attempt to distinguish safe channels from sand. Maps produced by palaeoclimatologists show the ground where Nuku’alofa now stands covered by sea, and a medieval Tongan poet’s description of the harbour mentions several islands that have since drowned.

The little archipelago in Nuku’alofa harbour has been favoured by invaders, traders, and exiles. Pangaimotu, which sits only a couple of

kilometres off the coast of Tongatapu, was a base for Cook and a refuge, nearly seven decades later, for Bishop Pompallier, whose Catholic faith and French allies were unpopular with the rulers of Tongatapu.

Today the island is the home of Carl Emberson, a lean, brown-skinned Dane who was a favourite at the king of Tonga's card table in the 1960s. Carl and his wife Ana, who hails from the northern Niuan islands and is known throughout Tonga as Big Mama, run a sand-floored bar whose walls are covered with yacht flags, polaroids, erotic graffiti, and exotic banknotes left by generations of visitors. A few feet from this sanctuary, the hull of a wrecked ship rears out of Pangaimotu's warm, shallow lagoon. A couple of hundred feet in the other direction is the foundation mound of an ancient godhouse, where shaman-priests drank hallucinogenic kava and channeled voices from Pulotu, an island over the western horizon inhabited by spirits.¹⁹

With its lovely but sea-eaten coast and its reminders of a ruined past, Pangaimotu can both delight and discomfort visitors. Von Sturmer's writing has always been both grateful for and sadly aware of the transitory nature of earthly pleasures. For him, the fish that cruise Pangaimotu's lagoon have become part of the island, and will share its fate:

undulating sunlight,
in the shallows
sand-coloured fish
accompanied
by their shadows.

In the 'Tongatapu Dream Choruses', Murray Edmond makes a more jocular reference to aquatic adventures in Nuku'alofa's harbour:

¹⁹ Niel Gunson, a missionary turned scholar of religious history at the Australian National University, has written repeatedly about Tonga's ancient godhouses and the priests who performed inside them. In 'A Note on Oceanic Shamanism', which was published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 2009 (available online at http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/docs/Volume119/JPS_119_2_06.pdf), Gunson outlines his findings and defends them from critics. Gunson's excavation of Tonga's pre-Christian religious history has greatly influenced some of the kingdom's artists and intellectuals, including the sculptor Visesio Siasau, whose work I discuss here: <http://readingthemap.blogspot.co.nz/2014/01/burning-gods-letter-to-visesio-siasau.html>.

when you're feeling full of beans
plunge in the brinnie
jump in the drink

The ruins of Nuku'alofa

Nuku'alofa is not an especially old place – it was only a minor settlement before the first modern ruler of Tonga, the Wesleyan warlord Taufa'ahau, chose a site for his capital in the middle of the nineteenth century – but it is full of ruins. Humidity and termites have rotted and collapsed scores of the city's wooden buildings, while poor-quality concrete and self-taught architects have ensured the dereliction of many of its newer structures. The riot of November 2006 saw arsonists and looters add to Nuku'alofa's stock of ruins.

Richard von Sturmer is a film maker and actor – he first visited Western Polynesia in the late '80s, when he co-starred in Martyn Sanderson's adaption of Albert Wendt's *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* – as well as a poet, and last September he spent hours wandering Nuku'alofa with a camera. His poems record visits to a couple of the city's ailing buildings.

On Hala Mateialana (hala is the Tongan word for road), just east of the Nuku'alofa's central business district, Von Sturmer discovered the half dozen termite-tormented cottages that serve as the city's public mortuary. In Tonga, the dead are usually prepared for burial at the home of family members. Inevitably, though, some of the dead are unable to find hospitality in a private home. Although it lacks the high-tech freezers of its New Zealand equivalents, the mortuary on Hala Mateialana provides a place where these people can await burial. After talking with the supervisor of the mortuary, Von Sturmer was allowed to look around the site. Like the unstable archipelago of Nuku'alofa harbour, the warm bodies lying on termite-ridden wood make the poet fearful:

I don't want to end up
in the mortuary
on Hala Mateialona.
It would be lonely
with only the dogs
to bury my bones...

Already the silk coffin
is filled with yellow wasps.

One of Nuku'alofa's more spectacular ruins is the Meseia (Messiah) Plaza, a sprawling concrete building in the city's central business district. The Plaza was opened in 1980 by the Tokaikolo Fellowship, a recently expelled faction of Tonga's state-endorsed Free Wesleyan Church. Tokaikolo's founder and first leader was Senituli Koloï, a thin, charismatic faith healer who held huge open air meetings in the Tongatapu countryside where he denounced modern medicine as an insult to God. Koloï urged his followers to prove their faith by fasting; he died the year the Meseia Plaza was opened, after refusing food for eighteen days.

If Koloï was a Tongan Cathar, then his successor, the long-reigning, bloated Liufau Saulala, resembles one of the debauched Popes of the fourteenth century. Under Saulala's leadership, Tokaikolo has run up big debts and suffered big splits. The Meseia building was supposed to brim with shops and offices, but when Richard von Sturmer squeezed through a smashed window and explored its dim and dank interior the only occupants he discovered were lying in sleeping bags on the concrete floors of empty rooms. Von Sturmer eventually found his way to the Plaza's abandoned rooftop, which for a while housed a popular restaurant and nightclub:

On the roof of
concrete beach umbrellas
no one answers your prayers.

Each umbrella
has tumbled over
to become
an ancient satellite dish.

Swingman

Swingman, whose real name is Siua Ongosia, was Tonga's first hip hop star. About a decade ago he began rapping in Tongan over beats and samples that were sometimes supplied by other members of the Ongosia family, like his brother Jimmy. Then, as now, Swingman's lyrics were held together by insistent rhymes, rather than by linear narrative or argument. Swingman can throw bizarre images at this audience, begin and break off anecdotes, boast about or bemoan his love life, and tell long jokes that appear to lack punchlines, but his ramblings are always contained within strict, hypnotic rhyme schemes.

After a period of success, when he was employed by the government to rap about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases and recorded a series of videos that became youtube hits, Swingman developed a reputation for odd behaviour. He was seen beside Nuku'alofa main drag, waving his arms about as if he were flying; he took the stage at a music festival in the countryside, but refused to open his mouth, preferring to entertain the audience with a series of enigmatic hand gestures.

As his live appearances and new recordings dwindled, Swingman could often be found on Railway Road, which follows the route of an old tramline between downtown Nuku'alofa and the dirty lagoon on the city's southern fringe. Railway Road runs past the ruins of many buildings that were torched during the 2006 riot, as well as stores full of pirated DVDs, kava shacks, barber's shops, and the headquarters of the Fakaletti Association, which looks after the needs of Tonga's increasingly oppressed trans-sexual community. Railway Road is a popular site for drug sales; during the night fakaletti solicit from its burnt-out lots.

The young people who gather on Railway Road are alienated from Tonga's traditional village-based life. Often, though, petty criminal convictions and a lack of cash mean they cannot leave Tonga. They spent their time getting stoned on marijuana grown in the Tongatapu bush, on crack cocaine pulled off ships from America, and on anti-psychotics stolen from Nuku'alofa's hospital.

A kilometre or so from Railway Road, in a lagoonside kava shack, the painter Tevita Latu has founded the Seleka Club, where he mentors some of the Nuku'alofa's youth and teaches them the intricacies of drawing and collage. The Seleka Club is a determinedly rebellious institution – its name is an anagram of the Tongan word for shitting, its members drink

kava from a toilet bowl, and its stereo blasts death metal and hip hop into the Nuku'alofa night – and it has provided a refuge for Swingman, and for some of the other casualties of Tongan society. If he is not on Railway Road or in prison, the rapper can often be found at the Seleka Club.²⁰

I was introduced to Swingman's music by 'Atenisi students Miko Tohi and 'Alokoulu 'Ulukivaiola, who have been shooting footage of the rapper for what they hope will develop into a documentary movie, as well as translating some of his lyrics into English. Both Tohi and 'Ulukivaiola consider Swingman a genius, and are depressed by the way that other, lesser rappers, like Junior Fakatava, a descendant of the boastful Fakatava who confronted Fineasi Malukava more than a century ago, have usurped his place in Tonga's music scene.²¹

Not everyone shares Tohi and 'Ulukivaiola's enthusiasm for Siua Ongosia. Many conservative Tongans believe that his strange music and drug-assisted antics symbolise the decadence of Nuku'alofan youth.

²⁰ I have written about Tevita Latu and his extraordinary club here: <http://readingthemaps.blogspot.co.nz/2013/12/why-tevita-latu-is-new-lou-reed.html>.

²¹ To give some idea of Swingman's style, here are some lines from Ulukivaiola and Tohi's the translation of 'Taahine Kaka' ('Cheating Girl'), a song that can be found on youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wljzq2uUwLo>:

"Aloha, Paula Zulu"
I am about to weep
Over my love for your flock of hair
I am half-caste
And I throw the discus
I often ride the bus and play music.

Lia it's me Vili
My fan is broken
I'm begging you to make a family with me
Trust me, I'm getting wirier
Join with me for I have a tractor...

Someone show some love
Asisi is all alone
Bring her here to spank
Spank it until it's bare
Even though I have no lover
I have soap
Brought from the shop
To wash away the smell.

In certain ways, though, Swingman can perhaps be considered a traditional Tongan poet. Like many previous punake, he relies on rhyme to hold together long, essentially unmetred lines, couples his words with music and dance moves, and duels verbally with his rivals. Even Swingman's interest in drugs is arguably traditional: in pre-Christian Tonga poets, as well as priests, would use hallucinogenic kava to receive inspiration from the spirits in Puluotu.

Both Murray Edmond and Richard von Sturmer were fascinated by the stories they heard about Swingman, and excited by his work. Swingman makes an appearance at the end of the 'Tongatapu Dream Choruses':

dream Tongatapu
is a giant bell
swinging in

Pacific wind
Swingman walks
Streets at night

With its use of rhyme and half-rhyme to connect sometimes absurdly divergent thoughts, Edmond's sequence reminds me of the Tongan rapper.

When von Sturmer performed some of his Tongan poems at the kava gathering held to mark his last night in the kingdom, the audience was delighted by his surreal imagery. Tevita Latu, who was a part of Richard's audience, remarked that the images in the following lines could have come straight from Swingman:

And the dogs are barking
in a forest
in a forest of bells
and I'm listening
with a green ear
an ear as large
as a taro leaf.

And a giant hand
takes off its glove

and strikes the land
with the full force
with the force
of a hurricane.

And tiny pigs fly past
with bats
between their teeth,
bats as ripe as figs
plopped into the mouth
of a green hurricane.

I like to think of the poems that Murray Edmond and Richard von Sturmer wrote in Tonga last year as belated correctives to the indifference that palangi New Zealand writers have shown towards their nearest neighbour. Edmond and von Sturmer have taken the opportunity that RAK Mason missed back in 1931. I hope others will follow them.²²

²² In 2015 Titus Books is hoping to publish Edmond's and von Sturmer's poems in English and in a Tongan translation, along with illustrations by members of the Seleka Club.

Hamish Dewe

An Introduction to the *Millerton Sequences*

Leicester Kyle. *The Millerton Sequences*. Ed. Jack Ross. Poem by David Howard. ISBN 978-1-927242-28-5. Pokeno: Atuanui Press, 2014.

Leicester Kyle's latest book covers the final period of his life, after leaving Auckland to live in Millerton. In the context of these poems, this seems like a denial of the overly-human urban world in favour of the more mediated world of the human-in-nature, a rejection of the human as master in favour of the human whose mastery is conditional upon his place within the larger context of the natural world.

The five central sequences of the book are presented in chronological order, bookended by two standalone pieces, "One Hundred Steps to Millerton Mine", and "Red Dog/Brown". "One Hundred Steps to Millerton Mine" serves as a great introduction to the core sequences, introducing most of the main themes. "Red Dog/Brown" is almost tacked on at the end. Although it fits into the arc of Kyle's growing discursiveness over time, it doesn't fit thematically, and functions more as a structural counterweight to the introductory poem.

It's hard to read this book without being reminded of Kyle's background in the Anglican church. Liturgical phrasing pops up occasionally, as do a couple of biblical references and parallels. While religion certainly isn't an obvious theme, it certainly forms part of the framework of thought.

One Hundred Steps to Millerton Mine

Starting from this poem, the sequences, with the exception of "The Catheter Club", have a remarkable consistency of reference. Parallel phrases and constructions crop up regularly. The hundred steps are an ascent, to "the paradise prepared", the made world of the original mine, now in the final phase of reclamation by the bush. It's the book's first example of human endeavour on a human scale, a scale on which any damage wrought can be redeemed by natural processes within the span of a couple of generations. We ascend the steps through the teeming bush

and ascend to our own realm of activity and commerce, without transcendence. Paradise is immanent in this life and does not need to be searched for anywhere else. Our acceptance of our place in a world which is larger than ourselves and has no concern for our well-being (see “Rain” and “Rain Poems”) leads to small epiphanic moments of grace. Notable by its absence is any attempt to paint this mine as “the Pit” [“Death of a Landscape”]. Kyle’s paradise is a fragile balance between human activity and that of the rest of the natural world of which he is part.

Five Flowers at Millerton Mine

Kyle’s botanical knowledge comes to the fore here, with some close descriptions of local flowers, without overwhelming the reader with botanical technicalities as he has in other places. His close attention to the particularities of each flower, and the environment in which it lives, keeps the attention focussed, intimate - the precondition of grace. In ‘*Pterostylis montana* var. *ruricaulis*’, the bush is imbued with the menace that later slips over into his descriptions of West Coast rain, whose descriptions are similarly detailed. The bush “takes life”, playing on the ambiguity in the phrase, is “staunch” and gathers in the militaristic phrase “Troop for space” where it overwhelms the fragile human environment of the original Millerton mine.

Picnic in the Mangatini

Another foray into the ‘wild’, full of the awareness of the contingency of the human experience. It is a being-in-the-world, in the overlap where the self meets the world, and where neither is lost. Like the cloistering of later poems, silence and stillness here are not an abdication - they are active, creating the space where grace may be found, like the weka’s visit: “grace in such things abounds”. Yet this moment of grace is soon over, contingent upon the weather, like all activities in Millerton. The arrival of “The clouds that came in from the sea” foreshadows the next sequence.

Rain

In each of these poems, the rain conditions the possibilities of the day's actions and its mood. This is also where Miriel makes her first appearance. She returns throughout the book, often guiding the poems from behind the scenes, forming the unseen seabed that determines the shape of the waves above.

There's a soft presence seeping
a damp unannounced and of unstated stay

Days like these are days for memory--

You're already on my mind
[Rain 2]

The rain also takes on a sort of Old Testament awesomeness: "the torrent [...] that I must wait out / and cower before" [Rain 4]; "soon there will be the comfortable sound / impartial upon us like justice". The latter phrase echoing the sentiment of "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" [Matthew 5:45].

Death of a Landscape

This is the collection's central poem in every sense. It's in the structural middle of the sequence, has the most gravitas and sheer bulk of pages. Some of this is due to the editor's decision to include two versions on the poem. The first version includes the text handwritten on pages from the proposal to create a new open-cast mine on the Millerton plateau. The second is just the text. The decision to include both versions is based on the fact that there are slight textual differences and, given that this is a posthumous collection, it is impossible to assign primacy to either text.

It's hard to see that the handwritten version uses the background of geological tables and bureaucratic evasion as much more than context, but it is a context that goes right to the heart of one of the sequence's themes – the use of technocratic language as a hedge against responsibility, an evasion of morality, an apologia for destruction on an inhuman scale. The editor describes this as a kind of ecological protest poem, which it is. That description glosses over the much more

interesting and contradictory things that the poem is also. It's an uneasy, and finally flawed, melding of the grief Kyle feels over the death of Miriel and the approaching destruction of the Millerton plateau.

Although the destruction of the landscape can be remediated, its being cannot be returned. The essence of both a person and a landscape resides in its natural progression through continuity of experience and memory:

it's the idea and the ideal
that over a life
has made its own form

Call that a soul, if you will, but the landscape manufactured to replace the one destroyed can never recapture the essence. Those that plan the rape of the land hide behind the blandness of their language and scientificity of the tables and other bureaucratic apparatus:

the receiving landscape
the outcome for the area
the best landscape fit
the final landform--
geo-speak
to make death no matter

This replacement echoes Kyle's 'replacement' of Miriel. "Death of a Landscape" was first published around a year and a half before he married his second wife and he uses parallel constructions for the replacement of both a wife and the landscape. You can replicate the features, the lifeless 'laminated', but not the essence. In Miriel's case, he says

when you look
you don't see the real,
you see what you've made
in your mind

and in that of the landscape

though it might be
'a receiving form'
and though
'the final form'

has been designed,
all else is inferior

One final description of death might apply equally to Miriel's melanoma or the mechanical and chemical destruction of the landscape: "Must there be this wrack, rape and scouring?" Both kinds of destruction require some kind of recognition, and the second and third sections show the differing human and inhuman reactions:

do the best you can,
involve the family
and turn to your friends
[Death of a Landscape 2]

there's an answer,
not of fact or consolation
nor even a promise,
but of obstacle,
some sort of it-has-to-be
[Death of a Landscape 3]

The unspoken comparison is that the church, and family, offer both promise and consolation.

At first sight, there seems to be a contradiction between the generally positive depiction of the first mine in "One Hundred Steps to Millerton Mine" and the proposed new mine. In this case, a difference in quantity really is a difference in quality. The original mine was built to a human scale. It can be reclaimed through natural processes in a human timeframe, that of living memory. The new mine, though, cannot be reclaimed in the same way: "Destruction on this scale / Is quite new" [Death of a Landscape 5]. Given a long enough timeframe, of course, it will revert to a natural state, regain its identity through natural growth, but that process would take much longer than the frame of human memory. On a human scale, the destruction is permanent.

Death is not purely destruction, though. It is also transformation, although that transformation leaves a bitter taste for those who must witness it, as in Kyle's sarcastic

drink this,
the black water

that runs in the creek

it's good for you

The equally dour

love the machines
with blades and buckets
as big as the mouth of a mine
and the explosives

at the end of this section makes a suitable pivot into the next poem's

Destruction on this scale
Is quite new;
we haven't done it much,
it grows on you

The manufactured return of the landscape is an empty facing upon the voided memory. The lamina has no content in or of itself, no memory, no meaning. When discussing the geology of it, the idea is relatively straightforward – each layer of laminate is placed and not naturally or spontaneously grown upon the next, but such human creation does not grant it any sort of life force or memory. True, its inhabitants might return in the distant future, but that does nothing to make the situation any better on the scale of a human lifetime. However, the conceit becomes much more confused once applied to the passing of his wife. On her death, we still have a soul to contend with. Does it go to the promised land (Beulah) or the Pit? If it were to return to the body, Lazarus-like, would it be a fully-functioning human again, or would it merely be an inhabited shell, “[y]ing] there laminate?”.

“[T]his pit” (the original mine) is a human-scale version of “the Pit”. What makes “Death of the Landscape” so interesting is the confusion that seems to be in the writer’s mind, the failure to make it all fit into a satisfyingly unitary statement. He wants nature as the creative force, but with god waiting in the wings. The death of his wife is transformative, and you sense there’s a grudging acknowledgement of its redemptive qualities for her, while the widower must deal with his grief.

Kyle again mixes the death of his wife with the death of the landscape in the final poem of the sequence, “Aubade”. Here, the parting of the

lovers is overlaid with the passing of the landscape. The scouring of the land by chemicals merges with the widower's regret as "as acid in the gut / corroding".

Rain Poems

Individually, there's little to say about the individual poems here that hasn't already been covered by "Rain". As a group, they are a little reminiscent of Baxter's *Jerusalem Sonnets* in their pared back, discursive language and wilful focus on the materiality of everyday existence. The most interesting of the poems is the final piece, once again showing the generative aspect of violence and destruction. I'll quote the poem's first and final lines:

Of Earth and Sky

and prophetic rain
that has from the first few drops
a sense of purpose

[...]

until all is beaten down
impregnated and subdued
in this cold copulation
of earth and sky.

Books and magazines in brief

1. Alan Brunton, *Beyond the Ohlala Mountains: Poems 1968-2002*.
2. Kay McKenzie Cooke, *Born to a Red-Headed Woman*.
3. Craig Cotter, *After Lunch with Frank O'Hara*.
4. Alison Denham, *Raspberry Money*.
5. Doc Drumheller, *10 x (10 + -10) = 0*.
6. Eugene Dubnov, *The Thousand-Year Minutes*.
7. Sue Fitchett, *On the Wing*.
8. Alexandra Fraser, *Conversation by Owl-Light*.
9. John Gibb *The Thin Boy & Other Poems*.
10. Rogelio Guedea, *Si no te hubieras ido / If only you hadn't gone*.
11. *Sweeping the Courtyard: The Selected Poems of Michael Harlow*.
12. Michael Harlow, *Heart absolutely I can*.
13. Chloe Honum, *The Tulip-Flame*.
14. David Howard, *The Speak House*.
15. Leonard Lambert, *Remnants: Poems*.
16. Stephanie Lash, *Bird murder*.
17. Cilla McQueen, *Edwin's Egg & Other Poetic Novellas*.
18. John O'Connor, *Whistling in the Dark*.
19. *Outloud Too* (Hong Kong, 2014)
20. Lee Posna, *Arboretum*.
21. Helen Rickerby, *Cinema*.
22. Marie Slaight & Terrence Tasker, *The Antigone Poems*.
23. Elizabeth Smither, *Ruby Duby Du*.
24. MaryJane Thomson, *Fallen Grace*.
25. Steve Toussaint, *Fiddlehead*.

- Alan Brunton. *Beyond the Ohlala Mountains: Poems 1968-2002*. Ed. Michele Leggott & Martin Edmond. ISBN 978-1-877441-47-9. Auckland: Titus Books, 2013.

The book is, for a start, overwhelmingly beautiful. Who would have anticipated those scruffy old papier-mâché masks from old Red Mole performances could look so striking, photographed as they are against jet-black backgrounds, like Picasso sculptures, or – even better – gaudy folk skulls from the Mexican *día de los muertos*? In terms of design, then, it's hard to imagine how it could be bettered. Kudos to Brett Cross, Ellen Portch, and the rest of their team at Titus Books.

But was Brunton really any good simply *as* a poet? This, after all, is our best chance to find out – a careful selection from the whole body of his work by his old colleague Martin Edmond and the careful conservator of his literary legacy, Michele Leggott. There's a kind of persistent myth that Brunton was all about performance: the sound of the living voice, the impressiveness of his sheer presence. And, having witnessed some of those readings and performances, I can certainly testify to his skill in this regard. What, after all, could be inside here to merit such packaging? I open the book at random:

People here!	Yeah. Fucking lots.
See the game?	Yeah. Fucking primo, eh? ...
Great game.	Yeah. Fuck. Watched it on TV. I got fucking nuttled. ...

["Pindaric – Victory Parade," p.287]

I don't know about you, but this kind of cruelly accurate transcript of how we *actually speak* is something I haven't heard nearly enough of in Kiwi poetry to date. But that's only one of his many tones of voice: there's the tenderness of "the heart is a lover with beautiful hips" ["Guru Hoodoo," p.270]; the high hieratic of "My father died in December. / With my brothers I carried him / to the low house reserved / for dead soldiers" ["Move," p.263]; the everydayness of "the Ides of March has found us here / & the dope / has all / given out" ["Black & White Anthology," p.131]. I just can't convey all the riches inside here. You're crazy if you don't get down on a copy of this collector's-item-in-the-making while you still can.

- Kay McKenzie Cooke. *Born to a Red-Headed Woman*. ISBN 978-1-877578-87-8. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2014.

This is Kay McKenzie Cooke's third collection of poems and, like the first two, it depends heavily on reflections on her Southland heritage: "You could say that this book is all about time; its capricious brutalities and its saving graces," as Cooke herself explains. Another interesting feature here is music. The book concludes with a list of all the pieces of music she's sampled from for the titles of the various poems. At times, in fact, it reads almost like a DJ's version of existence: "the soundtrack of our lives," as some radio station or other once claimed ("Classic Hits," was it?) It seems quite a good conceit for isolation within a "close-knit community," as the cliché describes it. There's definitely a lot going on under the surface of this collection:

Let's look at each other
long and hard.
It may be our only way
of knowing
where we are going ["it feels new," p.70]

- Craig Cotter. *After Lunch with Frank O'Hara*. Introduction by Felice Picano. ISBN 978-1-937627-18-8. New York: Chelsea Station Editions, 2014.

I guess that my first thought about this was that it was rather an in-joke, a strangely *dependent* way of titling a book of poems, but I now think that that was a mistake. Frank O'Hara was, after all, a trickster who spent an immense amount of time and energy subverting and undermining the pomposity of his poetic peers and predecessors, and this book is definitely written in that spirit. "More like a Monty Python send-up than a nostalgic paean," as Diane Wakowski puts it on the back of the book. Or, as Cotter himself expresses it:

I'm tired
but Frank and John want me to write on.
...
It's how we learn –
knocking each other off ["Good Friday," p.58]

- Alison Denham. *Raspberry Money*. ISBN 978-0-9864529-3-2. Christchurch: Sudden Valley Press, 2013.

Alison Denham's first book of poems, *Pieces of Air* (1999), was published by the late lamented Theresia Liemlienio Marshall, who also published my own first book, *City of Strange Brunettes*, in 1998. So let's just say that I'm predisposed to like her work. I'm very pleased to report, then, that this second book has been well worth the wait. There's a kind of Gothic exuberance about her poetry at its best which seems to suit the South Island ethos of Sudden Valley Press very well:

Tuesday night a bell ringers' practice
someone notices another gravestone gone over.
["Spring comes to the villages," p.51]

This is more a poetry of discomfort than of complacency. Denham's poems read like chants against the dark.

- Doc Drumheller. $10 \times (10 + -10) = 0$: *A ten year, ten book project, 20/02/2002-21/02/2012*. ISBN 978-0-473-27757-4. Christchurch: The Republic of Oma Rāpeti Press, 2014.

You can open this huge, mad book on any page and find some irritating set of silly rhymes designed to set your teeth on edge: "Homesick / sailors lick / salt from their thick / beards tasting oil slick / oceans that are seasick" [Part 8, p.6]. Like Zukofsky's almost equally eccentric "literal" translation of Catullus, it seems more calculated to enrage than engage its readers. And yet, the sheer scale of the performance – in both cases – gives one pause. *Is it madness? Or is there an underlying message here about the multiple effects of language?* Drumheller is an addict of text-experiments such as those pioneered by the founders of Oulipo. He's certainly not unconscious of the effect such deliberately baffling texts can have on this predisposed to look for a reassuring orderliness in their reading. I think, finally, that Drumheller's book could be said to make as much – or as little – sense as the equally baffling rhymes of Edward Lear. A haunted spirit of unease seems to lie at the roots of both projects. Dismiss him if you dare, but I suspect that Drumheller has more to teach than to learn from those of us who live within slightly safer margins of experimentation. It's no accident that his work is prescribed reading in some at least of Lisa Samuels' university writing courses.

- Eugene Dubnov. *The Thousand-Year Minutes*. ISBN 978-1-907356-74-2. Translated by Anne Stevenson & the author. UK: Shoestring Press, 2013.

Anne Stevenson shouldn't need much introduction to most fans of contemporary poetry: biographer of Sylvia Plath (*Bitter Fame*, 1989), and award-winning poet in her own right, she's now collaborated with Eugene Dubnov on this sumptuous dual-text selection of work from his two volumes of poetry in Russian, *Russet Coins* (1978) and *By Sky and Earth* (1984). One of Dubnov's poems is included on p.79 of this issue of *Poetry NZ*, so you can see something of how he writes: a somewhat old-fashioned voice, some would say, but as the poetry of the earth and of pastoral makes a belated comeback, I think such verses make more and more sense to us. As Stevenson puts it in her introduction to the book: "The English cribs he sent me ... brought to mind the dream-like paintings of Chagall" [p.xii]. I would add, something of the pure and uninflected voice of John Clare: "targets in the river / grief in the grass / rain / the spangled asphalt" ["Cityscape," p.9].

- Sue Fitchett. *On the Wing*. ISBN 978-1-927242-52-0. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2014.

My name is *Sue*,
how do you do. ["Sue T Rex," p.16]

Sue Fitchett is an "avid conservationist, particularly with birds," as the back of her new book of poems proclaims. We might have guessed. There's a lot here about birds, just as there was a lot about Auckland and its multicultural plumage in her previous sole collection *Palaver Lava Queen* (2004). I have to say that, while I greatly enjoyed the evidence here of her immersion in avian lore generally, what I liked best was these occasional daft moments of contrast and disproportion, such as the one (quoted above) from a poem set in the Chicago Natural History museum. A sense of humour is a difficult thing to justify to the constitutionally puffed, but I would see humour as one of Fitchett's most pleasing attributes: "arriving in the spring / the Englishman could have been / an albatross migrating for a summer feed" ["It is the Toroa seeking food merely," p.66]. Quite so.

- Alexandra Fraser. *Conversation by Owl-Light*. ISBN 978-1-927242-44-5. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2014.

This is Alexandra Fraser's first collection, an "examination of a long-term love affair and its consequences." The author mentions that "her other love, science, now informs much of her writing" – she was for many years a science teacher – and this does indeed give a certain edge to some of the poems included here:

name the fish the trees the flowers
 agaphanthus
Metrosideros
 houhere oak
 kahawau

know where your innards are ["Some memes to shape you," p.42]

There's a certain residue of the teacher here, too, I would say (I speak as one myself): someone with information and ideas to impart, I mean: thoughts gathered over many years.

- John Gibb. *The Thin Boy & Other Poems*. ISBN 978-0-473-27736-9. Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2014.

There's something rather macabre and forbidding about John Gibb's imagination: something a little reminiscent of the doomed landscape of spies and gasworks in the poetry of the young W. H. Auden, perhaps:

You went out to track down old friends
 Who, even in the three months since you left town,
 Have shifted house, changed phone numbers ...
 Naturally it does them no good. While you
 were away you have become equally determined
 ... like an accomplished encyclopedia salesman ["Homecoming," p.7]

Or the nightmarishly nondescript desert island in "Ashore," where "No long-lost friend or significant stranger / Stood on the skyline / Or miraculously descended the steep bluffs / Picking his way towards me / With a walking stick / Souvenired from a silent parsonage." If it weren't for an almost Beckettian quality to the author's black humour, his book would be intolerable. Instead it's guardedly amusing.

- Rogelio Guedea. *Si no te hubieras ido / If only you hadn't gone*. With translations by Roger Hickin. Introduction by Vincent O'Sullivan. ISBN 978-0-473-28658-3. Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2014.

Mexican poet Rogelio Guedea has been in New Zealand, teaching Spanish at the University of Otago, for a number of years now. It's pleasant to think of him as an alternative to the somewhat monotonously monoglot world of contemporary Kiwi poetry. His translator (and publisher) Roger Hickin's decision to present his poetry in dual-text, Spanish on the left, English on the right, is a particularly welcome one for those of us who can make some fist at understanding the originals, but are grateful for a bit of help with the tougher bits.

It's true, my coffee has no taste without you.
I added another spoon of sugar thinking that might fix it
to no effect / yet another, it was just as bitter.
clearly sugar was not the issue [p.31]

There's an agreeable lack of pretentiousness about Guedea's work, a matter-of-fact colloquial ease which covers the adroitness with which he marshals his wares: some of the music may be more apparent on the left side than the right, but then that's all the more incentive for all of us to have another try at escape from the prisonhouse of the English language.

- *Sweeping the Courtyard: The Selected Poems of Michael Harlow*. ISBN 978-0-473-27420-7. Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2014.

Those of us who already have a little row of Michael Harlow's books on our shelves: the wonderful *Giotto's Elephant* (1991), his two more recent AUP collections, *Cassandra's Daughter* (2005) and *The Train-Conductor's Blue Cap* (2009) – in my case, even a dogeared Xerox of his very first book *Edges*, published in Athen in 1974 – will still be very pleased to welcome this substantial volume of *Selected Poems*, spanning a publishing career of (now) forty years. Harlow has always been an exotic in the plain-jane world of New Zealand poetry: an unashamed intellectual, an urbane world-traveller, a connoisseur of the world's mythologies. I still remember the shock of disbelief with which I started to read his John Clare elegy, 'Talking at the boundary,' and realised that this, too, could be a part of the "local." For that, if nothing else, I would owe him a debt. As it is, as this books shows, his gifts to us over the years have been manifold.

- Michael Harlow. *Heart absolutely I can*. ISBN 978-0-473-27647-8. Hoopla Series. Wellington: Mākarō Press, 2014.

This new series, from Mākarō Press in Wellington, is edited by Mary McCallum, whose first novel *The Blue* won the Montana NZ Readers' Choice Award in 2008. The idea is to put out three "Hoopla" books each year: "A new poet joins a mid-career and a late-career poet." As the press release puts it: "We like strong work that steps onto the tightrope without hesitation and gives the performance of its life." Michael Harlow is, of course, the most established of the three poets on display in this initial offering, and it's nice to see so many familiar old friends in this selection from his poetry to date. I'll confine myself to one quote, from "Translating Narcissus": "The stranger in the Oyster Bar at Grand Central / waiting for the train he kept missing, who confessed / in a whisper that grew up kissing himself a good / many times goodnight in the bedroom mirror. / And he was, he said, let's face it, a big-time masturbator." [p.42] – No problem, but not easy.

- Chloe Honum. *The Tulip-Flame*. ISBN 978-0-9860257-5-4. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2014.

I suppose that Chloe Honum must have anticipated that I would pick up her book with a certain feeling of surprise, given its thoroughly high-culture-American trappings. Her covering letter, though, explaining that she was brought up in Glenfield, and that this, her first collection, accordingly contains "many poems that draw from my childhood in New Zealand," made immediate sense of the discrepancy. There's some great stuff in here in any case, whichever country she identifies with in future:

... *I know about you, I want to say. Mean drunk. Molester. I am seven or eight. It is fall, the Zen season, the trees clearing their minds. Gold sap. Lavender. Grandfather, where is your memory? I would like to help you look for it. I would like to see you crawl under the shrubs. ["Nursing Home," p,20]*

I have to say that I like that very much: there are *so many* disturbing overtones about it, so many reasons to feel ashamed and worried. I think the short prose poem is an excellent medium for Honum, actually: the form seems to lend itself to adding just that one more creepy detail which brings the thing to a kind of febrile Lovecraftian life.

- David Howard. *The Speak House: A Poem in Fifty-Seven Pentastichs on the Final Hours in the Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*. ISBN 978-0-473-28364-3. Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2014.

This poem was composed while David Howard was the Robert Burns Fellow in 2013 – hence, I suppose, the choice of that other illustrious Scotsman Robert Louis Stevenson as a subject. It’s certainly not the least ambitious technically of his poems, but I can’t help feeling that the biographical minutiae of the Tusitala ménage in Samoa helps to ground it in a kind of agreed-upon reality that gives good scope to Howard’s particular virtues of verbal precision and imaginative projection. “Swollen with details of R. L. S.’s life at Vailima from December 1889 to December 1894, the poem is necessarily shaped by the power plays that divided Samoa then,” as he himself puts in a note on p.25. There’s also a nice weaving of Stevenson’s own fictional self-projections with his final role as chief and arbiter of Samoan society: “Captain Smollett walks with Squire Trelawney / on the leeward side, out of the wind / but the sea is a hacksaw / and its teeth wear the leg of a cook ... ‘he’d look remarkably well from a yard-arm, sir.” All in all, a fascinating book: a world in miniature in one densely packed chapbook poem.

- Leonard Lambert. *Remnants: Poems*. ISBN 978-1-927242-28-5. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa, 2013.

Here is the news ...

Today my brother sold his business, his life,
my lady’s tumour was found benign,
and I confronted the demon nicotine.

And nothing will ever be the same again [“Mystery Channel,” p.36]

I think this quote gives something of the flavour of this new set of poems by Leonard Lambert: “Never quite as simple as they seem,” as the blurb puts it. He’s certainly a poet who – in W. H. Auden’s words – resists “the temptations / to skyline operations.” The subjects on offer here include J.D. Salinger, the Gold Gate Bridge, Napier, the 1950s: a series of snapshots from a still not-too-distant past. The language is direct and yet not unselfconscious, the thoughts more interesting for *not* being embellished and written up to impress. All in all, I can imagine this book outlasting a good many of its more flashy neighbours.

- Stephanie Lash. *Bird murder*. ISBN 978-0-473-27649-2. Hoopla Series. Wellington: Mākarō Press, 2014.

Stephanie Lash is a poet and archivist who lives in the Aro Valley, Wellington. *Bird Murder*, her first book of poems, the second in the first group of three short books published by Mākarō Press's "Hoopla Series," is "a gothic murder mystery telling of the demise of a ruined banker, set in the not-quite-fictional town of Tusk." It's hard to avoid being reminded of Dorothy Porter's splendid detective story in verse, *The Monkey's Mask*, first published twenty years ago, and subsequently made into a somewhat lacklustre feature film, with Kelly McGillis in the lead role. Why haven't there been many more such narrative poems since Porter started the ball rolling? It does seem like an excellent way of condensing and sharpening a narrative down to its bare bones:

The flagstones
were white too and
wept salt, hardly, and cold fell, every corner.
["A tenant in the attic," p.9].

- Cilla McQueen (in association with the Alexander Turnbull Library). *Edwin's Egg & Other Poetic Novellas*. ISBN 978-1-877578-13-7. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2014.

These are some of the fruits of Cilla McQueen's tenure as New Zealand Poet Laureate, a post she held from 2009-2011: "My two researchers at the National Library sent me 'clouds' of images in no particular order, from which it was my job to discover a possible relationship between any image and any part of the text." The result is certainly a wonderful piece of bookmaking: beautifully presented in a sturdy slipcase, with each of the eight "poetic novellas" as a little A6 booklet. The contents seem rather reminiscent of early surrealist experiments such as Max Ernst's *Une Semaine de Bonté* (1934) or some of Man Ray's photo-collages from the 1920s. McQueen has been experimenting for a long time in the border areas between drawing and poetry, and her latest move into the "space between prose and poetry" seems, in retrospect, to have been only a matter of time. One can't help feeling that this might herald some further adventures in cyberspace – possibly the incorporation of online animation techniques in future work along these lines?

- John O'Connor. *Whistling in the Dark*. ISBN 978-0-473-29151-8. Wellington: HeadworX, 2014.

It's truly amazing how technically adventurous John O'Connor allows himself to be in this new collection from HeadworX, hot on the heels of last year's *Aspects of Reality* (reviewed in *PNZ* 48). Is he not one of the most unjustly neglected New Zealand poets, in fact? When you consider the strength of his body of work to date, and his willingness to keep changing and experimenting with each new decade, I find O'Connor a constant inspiration. It's not a particularly benign or kindly voice, one would have to admit: "Keep it Stupid, Stupid" is the title of a couple of prose poems which are certainly somewhat disconcerting in their wildness and exuberant wit:

an organ grinder walks towards the idea of a museum. he
trundles a pushcart. an imaginary monkey sits on his shoulder
waving its penis at the tourists. [p.61]

What does all that *mean*? Bugger all, one suspects, and yet the notion of an imaginary building that's no longer there could scarcely be seen as a neutral one in post-earthquake Christchurch. Excellent – if disturbing – stuff.

- *Outloud Too*. Ed. Vaughan Rapatahana, Kate Rogers, Madeleine Slavick. ISBN 978-988-13114-0-5. Hong Kong: MCCM Creations, 2014.

This is a very nicely produced anthology of poems to do with all aspects of life in Hong Kong, from "local and overseas poets alike." Four of the 48 writers included here have strong connections with New Zealand (including two of the editors: Vaughan Rapatahana and Madeleine Slavick), but I guess it's this idea of fusion, of "a stable community of writers in a city constantly reinventing itself" that's of particular interest right now, as the struggle for democracy intensifies in this former colonial enclave, now rejoined politically to China. It's hard not to see hints of that in a lot of the poems included here, in fact: "the guy in the front row / leant forward & / thud / hit his head / with cupped hand / like he didn't want that particular / idea to take root in there" [Alan Jefferies, "Reading," p. 55].

- Lee Posna. *Arboretum*. ISBN 978-0-473-28356-8. Auckland: Compound Press, 2014.

This is the first of two chapbooks launched recently by Auckland publisher Compound Press at a rather convivial event at the Timeout bookshop in Mt Eden. Lee Posna and Steven Toussaint, two young American poets (their respective authors,) gave readings and answered questions about their work on that occasion – Steve from his just-published book, Lee (interestingly) from some other, more recent work on the subject of ants, which he accompanied with a series of photographic handouts. This gives some clue to the subject-matter of his book, beautifully illustrated by Lucy Meyle. As the title might suggest, this is a poetry of the earth and the natural world:

Calling them my name
You planted my ashes in aluminium soil
And talked to them in tepid rain

The echoes of some of the more interior-looking American poets – Emily Dickinson’s “Because I could not stop for death” transformed to “Because I stopped for death” on the antepenultimate page of this unpaginated booklet – are also strong: virtually omnipresent, in fact.

- Helen Rickerby. *Cinema*. ISBN 978-0-473-27648-5. Hoopla Series. Wellington: Mākarō Press, 2014.

Helen Rickerby’s cool ironic voice has been an important part of the Wellington poetry scene since the mid-1990s, when she co-founded *JAAM* with Mark Pirie. Over the years her work has moved from the mock-surrealism of *Abstract Internal Furniture* (2001) to the more personal and engaged voice of *My Iron Spine* (2008) and *Northland* (2010). This new book of hers, from Mākarō Press’s Hoopla Series, looks “at the personal through the lens of a camera and the world of cinema through the unfiltered eye.” Clearly, like the late lamented Jim Carroll, Rickerby has spent a lot of time living at the movies – an almost inevitable frame, in retrospect, for writers of his post-beat generation; far more of a departure, however, for a poet in our own decaying post-modern: cinema, one might almost say, as museum-culture.

- Marie Slaughter. *The Antigone Poems*. Drawings by Terrence Tasker. ISBN 978-0-9806447-0-8. Potts Point NSW: Altaire Production and Publication, 2013.

This is a very interesting, very strange collection of poems and charcoal drawings created in the 1970s in Canada by writer Mary Slaughter and artist Terrence Tasker. It has been described by Grace Cavalieri as a “holy book – written in ecstasy and the madness of genius” and there *is* a certain air of the sacramental about it. Antigone, subject of Sophocles’ eponymous drama, has always been a protean figure within western culture. George Steiner wrote an entire book about the various ways in which she’s been re-envisaged down the centuries, culminating (I suppose) in Jean Anouilh’s play about the French Resistance, performed under the noses of the Gestapo in wartime Paris. What does she mean to Marie Slaughter? A desire to “live all lives, all deaths, encompass all women” [p. lxxxix]? One can’t help feeling that a very personal version of the Freudian family drama is being played out here, behind these pared-down lines of poetry.

- Elizabeth Smither. *Ruby DUBY Du*. ISBN 978-0-473-26830-5. Lyttelton: Cold Hub Press, 2014.

Well, we’ve had a lot of poems by mothers about their children: Joanna Paul’s *Imogen* is a particularly poignant example of a whole collection consecrated to mourning for a dead child; on a lighter note, Anna Jackson’s *Elvira* inspired a whole series of poems back in the nineties and early oughties. Elizabeth Smither’s new book *Ruby DUBY Du*, though, contains the poems of a doting grandmother. At first sight this might seem a bit meretricious, but given that grandparents are so notoriously indulgent towards their offspring’s offspring, it’s interesting to see what Smither can do with this (alleged) genetic disposition:

Someone should applaud the cat for his restraint
the way he tolerates, observes, then plays

offering his tail while his furry face hides
his expression of distaste. [“Ruby and the cat’s tail,” p.30]

It seems that someone *has*. All this is very nicely observed. Its lack of grandiosity and pretentiousness is also greatly in its favour. A really charming little chapbook from Cold Hub Press in Lyttelton.

- MaryJane Thomson. *Fallen Grace*. ISBN 978-0-473-28152-6. Wellington: HeadworX / The Night Press, 2014.

The Night Press is a new venture from Mark Pirie's well-established publishing house HeadworX, designed as a convenient harbour for occasional chapbooks and the poetry journal *Broadsheet*. Judging from this first collection from Wellington writer and artist MaryJane Thomson, it's intended for a more questing, more – dare I say it? – *experimental* voice than HeadworX proper.

This is the book of your times,
Stage to stage, from Atlantis to Babylon.

So says her poem “No direction,” [p.14] only to continue: “In the meantime you Babel on.” That's a bad pun, a very bad pun – I like it. There's a satisfying breadth and grasp to Thomson's style of writing, as evidenced here: she's prepared to break out of any too rigid confines of the vernacular into the slightly more studied, but never (thank God) the pompous or affected. A fine debut volume.

- Steve Toussaint. *Fiddlehead*. ISBN 978-0-473-28354-4. Auckland: Compound Press, 2014.

Like Lisa Samuels, Steve Toussaint has a fascination with sound-poetry, melopoeia, word-music, whatever you want to call it. The basic conceit of his chapbook, that Rangitoto Island, in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf, might equate with the Mount Purgatory of Dante's epic, is not an original one. Jan Kemp got there before him with *Dante's Heaven* (2006), and I'm sure she wasn't the first to think of it either. Priority isn't really the point, though – it's what the poet *does* with the idea which should be of interest to us, and Toussaint certainly does a good deal: “beekeeper / whose bees sleep / in narcotic ether bee / keeper whose bees / dream about lice in their clothes / are your children at home / safe in their bunks or drunk / in the shoals / plying ferrymen with wine- / sotted kisses”: there's definitely an *atmosphere* to all that, a sense of travail and struggle, appropriate to the idea of Dante's *Purgatorio* and (above all) the “varco folle” [mad course] that drove Ulysses to wreck himself on it. This is good poetry to hear read aloud, but that's not the limit of what's going on it: volcanic murmurs are audible beneath the grass of his sojourn on Devonport's Mt. Victoria. Fateful, perhaps, for all of us.

Contributor Notes:

- **Ai Hao** is a Chinese poet born in early 1980s, now based in Xi'an. His translator, **Liang Yujing**, is a lecturer at Hunan University of Commerce, China. He writes in both English and Chinese. He will go to New Zealand to study for his PhD at Victoria in late 2014.
- **Gary Allen** is an award-winning poet, with thirteen published collections, most recently *Mexico*, Agenda Editions, 2013. His poems have been published widely in international literary magazines, including *Australian Book Review*, *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Westerly*, etc.
- **Jim Arkell** has been widely published in his native Australia in poetry journals, newspapers and small press anthologies, as well as being broadcast on local and national radio. He likes to say he cut all his artistic teeth on punk rock, and now he's getting dentures!
- **Anita Arlov** organises and MCs *Inside.out* Open Mic for Writers, at One2One Cafe, Ponsonby, once a month, as well as *Spit.it.Out* spoken word events, which premiered at last year's Auckland Fringe Festival and was staged again in March 2014.
- **Ros Armstrong**: "Initially writing newspaper travel articles, I later diversified and gained recognition for short story, poetry, play and essay writing. I'm currently finalising a novella *Mind Games* and seeking a publisher for a children's cat rescue story that contains a trace of futuristic possibility."
- **Ruth Arnison** is currently the poet in residence at Dunedin's historic home, Olveston. Her term there will conclude in August with a poetry reading and exhibition of artwork by NZ artists responding to poems written during her residency. Ruth is the editor of *Poems in the Waiting Room* (NZ): waitingroompoems.wordpress.com.
- **Jake Arthur** is a postgraduate student at Victoria University of Wellington. He enjoys getting stung by the prickly issues of poetry and poetics, and while he is currently studying American poet Mary Ruefle, he isn't letting that get in the way of his love for New Zealand poets. He also has a poem forthcoming in the inaugural issue of *Sweet Mammalian*.
- **Terri Ashton** is a former journalist, with an interest in the way poetic language can be sacramental. For her, poems that 'speak' are those with the stamp of hope and are about real things. She helps out of work South Aucklanders get jobs.
- **Ardyn Janelia Dos Santos Baia** is a New Zealander of mixed Samoan and Dutch heritage, who identifies strongly with her Samoan-kiwi side

as she was born and raised in South Auckland. She is currently working as an English language teacher in South Korea.

- **Troy Banyan** is Bristol, England born and bred, 53 years old, married with 2 grown-up kids and works in the local authority as a Case Officer for children with special educational needs. Writing is his (very necessary) outlet.
- **Robert James Berry** lives and writes in Dunedin. His work has been published widely. His ninth collection *Toffee Apples* is now out from Ginninderra Press, Port Adelaide, Australia.
- **Tony Beyer** is returning to Taranaki in 2015, after three successful years of teaching in West Auckland. His most recent book is *Great South Road and South Side*, Puriri Press, 2013.
- **Eden Bradfield** writes in Oamaru, and has previously been published in such places as *Percutio*, *Takahe*, *Minarets* and *Elle*. In addition to this Bradfield plays music in The Moonrakers and probably has far too many paisley and floral shirts, if this is even possible.
- **Liz Breslin** lives and writes in Hawea Flat. Her poems have been published in *Landfall*, *Takahe*, *Bravado*, the *Otago Daily Times*, on a Phantom Billstickers poster and in other places. 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. Since 2008 he has published four collections of poems: *Hauled Head First into a Leviathan*, Cinnamon Press; *Liquefaction*, Interactive Press; *Cravings*, Oystercatcher Press and *Punctured Experimental*, Kilmog Press. *Photosynthesis*, Kilmog Press (2014) is his latest collection.
- **Owen Bullock** has published a collection of poetry, *sometimes the sky isn't big enough* (Steele Roberts, 2010), and edited a number of journals and anthologies, including several issues of *Poetry NZ* and, most recently, *Given an ordinary stone* (NZ Poetry Society, 2013).
- **Chris Cantillon** lives in Wanganui and works as a lawyer. He is currently researching the Lindisfarne Gospels (England, circa 735AD) for a proposed article. *Lancasters* is his third contribution to *PNZ*.
- **Liam Campbell** is a nineteen year old student, currently living in Rotorua and studying art at the Waiariki Institute of Technology: "Unfortunately, I have no publishing history as this is the first time I've submitted anything. I hope this will not turn you off reading my work."
- **Lyall Clarke's** "generation gap" is from a suite of poems about war. He comments: "I have never been to war at all but I did do my Compulsory

Military Training in 1952. My father's two brothers went to World War One. One was killed at Gallipoli on the worst day of the campaign (August 7th/8th 1915), and my other uncle was killed in the Battle of Passchendaele, in 1917."

- **David R. Cravens** started his writing career as an adjunct Professor of English Studies for Central Methodist University, and since that time he's published widely, both in the US and abroad, as well as winning the 2008 Saint Petersburg Review Prize in Poetry and the 2011 Bedford Poetry Prize. He currently teaches composition and literature at Mineral Area College.
- **Mary Cresswell** is from Los Angeles and lives on the Kapiti Coast. *Fish Stories* – her collection of ghazals and glosas – will be published by Canterbury University Press in 2015.
- **Hamish Dewe** edited *brief 43* in 2011. He was, back in the day, an editor of *Salt* (the Auckland one). Think of him as the anti-Jack.
- **Kieran Doody** was born and raised in Christchurch but is now residing in Porirua. His interests are poetry, music and art.
- **Glenys Doull** (Palmerston North). Glenys taught for over thirty years, and also worked in a call centre and libraries. She has recently retired and is using some of her time to write. This is the first piece of her writing to be published.
- **Eugene Dubnov** was born in Tallinn and educated at Moscow and London universities. Two collections of his poems in Russian came out in London; his verse and prose in English translation and written in English have appeared in many periodicals and anthologies. His bilingual poetry collection *The Thousand-Year Minutes*, co-translated with distinguished American-British poet **Anne Stevenson** (reviewed in this issue of *PNZ*), was published by Shoestring Press, UK, in 2013.
- **Rachael Elliott** has just completed her Masters in creative writing. She is Editor of the on campus student magazine *Nexus*. Earlier this year Rachael won the 2degrees Poetry Slam. Her work has previously appeared in *4th Floor*, *Probe*, *JAAM* and *Mayhem*.
- **Jan FitzGerald**, b.1950, is a long established NZ poet, with publication in all the mainstream NZ literary journals since the 1970s, and in those of the UK including *The London Magazine*. She is a full-time artist living with her husband, fellow poet-painter Leonard Lambert, in Napier, NZ.
- **Rata Gordon** has recently returned to New Zealand after spending time in India. She is originally from West Auckland and has currently

set up camp in Grey Lynn. Rata's poems have recently been published in *Landfall* (June 2013) and *Deep South* (2013).

- **Terry Greatrex** is currently teaching at a high school in Kazakhstan, after stints at universities in China. He has previously been a soil conservator, science writer, butler and bar owner, among other occupations. This is the first time he has submitted poems for publication.
- **Susan Green** (West Auckland) is a psychotherapist, writer and gardener. This is her first appearance in *PNZ*.
- **Charles Hadfield** has two collections from Salzburg University Press, and one from Oversteps (UK). He has appeared several times in *Poetry NZ* since moving to Auckland a decade ago, after working in many different countries on education aid projects. He is currently teaching at Exeter university. An extract from his new sequence, *Burnings*, can be found in the latest issue of *Tears in the Fence* (UK).
- **Scott Hamilton** has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Auckland. His thesis was published in 2011 by Manchester University Press as *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left, and Postwar British Politics*. Hamilton has published two books of poetry and an annotated selection of the poems of Kendrick Smithyman. His blog, <readingthemaps.blogspot.com> has had more than half a million readers since 2006. After spending 2013 in Tonga Hamilton is writing a book about that country's extraordinary avant-garde art scene; some of his chapters have appeared as essays at the online journal *EyeContact*.
- **Elsbeth Hill** graduated from Northtec Kerikeri with a Bachelor of Applied Arts in 2012. Elsbeth is a multi disciplinary Printmaker, creating work exploring identity, in Print, Paint, Sculpture, Digital Video and Text. Currently Elsbeth is employed as an Adult Education Facilitator at Northland Region Corrections Facility.
- **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.
- **Jan Hutchison's** most recent collection of poetry is *The Happiness of Rain* (Steele Roberts, Wellington). Her poems have been published in various magazines such as *NZ Books*, *Takahe* and *Quadrant* (Australia). She is represented in *Essential NZ Poems* (Random House).
- **Hayden Hyams** is previously published in *PNZ* and *Takahe*. He is a restaurateur based in Auckland.

- **Anna Jackson** is a poet and fiction writer, with many collections of poetry to her credit. She teaches English at Victoria University of Wellington.
- **Ted Jenner** is publishing his *Gold Leaves* book with Titus Books in late 2014. A recent look at his poetry can be found at <http://halvard-johnson.blogspot.co.nz/2013/08/ted-jenner.html>.
- **Annaleese Jochems** has had work published in *Brief Magazine*, *Blackmail Press*, and forthcoming in *JAAM*. She is a Creative Writing student at MIT.
- **Sophia Johnson** published her first poem “Moonlight Sonata” at age 12, and contributes regularly to literary magazines. She lives in Auckland and works as an actor, where she is best known for her roles in *Shortland Street*, *Nothing Trivial*, *The Almighty Johnsons*, and *The Last Saint*.
- **John Kambolis** was born in Manhattan. He grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, learning soccer from his former professional playing father, and reading the likes of Henry Miller, Charles Bukowski and Dostoevsky. He spends the days with his beloved dog Max, and works in the vintage sports collectibles field. He was recently published in *Haiku Journal*.
- **Noel King** is a native of Country Kerry, Ireland. His poems, short stories, articles and reviews have appeared in journals in over thirty-seven countries. His poetry collections are *Prophesying the Past* (Salmon, 2010), *The Stern Wave* (Salmon, 2013) and *Sons*, due out in 2015.
- **Joanne Kingston** is 42 years old, from Piha, Auckland, New Zealand, but has been living in San Francisco for some years now: “I am homesick, so I write of home. I entered my first poetry competition in April at the Auckland Museum for the ‘lest we forget’ competition. Mine was a chosen poem. ‘Some Hero’. So I will continue to share my poetry from now on.”
- **Leonard Lambert** is the author of five collections over as many decades. Of his work Maurice Gee has written: “It’s strong, witty and close to the bone. He’s after his own truth, with no faking in language or emotion.” A talented painter and enthusiastic performer of his own work, he lives in Napier with wife and fellow-poet Jan FitzGerald. His most recent collection is *Remnants* (Steele Roberts, 2013).
- **Deirdre Thorsen Lavery** lives in a Hawke’s Bay farming valley where she writes poetry, paints and looks after donkeys and horses. She is a foundation member of the Hawke’s Bay Live Poets’ Society and has

been regularly performing poetry since 1991. She has been published in *Poetry NZ*, *Landfall* and *Takahe*. She was second in the 2013 *Takahe* Poetry Competition.

- **Michele Leggott** was the inaugural NZ Poet Laureate under the National Library scheme (2007-8), was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2009 for her services to poetry, and in 2013 received The Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry. She is an award-winning poet, a founding director of the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre <<http://www.nzepec.auckland.ac.nz/>> and a professor in The University of Auckland's English Department.
- **Christine Leunens'** first novel, *Primordial Soup*, was described by *The Sunday Times* as "a remarkable debut novel". Her second, *Caging Skies*, was published in New Zealand in 2008 and the French translation shortlisted for the Prix Médicis. The New Zealand Herald selected her third novel, *A Can of Sunshine*, as Best Books 2013.
- **Simon Lewis** has been published by NZ literary magazines since 1975. His main influences are friends, Cohen, Borges and Burroughs.
- **Thérèse Lloyd** is currently a doctoral student at Victoria University. Her first full-length collection of poetry *Other Animals* was published by VUP in 2013. She lives in Paekakariki on the Kapiti Coast.
- **Richie McCaffery** is a PhD student/ Teaching assistant in the Scottish Literature Department of The University of Glasgow. He is the author of two pamphlets, *Spinning Plates* (HappenStance Press, 2012) and *Ballast Flint* (Cromarty Arts Trust, 2013) which recently won the runner-up prize in the 2014 Callum Macdonald Memorial Award for poetry pamphlets. His first book-length collection is *Cairn* from Nine Arches Press (2014), and his poems have appeared in places such as *Ambit*, *The Rialto*, *The Dark Horse* and *Best British Poetry 2012* (Salt).
- **Theressa Malone**: "Red Headed Girl Discovers the Peppermint Mine' was written one night whilst trying to flee from the realms of OCD. Its genre is a sort of modernist unconventional love note. If you do happen to select this piece, it will be my first published work. I am only 18 but have been writing poetry (albeit sporadically) for a few years now, typically as a creative outlet of sorts."
- **Reade Moore** gained a Diploma in Creative Writing from the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts (English) at Massey University. She lives in the Rosedale Valley near Nelson.
- **Margaret Moores** is a distance student at Massey University and works as a publisher's Sales Representative.

- **Elizabeth Morton** is a student and writer, living on Auckland's North Shore. She has a keen interest in neuroscience and philosophy. She has been published in *JAAM*, *Poetry NZ* and *Takahe*.
- **Jan Napier** lives near the Indian Ocean. Her work has been showcased in *Poetry New Zealand*, *Westerly*, *The Stars Like Sand*, *Australian Love Poems 2013*, *Windfalls 2*, *Paper Wasp*, and *Unusual Work*. Her poetry has also been published in other journals and anthologies both within Australia, and internationally.
- **Emma Neale**: "I've had five novels and four collections of poetry published in New Zealand. I live in Dunedin, where I work as a freelance editor and occasional creative writing tutor. My work has also appeared in journals in the US, Scotland, England, Australia and Canada, and translations in Mexico."
- **Janet Newman** is studying towards a Master of Creative Writing at Massey University. Her poems have been published in *a fine line*, *blackmail press*, *bravado*, *brief*, the Caselberg Trust website, *Nth Degree*, NZ Poetry Society anthologies, *Poetry NZ*, *Takahe* and *Snorkel*.
- **Piet Nieuwland** first appeared in the Globe Tapes and has since read poetry in a wide variety of forums including Pechakucha evenings. His poems have been published in *Landfall*, *Live Lines*, *Mattoid*, *Takahe*, *Snafu*, *Take Flight*, *Tongue in your ear*, *Poetry NZ*, and *The Blue Notebook Review*. His most recent poetry booklet is *Tzarinas Equinoctial*. He is behind the Poets Exposed readings in Whangarei and has just co-edited a chapbook compilation of Northland poetry titled *Fast Fibres Poetry*. He also works as a consultant management planner to the Department of Conservation.
- **Keith Nunes** is a former journalist who now writes because he wants to. He's been published in *Landfall*, *Poetry NZ*, *Takahe*, *brief* and *Trout* among others and has a chapbook out called *Crashing the Calliope*. He lives in rural Bay of Plenty with artist Talulah Belle.
- **Jessamine O Connor** is an award-winning and frequently published poet, from Ireland. Her chapbooks *Hellsteeth* – funded with a 2013 artists bursary – and *A Skyful of Kites* are available from www.jessamineoconnor.com. She facilitates the weekly Wrong Side of the Tracks Writers from her home in a train station in Sligo, and is founder of The Hermit Collective, www.hermitcollective.com, a poetry/art/music ensemble.
- **John O'Connor** is a Christchurch poet. His most recent publications include *Aspects of Reality* (HeadworX, 2013) and *Whistling in the Dark* (HeadworX, 2014), reviewed in this issue of *PNZ*.

- **Tru Paraha** is an artist working in the fields of choreography, performance art and poetry and has worked internationally as a professional practitioner for 20 years touring throughout Asia, USA, Europe and the Pacific. Tru received her post graduate diploma in creative and performing arts from The University of Auckland and has recently completed her Master's thesis.
- **Chris Parsons** lives in Christchurch and has poetry published in *Blackmail Press*, *JAAM*, *The Otago Daily Times*, *Snorkel*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *Takahe*, and *The Typewriter*.
- **Sarah Penwarden** was born in Taranaki and lives in Auckland: "I worked as a counsellor for ten years and I am now a counsellor educator, also studying towards my doctorate in a topic that brings together my interest in poetry and grief. I have had poems published in *Poetry New Zealand*, poems and short stories published in *Takahe* magazine, a short story broadcast on *Radio New Zealand*, and short stories and poetry for children published in the *School Journal*."
- **Kerry Popplewell** grew up in Napier, but has spent most of her life in Wellington. A collection of her poems, *Leaving the Tableland*, was published by Steele Roberts in 2010.
- **Jenny Powell** is a Dunedin writer and teacher. She has been widely published nationally and internationally in literary magazines and anthologies. Her first collection of poems was published in 1998. Her most recent collections are *Vietnam: A Poem Journey*, published in 2010, followed by the chapbook *Ticket Home*, published by Cold Hub Press in 2012.
- **Joanna Preston** is a Tasmanaut poet, editor and freelance creative writing tutor. Her work has appeared widely, and her first collection, *The Summer King*, won both the 2008 Kathleen Grattan Award for Poetry and the 2010 Mary Gilmore Prize.
- **Vaughan Rapatahana** continues to be published across the globe in a variety of genres - for example the month of April saw his obituary of Colin Wilson in *Philosophy Now* and his lead-edited poetry anthology entitled *OutLoud Too* (reviewed in this issue of PNZ) published in Hong Kong, where he is a long term resident. His next poetry collection, *Atonement*, will be published by ASM/Flying islands in Macau by the end of 2014, while a follow up to *English Language as Hydra* is to be published in April 2015 by Multilingual Matters, U.K.
- **Nicholas Reid** is an Auckland historian, critic and poet who conducts the book blog *Reid's Reader* and has four times guest-edited *PNZ*. His first collection of poetry was *The Little Enemy* (Steele Roberts, 2011), his

sonnet sequence *Persephone and Dis* appeared in 2013 and he is currently preparing a second collection.

- **Jeremy Roberts** is a primary school teacher, currently working in Jakarta, Indonesia. He was one of the 4 MCs at Auckland's "Poetry Live" from 2011-2012, and regularly appeared at numerous spoken word events around Auckland City. He has also read his work in the USA (Texas) and Jakarta.
- **David Romanda** lives in Kawasaki City, Japan. His work has appeared in *Ambit Magazine*, *PN Review*, and *Poetry New Zealand*.
- **Jack Ross** is 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. His other publications include four full-length poetry collections, three novels, and three volumes of short fiction. More details are available on his blog *The Imaginary Museum* at <http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/>.
- **John C Ross** is a 14 years retired, honorary research fellow at Massey University: "A much shorter and simpler version appeared in *a fine line* (Jan 2014): 16, as "the rights of men," but this is massively re-thought and re-worked, going on from what Alistair Paterson suggested I might do with it. Enough to make it largely a different poem."
- **Joshua Vernon Roy-Anstey** lives and works in Wellington. He is 24 years old, and is currently studying religion and anthropology at Victoria university."
- **Dagmara Rudolph** is an 11-year-old Kiwi girl, with poetry published in *Upstart Magazine*.
- **Anna Rugis** is a poet, singer and songwriter who has produced many CDs of original music and whose poems have been published widely. Her latest CD, *light as*, is available on itunes. She lives in Maraetai near Auckland.
- **Genevieve Scanlan** was born in Dunedin and raised in Oamaru. She is currently a postgraduate student in the English Department at Otago University – having just completed a thesis on the novels of Robin Hyde – and loves Dunedin for its rich literary culture.
- **Kerrin P. Sharpe's** first book *three days in a wishing well* was published by VUP in 2012. Her work appeared in *Oxford Poets 13* (Carcenet). Another book, *there's a medical name for this* has just been released (VUP).
- **Fred Simpson** (Cambridge) is a G.P. whose work has appeared previously in *PNZ*, as well as in other poetry magazines in NZ and

- overseas. He has published a collection of poetry entitled *Lucky Me!*, and recently published his first novel, *Ted's Urn*.
- **Tracey Slaughter** is the author of *her body rises*. Her poetry and prose has been widely published in NZ literary journals, and she was the 2010 recipient of the Louis Johnson New Writer's Award. Her novella *The Longest Drink in Town* is soon to be published by Pania Press. She lives on the Coromandel Peninsula and teaches in the English Department at Waikato University.
 - **Laura Solomon** has a degree in English Literature (Victoria University, 1997) and a Masters in Computer Science (University of London, 2003). Her books include *Black Light*, *Nothing Lasting*, *Alternative Medicine*, *An Imitation of Life*, *Instant Messages*, *The Theory of Networks*, *Operating Systems*, *Hilary and David*, *In Vitro* and *The Shingle Bar Taniwha and Other Stories*. She has won prizes in Bridport, Edwin Morgan, Ware Poets, Willesden Herald, Mere Literary Festival, and Essex Poetry Festival competitions. She was short-listed for the 2009 Virginia Prize and won the 2009 Proverse Prize.
 - **John Tangney** teaches literature at NTU, Singapore. His essays and poems have recently appeared in *Literary Imagination*, *Litteraria Pragensia* and *The Cortland Review*.
 - **Richard Taylor**: Born 1948. Lives in Auckland. Published in various including *Poetry NZ*, *Spin*, *Pander*, *brief*. Has had various (mostly factory etc.) occupations including Lineman. BA (Auck. 1995). Three books including *RED* (The Dead Poets), *Conversation with a Stone* (Titus). Blog *EYELIGHT* with (slow – my apologies) work including art, texts etc.
 - **Loren Thomas** is a student at The University of Waikato, studying towards a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Writing Studies: “I have not yet been published, but have only just started to submit work to be considered for publishing. I have been writing since I was a child, and hope to pursue creative writing through post-graduate study in the near future. The majority of my poems focus on the theme of mental illness.”
 - **Edwin Thumboo** is a Singaporean poet and academic who is regarded as one of the pioneers of English literature in Singapore. He is an Emeritus Professor at the National University of Singapore, and has many books and anthologies to his credit.
 - **Mike Tolhurst** is a student at MIT Auckland. Robert Sullivan is his poetry tutor. A 57-year-old lawyer from Auckland, this is his first year in the creative writing course.

- **Jamie Trower** is a second-year Arts Student at the University of Auckland, currently studying Drama and English with a very keen interest in Creative Writing: “My major passion is poetry. My own experiences and views of the disabled community are outlined within my poems. I use constant references to the landscapes and geographical imprints of the ‘limbo’ in my brain. Another major theme in my collection is the presence of God to a disabled person.”
- **Richard von Sturmer’s** new collection of poetry, *Book of Equanimity Verses*, was published by Puriri Press last year. He currently works as the lyricist for ‘The Floral Clocks’, a music group formed by Gabriel White.
- **Kirsten Warner** works as a journalist and performs as a poet and musician. Her poem “It’s A Girl” is one of Phantom Billstickers poem posters and has been stuck up around New Zealand and the world. She was 2008 winner of the Landfall Essay Competition and has had fiction and poetry published in *Landfall*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Bravado*, *JAAM*, *Takahe* and in two anthologies *Our Own Kind: 100 New Zealand Poems About Animals*, and *Just Another Fantastic Anthology, Auckland In Poetry*. She is currently chair of the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Society of Authors.
- **Wei Sun** is currently completing her degree in philosophy at the University of Canterbury. She has a huge interest in writing – mainly political and philosophical articles, poetry and comedy. She has been learning the English language for 4 years so far and is currently a writer and assisting editor for *Fightback Aotearoa/NZ*.
- **Elizabeth Welsh** is an academic editor and poet. She won the Auckland University Press Divine Muses Emerging Poet prize in 2012 and she runs the online literary magazine *The Typewriter* for emerging New Zealand poets. She is currently working on her first poetry collection.
- **Gabriel White** is a New Zealand filmmaker and musician. His latest work is *Oracle Drive* (2013) a feature film set in Auckland’s North Shore. Other works include *The World Blank* series (travelogues, 2001-10), *The Unplanned Masterpiece* (2009) about the history of Auckland and *Stories of Tamaki* (2010) about the Maori history of the Auckland area. The excerpts in this issue of PNZ come from his film *Aucklantis*, available at: <https://vimeo.com/103964876>.
- **Pat White** is a poet and essayist. He lives in Fairlie, on the edge of the Mackenzie country. *Gnossienne*, poems and drawings a collaboration with artist Catherine Day was published by Wai-te-ata Press 2012. A

volume of poetry, *Naturally*, is forthcoming from Frontiers Press. A biography of Peter Hooper, West Coast award-winning writer, *The Quality of Light* is to be published by Mākaro Press.

- **Diane Wilson** is a writer based in NSW, Australia. She has spent her career writing (mostly) non-fiction in the corporate world. She has been writing fiction since 2011, inspired by a temporary move to a new city (Melbourne), supported by a weekly writing group and informed by some university studies in creative writing. Diane writes short stories, flash fiction, poetry and some other things which are difficult to classify. She wonders whether she might write a novel one day. Now back in NSW, she has just bought a house in the Blue Mountains with a perfect writing room overlooking the garden.
- **Landa wo** is an Angolan Cabindese poet who lives in Germany, having previously lived in Ireland, France, Gabon, Congo and England. A poet from the Diaspora, Landa wo writes mainly in English and French with the heart oriented to the unknown, dreamed and surely idealized land of Angola and Cabinda. His work has won a number of awards.
- **Mark Young's** most recent books are the e-book *Asemic Colon* from The Red Ceilings Press, & *The Codicils*, a 6-page selection of poems written in the past four years, out from Otoliths.

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 Lisa Samuels, an especially innovative and experimental American poet now living in New Zealand, where she teaches at the University of Auckland.

Essays:

Jake Arthur: *Poetic Voice and Poetic Personality in the work of Jenny Bornholdt*

Scott Hamilton: *Jumping in the drink – Notes on the Tongan poems of Murray Edmond & Richard von Sturmer*

Review:

Hamish Dewe: *The Millerton Sequences*, by Leicester Kyle (2014)

Books and magazines in brief:

Jack Ross

MASSEY UNIVERSITY:
School of English and Media Studies
Albany Campus, Auckland, New Zealand

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 Lisa Samuels, an especially innovative and experimental American poet now living in New Zealand, where she teaches at the University of Auckland.

Essays:

Jake Arthur: *Poetic Voice and Poetic Personality in the work of Jenny Bornholdt*

Scott Hamilton: *Jumping in the drink – Notes on the Tongan poems of Murray Edmond & Richard von Sturmer*

Review:

Hamish Dewe:

The Millerton Sequences, by Leicester Kyle (2014)

Books and magazines in brief:

Jack Ross

MASSEY UNIVERSITY:

School of English and Media Studies

Albany Campus, Auckland, New Zealand