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POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND POETS & WRITERS
MARCH 2026



GILLIAN ROACH
The poem that finds you

COVER ARTWORK 'GINGKO' BY IRISH ARTIST EMMA BARONE



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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

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NEW ZEALAND POETS & WRITERS
MARCH 2026

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Gillian Roach is a Ahuriri Napier poet who won the New Voices — Emerging Poets Competition in 2018 and was runner-up in the Kathleen Grattan Prize for a Sequence of Poems in 2018 and 2019. Her poetry has been widely published, including in *Landfall*, *takahē* and *Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook*. Gillian is a founding member of the Isthmus poets, and has published three collaborative poetry collections with them over the past 9 years. She completed a Master of Creative Writing degree at AUT in 2016, and has also written novels and short stories.



THE POEM THAT FINDS YOU

I've been trying to 'listen differently' over the past few months, prompted by a chance remark on Instagram – *getting my news from poems today*. An idea magpied, like a shiny leaf, from the torrent of news, memes, jokes, and opinions that surges through my awareness daily. Some quick digging led me to the William Carlos Williams poem the comment referenced, *it is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there*. A well-known and often quoted poem, which like so many, I hadn't come across before.

I've always been an avid news consumer, but my sources have changed lately. I'm less likely to pick up a physical newspaper or listen to traditional radio. I read a lot online and enjoy greater access to international news and podcasts. But traditional news, with its fast turn-around and repetitive cycles can feel unsatisfying and voyeuristic. The tyranny of the algorithm means stories (and advertising) are pushed on us, based on what we reveal by our preferences. Slowly our worlds shrink as we receive more of the same.

So, what might change if I turned to my 'poetry feed' as an alternative news source, and looked to 'get the news' from poems? What might I find in poems, that I could conceivably die miserably without?

The lines flow from the hand unbidden / and the hidden source is the watchful heart

Derek Mahon, *Everything is going to be alright*

Gillian Roach

continued overleaf...

I recently travelled the new Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatu Highway between Woodville and Palmerston North with my husband and his parents. It's a trip we've all made many times, on the journey between Napier and Wellington, although never quite in this configuration. My husband drove, where once he might have wrestled in the back seat with his brother, or day-dreamed about being singled out from the crowd to sub on for Manchester United. The Glums, as they are known in our family lexicon, counted off familiar landmarks and passed around the fruit jubes. It was the first time they had been on the new road, and they were keen to see where it connected with the existing highway, and how much time it knocked off the trip.

The narrow Manawatu River gorge route was closed permanently in 2017 after a bad slip made the road impassable and, for eight years, drivers used the Saddle Road, a winding route across the Tararua ranges and through a wind farm with splendid views of the region. The new highway, completed in 2025, also takes you over the Tararuas via a more direct route, up close and personal with the graceful, monumental windmills, and flanked by walkers and cyclists using the purpose-built lanes either side. Faster, but less picture-skew, as we all agreed.

A bee zooms, deep amid the warm young grasses. / Startled, the rose / Laughs
Robin Hyde, *Embrace*

In a recent email newsletter from US poet and writer Devin Kelly, he explored Jonathan Aprea's poem Dial. The first line of Dial reads, *Most people make the same piece of art, over / and over*, which Kelly says might seem like a rather limiting proposition, but after that the poem 'takes every turn towards surprise'.

Kelly believes artists revisit the same kind of work, because we are essentially our lives and nothing more. "...we return, again and again, to our obsessions and our wonderings and our feelings and our lives, and we filter our attempt at creation through those lenses." However, "even in the midst of that sameness, we have the opportunity to approach and wander and stumble and move through the dark in order to revisit that sameness with a bit of difference."

This might involve offering our attention to different things. Choosing to listen differently. Not to mention the element of surprise in what we encounter. "We cannot predict what will emerge out of the darkness," he writes.

my sorrowful ones / twice we were told / final boarding call
Sophia Wilson, *Every Last Drop*

"Road trip with the Glums," someone posted on our family group chat with an eye-raise emoji. "Safe travels and enjoy the charcuterie in the back seat."

To pass the time on our roadie, we listened to a couple of episodes of Desert Island Discs, a BBC radio programme the 80-year-olds in our car have been tuning in to for more than fifty years. First up was Michael Sheen, whose Welsh lilt and stories of growing up in Port Talbot were particularly relateable to my Welsh father-in-law. We were entertained by Sheen's father's late-life career as a Jack Nicholson impersonator. And his grandmother had been a lion-tamer! From a craft perspective, I enjoyed Sheen's description of the way he steps into character for a role as being akin to a human mixing deck, dialling up and down aspects of his personality and attributes to reflect the person he is playing, recognising always that he himself forms the base material.

The second episode featured Kate Winslet, who holds a special place in New Zealanders' hearts for her role in the Peter Jackson movie Heavenly Creatures. Winslet came across as forthright and reflective, particularly about her brutal treatment by the British press over her appearance. One of her song choices was Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs, which set The Glums singing along, although my husband and I had never heard it before. I loved Winslet's comment that the children singing on Matchstalk Men had somehow given her permission to sing and dance along too. When the episode ended, I played the song in full and was delighted to find it is about the Manchester artist Lowry, who stayed committed to his unique style despite a poor reception from the critics at the start of his career. Winslet's refusal to conform to the artificial beauty standards which are held up as the standard for women in the film industry showed a similar commitment to her values.

If for us she arose, / Somewhere, in the pitched deep of our grief, /Crouches our power
Amanda Gorman, For Renee Nicole Good

continued overleaf..

As I helped Mark Ulyseas gather poets together for this special New Zealand edition of Live Encounters, I wondered what news would emerge from our poems. Would any local headlines from the New Zealand summer feature? Destructive storms, the tragic loss of life in a landslide at Mount Maunganui, health portal data breaches? Or would someone have picked up on the international headlines, such as the killing of young poet and mother of three, Renee Good, on the 7th January by an ICE agent in Minnesota, USA? Good was part of our wider creative community and the rapid poetic response after her death reached me almost instantly, half a world away.

The impulse to react to current events in the moment is understandable, that white-hot response to shock and disbelief. In 2023, I took part in a reading for National Poetry Day and when selecting the work to read, I realised all my recent poems were, in fact, pandemic poems. Yet I had texted my daughter when Auckland was locked down due to Covid 19, that I was 'over' all the Covid poems. There were so many and, read in the moment, it felt like they simply added to the overwhelming media noise. I had added to the noise. While my poems were not consciously written as a response to immediate current events, they couldn't help but be steeped in the atmosphere of that time.

Language must choose its moment to be in the world
Mike Oliver Johnson, *the right moment*

It is far easier to access poetry now than it has ever been. I'm connected to poems in a myriad of ways – through social media, blogs, podcasts, radio programmes and, of course, traditional journals, books and live events. In the current media environment, it's simple and almost instantaneous to share poetry and the actual news informs many poems, whether the immediate flash-fried response or a more slow-cooked version.

However, the poem that finds you on any given day will more than likely be unrelated to current events. The poem that finds you might show or tell, zoom in or out. It could be from 200 or 2000 years ago and still shed light or colour or nuance for the reader. Modern or ancient, a poem can encompass universal fears or joys.

I have been getting my news from poems these past few weeks and my news has been richer, funnier, quirkier and more human as a result. Poems are agile and democratic. They slip through in many guises. In songs or on peanut butter labels. In bathroom stalls and on bedroom walls. They laugh in the face of algorithms and filters, vigorously sharing voices and ideas others might silence.

"He painted Salford's smokey tops / On cardboard boxes from the shops"
Brian and Michael, *Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs*

As we listened to Desert Island Discs on our road trip with the Glums, the poems sneaked in. The earworm of the Matchstalk Men. Michael Sheen's lilting description of his father turning down a gig to impersonate Jack Nicholson, because Jack would be there. "It's his night, Michael."

What 'news' were they bringing? Small hugs of familiarity and connection. A little girl and her sister, entranced by the children singing on a record, and set free to dance up a storm. A middle-aged man affectionately skewering his Dad's glorious pomposity, in what was clearly a well-rehearsed family anecdote. These two acclaimed actors were firmly planted in the base material of their own lives. It was just the dials and faders of the human mixing desk they pushed up and down.

You work with what you have, was my news for that day, while staying open to any new magic. While the direction of travel may be the same, there are always new roads. In my own work, road trips, family dynamics, and transitions are subjects I return to often. Fair territory for poetry and, in combination, a chowder the consistency of emulsion paint, as thick as they serve at Café 88 in Woodville.

BLACK ICE, NAPIER-TAUPO RD

1.

These bags of blood these blisters my cargo
 talking of love and its opposite indifference
 I'd explore this further but I'm alert for ice
 laid down in transparent sheets
 almost undetectable
 interleaved with wet road

Cars and trucks ahead behind coordinate
 in neutral tones hushed by snow —
 follow the line of the car in front will the tyres to stick
 maintain the delusion of safety
 the heated car
 our cotton clothes

2.

My kid plays metal an instrumental
 jazz-like intense with rapid time shifts
 — no demon-screaming at my request —
 seeks comment on its virtuosity as grey rain
 congeals and jerks in syncopated frenzy
 off the windscreen

How apt Norwegian Metal for an arctic scene
 Te Pohue iced like an errant Nordic village
 yet I long for something sly
 deadpan an antidote

3.

I've never liked the Mohaka bridge
 the detachment required
 suspension of doubt
 for a successful transition

4.

Does it matter the song played was Brazilian?
 My original connection propels this poem
 a minute's research shows Norwegian Black metal
 shunned as Satanic misanthropic a dark currency marbled within
 the story of good children
 fluffy snow

A familiar bond on hitting
 the salted tarmac
 slides to a fine edge
 susceptible to ice as bridges
 and doubly so

ENERGY THIEF

The act of getting on a bus breaks you down, the girl says. We've all contorted, squeezing down the aisle and into our seats. Now we reassemble.

I know from her pale, quarter-moon face, she'll elicit my sad rejection tale somewhere before Palmerston North. She's that hungry. I tug my frayed skirt over my thighs, jam my formerly desired shiny knees hard against the woven magazine pocket.

Student? She picks up my notebook, flips through. Angles towards me, borrowing my light. *Writer?*

Sure. Every assumption, I will say yes. Let her feast on imagination. I am not together right now.

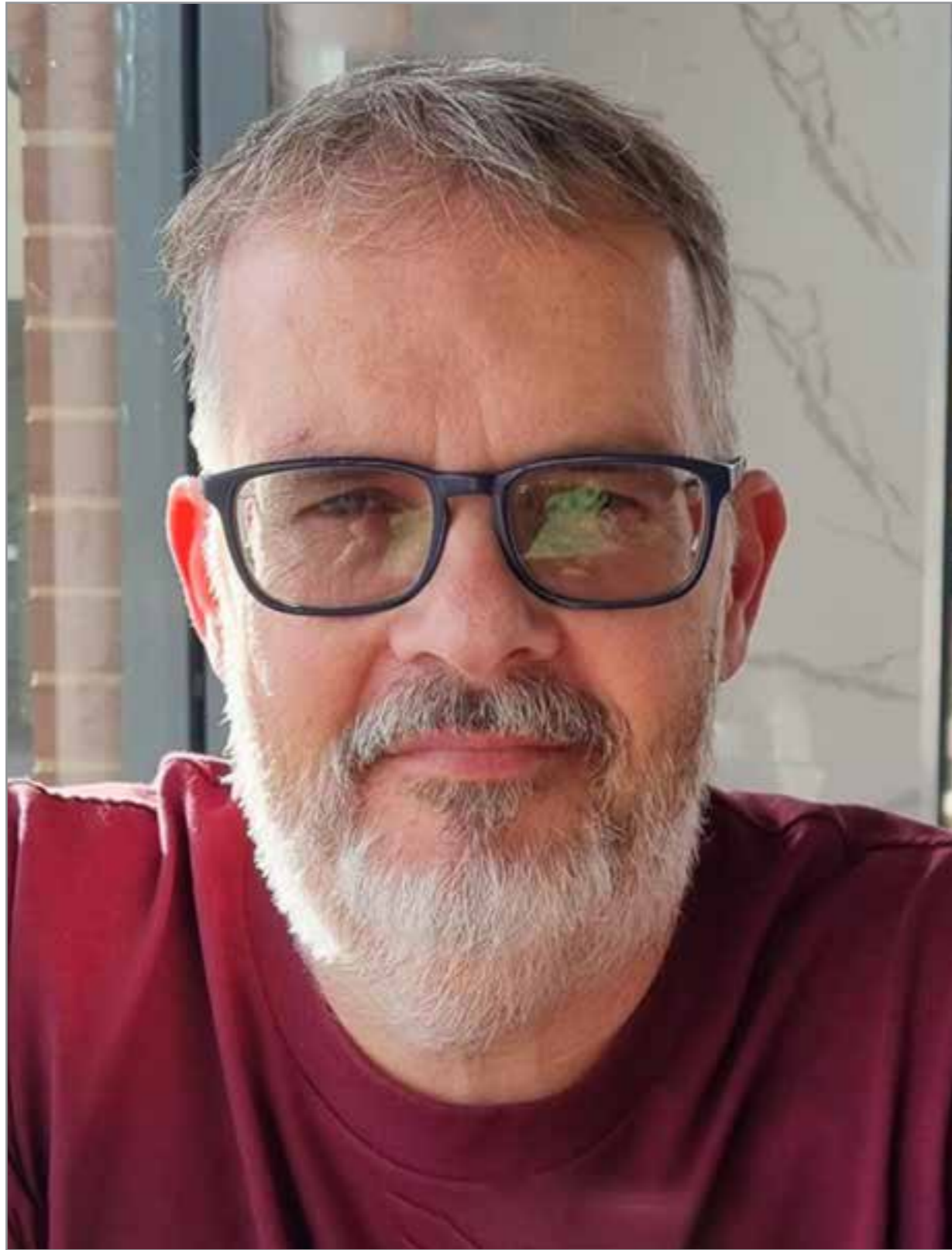
DRIVE TO THE CONDITIONS

Your folks bounce up and down
in the back seat of the Hyundai
as you hit the uneven surface of Aokautere Rd
and your mum says, *Ouf,*
he always wanted to be a rally driver.
I don't think you hear,
or what you hear is
That's my boy.

You drive fast when they're in the car too,
something I've only discovered
now we drive your parents.

I used to think you were in such a hurry.
Remember how you skimmed the curves
of the Manawatu river
on the old route through the gorge?
On a clear day
we could see the architecture
holding up the next bit of road,
or I could
from out over the side
above the water.

Lincoln Jaques is a Tāmaki Makaurau based writer. His poetry, fiction, travel essays and book reviews have appeared in collections in Aotearoa and internationally, including Landfall, Live Encounters, The Spinoff Friday Poem, Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook, Mayhem and takahē. He was shortlisted for the 2023 inaugural I Te Kokoru At The Bay hybrid manuscript awards and was the Runner-Up in the 2022 International Writers' Workshop Kathleen Grattan Prize for a Sequence of Poems. He has been selected for the international 2025 Best Small Fictions anthology from Alternating Current Press.



OUT WALKING

Remember those haze-fire nights
 The light from the full moon stinging
 Our eyes the reflection of stars
 Staining our eyelids full of tears
 when we were young not like now
 When our skin has turned from yellow-gold
 To nicotine stains our sadness at growing
 Old but at least we are together still here
 Under the exposed moon shedding on hills
 Making us scared of tree-shapes and ghost rocks
 Laughing together feeling a braille mortality
 Knowing all is illusory and each year is another layer
 Removed by a drunken archaeologist with a blunt
 Trowel the burden of those decades like a child
 On a metronome swing being pushed by an invisible
 Force waiting for us to fall which
 Will no doubt be soon.

Lincoln Jaques

DISCOVERING BUKOWSKI IN GRAHAM BRAZIER'S LIVING ROOM

We were still young. Poetry was yet to awaken itself within me, like a lotus bloom from the pile of deep shit that was my life, in those days.

The only thing keeping me going was the books I read at the time. *The Stranger. Down and Out in Paris and London*. The few friends that hadn't self-harmed into penal colonies or hanged themselves

or been killed in drunken car jams. When we eventually came out from the haze of those personal growth years there was one friend, she worked in the music industry, making sure the touring groups got their smack and the groupies were hidden in rear doors, she housesat

Graham Brazier's villa in Mt Eden, still a colonial wasteland at the time, late nineties, the rock'n'roll paradise strangled all the heyday of kiwi pub bands. She invited me over (me not realising it was Graham Brazier's house). I sat in his lounge room, on a settee where he sat, on the polished

floorboards, his memorabilia hanging from the walls, leaning in the dusty corners, photographs of him with the famous. We drank and my friend smoked cigarettes (inside Graham Brazier's house!) as she told me stories about Graham Brazier's notorious drinking and drug taking and all this time his songs were playing on the stereo.

He was an avid book collector, Graham Brazier. He grew up with his mother on Dominion Road where she owned a bookstore. They lived above. My friend recently sent me a photo she had of her and Graham Brazier standing in his mother's shop, locked in an embrace, the Penguin First Editions piled up on the shelf. In the lounge room where I now sat, I looked at his impressive library.

And there, I plucked down, *The Last Night of the Earth Poems*, thinking, what New Age shite is all this? (It was the nineties). The book dropped open on a short poem about a luger, about someone placing the luger to their temple, about the sound of birds being frightened by the click of the safety catch. And I was stunned. All of our lives were like a safety catch clicking off, waiting for the silence that followed, hoping it would be filled in.

Graham, I never met you. But I sat on your settee in your beautiful house in Mt Eden, and you will never know it but you introduced me to Bukowski on that fateful night. I remember driving home, listening to the songlist of your life: Latin Lover and Blue Lady and Billy Bold. And Bukowski tucked into the back of my mind.

You saved me.

SETTING MOON

for Pauline Thompson, 1942-2012

The last time I saw her, I stopped
on the way, bought Birds of Paradise
from a florist on the main road near
her house. Traffic reflected in plate-glass
seemed to melt and move, although
that may have been my tears.

I knew her not as my generation,
but through her daughter, we were close
friends once, having survived
the embattled high school years
together. We'd lost touch. Then I heard
Pauline wanted to see me.

The Birds of Paradise sat in the back seat
aching to fly through the open window.
When I arrived she was crippled in pain.
I searched the room for her tablets. The
house she now lived in was different
but her artworks froze us together in time.
The same style I always remembered: her Pitcairn Island
paintings, The Suzanne Aubert series. Transforming
colour in the world. I thought back then

to her studio, where I was sometimes invited
(discovering later that this was a rare privilege).
She'd discuss with me art, poetry, literature
it took many years to rediscover what I
was a part of, in those days, in that top room
like a Paris Salon, with our own Gertrude Stein
learning more than I ever would in a classroom
staring at half-finished canvases, while the dream
of being a writer was discoloured by the uncollected
consciousness of blue collar disapproval.

In that last visit, I'm not sure she really knew me.
I placed the Birds of Paradise in a vase I found
under the kitchen sink. We sat watching the late
afternoon soaps until her Carer came, a small
nervous woman who eyed me suspiciously. That
time haunts me still, as I got up, said goodbye
the waters rushing at the plate-glass windows, shadows
smothering our breathing, the pain increasing within
her, walking out past the miniatures opening to expansive
narratives of her full life, knowing we'd soon lose another.

Alexandra writes poems and short stories. She received several awards and fellowships, including the Kate Edger Postdoctoral Award from the University of Auckland (2016). Her work was published in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. Her latest projects include translating her poetry volume *Transformation* (Scripta Manent, 2023) into Romanian and completing her novel in progress, *A Secret History of the Metamodern*. She lives in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, where she teaches at a local high school.



Alexandra Balm

HURRAY. ODE TO JOY AND OTHER POTENTIALITIES

*Motto: This is supposed to be
a paradigm of presence
why does then absence
haunt my days?*

Hurray to the poem
that hasn't been written.
Hurray to the song
that hasn't been sung.
Hurray to the thinking
not yet articulated
Hurray to the work
that hasn't been wrought.

Hurray to the child
who has never been chided
Hurray to the parent
who has known no pain.

Hurray to the morning
that's yet to be broken.
Hurray to the world
that's still to be born.

*

You've promised me a world
with no hate, nor misconceptions.
You dreamt of a self – bright,
without complaints.

You lifted the veil off
for just a brief moment,
and left me to yearn for
for years afterwards

Alexandra Fraser lives in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa NZ. She has been writing poetry for over 20 years and has been published in magazines and anthologies both in NZ and overseas. She has also published two collections of poetry. Her poetry usually focusses on connections, because in a world full of power-driven disconnections and cruelties, people still connect with love for one another. That is our human strength and our survival mechanism and worth giving words to.



WE DIDN'T SIGN UP FOR THIS

Leaves have fallen the winter is long
 grey-threaded skies and days
 brood over hours on screen
 pixilated faux-families
 roots lie quiescent in rain-soaked ground
 waiting to wake with the rising mercury

a winged messenger of the gods
 carrying cherry blossom
 wine-red magnolia buds bursting
 the crackle of a happy fortune cookie

but decayed fallen branches
 despair gone rancid
 the footsteps that are not heard
 for that we will not answer the door
 will not sign for the package
 will not take it inside cut
 through the wrappings
 made of old news the print-outs
 of lost poems
 frayed faded ribbons
 holding the darkneses together

rather we will look from our window
 observing out-of-season daffodils
 dead birds and the crying time

Alexandra Fraser

SALAMA MAMA

*Salama Mama
ino vaovao? - what's new?*

Your letter fragments drop into my day

Yesterday we made timber boxing for concrete columns

I slice the rind of two lemons into fine strips sift flour
break eggs

*We've been mixing lots of concrete back and forth
buckets of sand aggregate water*

Push paragraphs around cut and paste change words
check invisibles

Today I built scaffolding from eucalyptus logs

Meet the architect add a window choose the doors

Here we have bucket showers from well-water

Shop forget re-usable bags remember wine go to yoga

*Had a lovely afternoon in the shade hacksawing rebar
to measured lengths*

Hand-stands elude me my ardha chandrasana satisfies

*We went for a walk to find chameleons
rested under a lychee tree
were given bananas and a live chook*

I walk by the mangroves remember us there together?

*Before the sun rose
the landscape looked like a Colin McCahon painting*

I miss you

Now the world is wet very too wet to work

I pick basil the last of the beans

*We dug trenches around our tents the toilets had flooded
fly maggots had crawled out*

Tidy the pot plants bromeliads remind me of you
spiky tough beautiful

*A special dinner we had zebu kebabs
fried cassava balls and salad
green vegetables at last*

The paper is thick cream almost waxy
not scented no hint of your Gucci

Or the slightest whiff of concrete dust
just faint hint of lemon from my fingers

A lullaby of chirruping fruit bats crickets

You have used a fountain pen
wrapped your voice in ink

Parcelled and stamped it
so my eyes can be my ears

I hear your soft excited lilt
stroke your words

It's beautiful here

Andy Fey (he/they) is a queer, disabled Pākehā working in the tertiary education sector, with professional and research interests in access, inclusion and belonging. Andy is an activist and educator, using poetry and zines as a mechanism to connect with people.



PLAYING WITH WORDS

The poet plays with words like dolls
Popping their heads off
Giving them atrocious haircuts
Sometimes (*scandalous!*) making them kiss

Their notebooks are a cluttered playbox
Stanzas packed naked and promiscuous
among dismantled couplets
Unsettling in their careless intimacy

Acceptable in abstract
Disquieting in practice
Neither play nor creation
Bear scrutiny without discomfort

Andy Fey

RIGHT TO REPAIR

House on the ridge
Population: three sewing machines,
one overlocker, two craftspeople

The Educator takes on Aspects
Spider
Tailorbird
Weaver ant
Nests in a tangle of yarn
Fabricates wonders
Shirts savaged by the carpet sharks
Mended visibly, joyfully,
holes transformed into sunbursts, insects, splashes of whimsy
hit critical mass and become invisible again
"I thought you bought it like that"

Packages shipped from faraway lands
Spill their treasures
Arcane glyphs,
slabs of rock we tricked into thinking,
clever mechanical devices
The Engineer shucks JoyCons from their shells
Reveals the meat
precision surgery on the circulatory system
Amputating a faulty component
Grafting in an upgrade
Better than brand new

"If you can fix it, you can keep it"
precedes a procession of the resurrected:
Laptops frankensteined into function;
A chimera of a bicycle,
a medley of disparate donors furnish components,
frame and rims and saddle in mismatched marriage;
An ailing espresso machine, silver, hulking,
flayed and strewn about the kitchen,
Lines cleared and coils polished, reborn
Hissing and spitting greetings each morning
(Rescues tend to be lovebugs)

Perhaps a sense of kinship
Draws us to repair broken things
Rather than discard them.
Defiance too-
My needle, his toolbox, our labour
Against the pressure to consume,
Drain dry, abandon the husks.
Restoration of hope-
restoration *as* hope, enacted.
Every stitch and screw rebelling
Against a throwaway world.

Anita Arlov is the child of Croatian parents displaced after WW2. She lives in Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland. She writes poems and very short prose, hosts workshops and occasionally judges short form fiction. Anita grew up enjoying the cadence of language but didn't begin writing till mid-life in response to the Canterbury earthquake in 2011. Anita has won the Divine Muses Poetry Competition, the NZ Flash Fiction Competition and has placed second in the Bath Flash Fiction Competition. She is widely anthologised, including Bonsai: Best small stories from Aotearoa/New Zealand; Broadsheet; New Flash Fiction Review; takahē magazine; Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction. She convened a team that ran the NZ Poetry Conference & Festival, a successful three-day celebration of all things poetry including vispo, wordcore, sung poems, cine-poetics and workshops, involving 200 poets and arts activists. For ten years she managed popular spoken word event Inside Out Open Mic for Writers. In 2022 she was selected an Ockham Collective Arts Resident. *"I like to conflate arresting facts with fiction, memory and emotion. Once I get a fix on a tone, I dive in and commit to getting out alive."* – Anita



THIS BRANCH

a tree pulls me up in a friend's living room
a blossom tree branch
seven feet high in a clear jar of water

he placed it last winter
after the big storm snapped it

like a song
a local version of the master release

I should praise him for his care
no florist's fanfare
no toot-toot parade as moving

it lifts like faith

all the spent riot — the dried flowers from spring —
he's kept too
swept close to the jar
a pink hem
a Cubist completion

yes, it blossomed well in just water
now look: a summer mass of green

Anita Arlov

ELECTRIC LANGUAGE

Pablo Neruda at Machu Picchu

I couldn't sleep for the voices
 calling me
 I had to go
 Andes foothills
 were druggily stunning
 like clapotis waves
 haze fogged me
 like a sulky guardian angel
 step by step
 all sixteen hundred steps
 up the chiselled cordillera
 the mesa hit me
 like a hot kiss from a skeleton lover
 I had been here before
 condors flying galleons
 dipped and soared
 I couldn't sleep for the voices
 when night fell

shadows hung like marionettes
 mist was an ice hug
 I belonged here
 the moon was a clench
 a torch song diva
 mountain peaks took shape
 reefing the citadel
 like a hoop of purple priests
 why do we hammer and sunder?
 I couldn't sleep for the voices
 dawn struck like a gold axe
 blue hummingbirds appeared
 neon as flint sparks
 their wings beat a fluid buzz
 like static like language
 one smelt of lanolin counting weft
 another crackled like a fire
 one was poxy white with ash
 one was humming peeling papaya
 one groaned bent double
 one was silent wed to a shovel
 I couldn't sleep for the voices

FINNY

Pick your way.
Tangled through seaweed and
dinosaur driftwood
are loops of flat blue strap:
that waterproof package twine
made from fibreglass.

Ghost gear tossed back by ocean
to land on sand — silica —
its origin.

What shift
what threat propelled the first fish
to swap ocean so elastic in those eons
for open air?
To haul themselves along on bony lobe fins,
buccal pumping
holing up
— our ancestor Finny and her whanau —
in marshes valleys caves?
Next minute: legs. Lungs.
Warm blood. Teats.

Motion.
It thrums in our bones like swamp rock.
We strain to unlock the next
level. Make gains butterfly-scale.
Bear loss like an iceberg calving.
Life is dance life is armament
life is arms out on loop.
We orbit. We ambit.

The Māori know.
Rangi the sky and Papa the earth
opened their eyes to cling in darkness.
Their children imagining light
undid them, birthing the world.

When will it be
that we friable humans
abandon land for ocean?
Or fire up into outer space
the seminal aspiration?

It's a trip hazard.
What if I coil it from elbow to thumb-valley
like yarn take it home what then?
I'm growing fearful
of the burning final issue.

Barbs Peterson lives in the suburb of Māngere Bridge, on the cusp of South Auckland, where much of her writing is inspired by the village community and scenic surroundings. She has been published in several Auckland Writers anthologies as well as “Ramble On: A celebration of walking in New Zealand” by Z.R. Southcombe, and is a regular face at Poetry Live nights. Her writing aims to encompass an introspective journey through the experiences of loss, love, heartbreak, joy, bleakness, magic and hope.



INTERLUDE

I don't know what to say.
 So I hold the illusion of a hand
 and I tell you about the weather,
 that it's going to rain hard
 so you can assure me you'll drive safely.
 I know I won't get the hints you'll send me
 in the shape of a winking star
 or the gilded contours of the moon.
 I stroke your ghost-face,
 pale as paper,
 soft as a feather.
 I remind you to eat.
 I remind you of the days
 we swung our legs fast and careless
 over the rotting plank bridge
 because just for one second
 we felt immortal;
 the rushing water below
 an eternity waiting to engulf us,
 the future, dust-mites carrying important secrets
 between the warped pages of old books.
 I squeeze your phantom fingers;
 hold them to my fears.
 I show you pictures
 reminding you of a happier world,
 a place that wanted you to live forever.
 I don't know what to say.
 My heart fluttering like a bird
 my lips touch your listening ear
 breathing words through translucent skin
Goodbye;
 floating out the window now, into thin air;
I'll see you tomorrow.

Barbs Peterson

THERE IS NO CURE FOR FEELING TOO MUCH

Somewhere, in an attic
you can hear a baby crying
but they're telling you don't listen,
just sleep.
As if the cries wouldn't haunt your dreams.
As if you wouldn't sleepwalk, searching
following the wailing
like a starving waif
hypnotised by the scent of food.
The warning light on your dashboard
is the problem, they tell you.
Take these pills and it will stop.
Put this blindfold on.
The baby cries on and on,
and you'll keep searching, searching
through cluttered rooms
ignoring a radio voice that tells you
to keep calm and carry on.
You can feel her
sucking on her fist,
you can see the blister form
on your own delicate skin
and they're blocking the attic stairs now;
as the screams get louder,
they're telling you the problem
is having eyes and ears, and a soul.

YOU SAY THE UTOPIA WILL NEVER COME

Meet the new year
same as the old year.
We can't go a day without
bleeding, somehow;
the bright new lambs wool
already stained
with loss and chaos and alarm.
How do we still gaze at a star
with hope, when it is somehow,
centuries old, has seen
so much, has died,
and still (*and STILL*)
carries on shining?
This fresh, hot cup of coffee
sat forgotten, neglected, went cold.
Still wringing out the storms from summer
we hang the latest tragedy out to dry.
The utopia may never come
but morning will, again and again
meeting the sorrows of yesterday
with a firm, faithful handshake.

David Eggleton lives in Ōtepoti Dunedin and was the Aotearoa New Zealand Poet Laureate between August 2019 and August 2022. He is a former Editor of *Landfall* and *Landfall Review Online* as well as the Phantom Billstickers Cafe Reader. His *The Wilder Years: Selected Poems*, was published by Otago University Press in 2021 and his collection *Respirator: A Laureate Collection 2019-2022* was published by Otago University Press in March 2023. He is a co-editor of *Katūvei: Contemporary Pasifika Poetry from Aotearoa New Zealand*, published by Massey University Press in 2024. His poetry collection *Lifting the Island* was published by Red Hen Press in Los Angeles, California in September 2025.



SOUNDER

Leviathan breached from shrouded waves
seeks albatross worlds and mislaid moons.
Epiphanies of parrots skim through treetops.

Hoisted up out of the water to blow a guffaw,
whale bulwark goes slapping and wallowing
against plastered sky above submarine chasms.

A wall slides past, on extended gliding flukes,
pursuing the force of a waterboarding mouth,
and the big shadowy tongue speaking volumes.

Bioluminous swizzles bloom in spectral blue.
Lightning forks strike plankton phosphorescence
lifting on a coastal surge of seahorse currents.

The ocean coils are so fluent they drag tree trunks
in their rip far out, then run up a cliff face,
to flip and crash back, swamping beach pebbles.

The bob of a fur seal's dark head snouts
from bull kelp to ride surf's whip-crack in.
Sharp winds churn gobbets of foam on sand.

David Eggleton

UNCANNY WEATHER

Heaven's heights resound to waiata.
Cicadas lasso noon's heat-haze.
A tūi trills like a manic doorbell.

The carpetbagger who parachuted in
is got at with slingshot and pitchfork.
From the rest-home, bring the coffin.

Social exquisites debunk fake Gothic.
The city of car sales pops the lock.
Swimming pools fill with vape smoke.

Fiordland walkers are guided by voices.
Existence goes on in tight-knit places.
Some take to kayaking mountain rapids.

Some run for redemption towards the hills.
Some lunge for oxygen on an icy peak.
A mud-pool wrestler twangs the elastic.

Rugby's won on the wobbly fields of Chur.
Enter the same old losers and winners,
to explain it all with a chart of the weather.

KĪLAUEA, HAWAI'I

When the akua, Pele, is blowing hot,
garlands of fire garnish her coasts.
Her magma hisses dragon-like,
her red eye-holes blaze flower-bright.
Snow is sprinkled above rainforest,
a canopy crown of white blossom.
Great scroll-works of fern shelter
chandeliers of orchids, beside lava folds
that shine in the wind and sun. Springs
wink and burst with prismatic bubbles.
The volcano smoulders with ashy breath.
Pupualenalena the Dog-spirit whines from a rock,
and ghosts gleam from smoking fissures.
Magma bulges as a black satin mass,
a solid river, a surface weathered and bumpy
but smooth. Break it open, and you see
where taffy lava has hardened into layers;
it splinters, brittle, full of air bubbles.
Now along verges of cracked asphalt
roads around where Kilauea slumbers,
hanging wisps of dried lava flutter
in the wind to tell the whole island is alive;
and when it stirs again, and fire surges
through vents to plunge into the boiling sea,
sending up multiple plumes of steam,
there will be wave-slaps from other islands;
there will be whales, swimming for dear life.

Denise Teresa O'Hagan has a Master of Creative Writing from AUT, a Botany Degree and several postgrads in various subjects. She writes both poetry and fiction and has had poems published in Fresh Ink, NZ Poetry Society's Anthology, 'a fine line', takahē, Tarot, Fast Fibres, The Blue Nib and Live Encounters Poetry. She is currently working on several novels in historical and contemporary fiction. She enjoys learning and practicing languages including Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian as well as travelling to places rich in history and culture. Much of her travel has inspired her writing.



Denise Teresa O'Hagan

THE PISSING EVIL

Adeline bolted upright in bed then fell back onto her firm mattress. Nightmares and near bedwetting had descended onto her like a plague. Her iron bed frame creaked. Saturday morning had dawned, and the sun's weak determined rays clawed at the heavy velvet drapes. She buried her cheek in the plush duck down pillow and groaned, ignoring her bladder that demanded she get up. The gold brocade eiderdown slipped off as she curled up against the morning chill. The pale blue of her floral bedroom wallpaper and minute white roses that formed a chain under the ornate architraves appeared in the dim hue. Charlotte Kerr-Taylor her best friend at the new Morningside School popped into her head. She smiled and rolled over, staring at the plaster ceiling, its intricate white patterns like an elaborate wedding cake.

The first proper school in the district had opened last summer, 10 January 1870, a date she'd never forget. Adeline was thrilled to now have the opportunity to sit in a classroom, with slate and chalk as opposed to having Miss Wainwright, the governess, take the long daily trek from her tiny flat above the Graham and Company Drapery in Queen Street to teach her arithmetic, French and spelling in the parlour. Excitement tingled inside her at the thought of getting up early every day to ride in the buggy down Whau Rd amongst the stone fences and the rolling hills full of sheep and cows, to School Road in Kingsland. The Mount Albert Highway District Board of Trustees had been in favour of opening an official school. She had heard her parents discuss the matter, that for the many newly arrived farmers in the district, an education for their children was high on their moral code of priorities, even for girls.

Up until now, most of the children of the district had received instruction from Reverend Alexander French at the Cabbage Tree Swamp School in the Methodist Chapel. Adeline pulled up the eiderdown. She hadn't had the misfortune to attend but she'd heard that the planks they laid across rocks for seats were entirely uncomfortable, not to mention the harsh nature of the teaching instruction. She shivered.

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The dark velvet curtains, backlit from the dawn light, glowed. She jumped out of bed as the need to use the lavatory took on an urgency and tiptoed barefoot to the water closet. Warm smells and bustle streamed into the passage from the scullery as the cook prepared breakfast. Adeline crept past the kitchen and down the hall to the small room on the back porch, her white calico nightdress flowing out behind. Her need to go privy had come with greater frequency of late and had become most annoying. Must stop drinking so much water, she thought as she lowered herself onto the wooden seat. Her mind wandered. They had arrived at the homestead on the hill in the country town of Mt Albert just five short years ago. She had been eight when they took that dreadful journey across the sea. The memories of torturous furls of white water and swells on a disease-ridden ship with ailing passengers floundering all over the deck, made her shrink. She had sought the fresh air on deck to the stinking berths below, where the wind and birds blew free.

She tore a square of newsprint off the wire hook. She'd used the chamber pot three times last night. She frowned at the ridiculous frequency. Standing, she yanked on the metal chain. As the water gurgled down the pipes, she ignored the thirst that welled up in her parched throat.

She scuttled back to her bedroom. She'd have to watch out, or Mama would start to notice and ask questions, and she hated more than anything being grilled about her whys and wherefores. Staying invisible was by far the safer option.

Soon the family would sit down to breakfast. She could smell the freshly made pikelets. Her mouth watered at the thought of them with fresh cream and homemade strawberry jam. She'd sit quietly and listen while Mama and Papa discussed the day's schedule and the current news, how the gold boom was waning and how the new Premier William Fox was faring. Nobody paid any heed to well behaved children at the dinner table. Mama always said children should be seen and not heard.

* * *

The ink well on her wooden desk shimmered moodily in the dim light of the classroom. Adeline slouched on her elbows as sleepiness caught her unawares.

Smack. The leather strap snapped onto the edge of the desk behind her and Adeline's bottom left the seat, sending her ink pen clattering across the polished kauri floor.

'Wake up Miss Adeline Battley!'

The stern features of Miss French appeared at Adeline's side as the teacher strutted from behind down the aisle. She eyed Adeline, her brows crossed disapprovingly.

Adeline sat stiff as a washboard. Her wide eyeballs followed the teacher's movements, while her insides cramped in fright.

'Insolence comes in many forms and falling asleep in class rates highly on that list, my dear.' Miss French leaned her palms flat on Adeline's desk, her face so close Adeline could smell stiff starch and musty mothballs.

'Yes, Miss.' Adeline said, eyes facing forward.

'Petulance and laziness are sins of the devil. There will be none of that nonsense in my class, do you hear?' With a sudden jerk, Miss French swivelled around, her heavy skirts swishing. She strode to the front of the class, the strap dangling down at her side.

Adeline exhaled. She glanced at the strap. She had not had the misfortune to experience the offensive object and hoped she never would. Though she had seen it in action often enough. Jonathan had made a mistake with his addition yesterday and the tan leather had come out like an extension of Miss French's arm to mete out his punishment. Being a perfectionist, the shame of such wrath would not only wound Adeline's hand but also her pride. The maligned children hid their red-welted hands in their pockets or under their woollen blazers, their quivering lips less stiff than their aspirations to stay strong.

continued overleaf...

She stared at a shard of light on the wall and began to wonder if going to school was such a good idea after all. Their ex-governess, the spinster Miss Wainwright, also formal and proper, had always arrived in her floor length navy calico dress, buttoned all the way up to the neck, with her hair pulled back into a bun so tight it would bring tears to one's eyes. But Miss Wainwright had been as soft as the housemaid's feather duster.

Adeline would sit in the window seat of the parlour and read Charles Dickens while the sun streamed in on them. Miss Wainwright would remind her to pull up her socks and mind her "ps and qs", and recite her *je suis, tu es, il est, nous sommes, vous êtes, ils sont* until Joseph brought the cow in for milking, but she would never indulge in anything more violent than the shooing of a fly.

Adeline stared at the blackboard, her back stiff, hesitant to move an inch. But with all the stress and anxiety, a dizziness overwhelmed her. Then nausea filled her throat, the taste of vinegar strong in her mouth. Panicking, she took deep breaths to abate the sensations. She didn't want to draw further attention to herself.

The room began to spin, like the globe on the axis in geography lessons. She put her head in her hands. Then without warning and before she could prevent it, she had thrown up on the slate atop her desk. The ink well filled to overflowing and dripped onto the floor. She grimaced at the sight as she wiped her chin with the back of her hand and looked up to see every eye in the room fixed on her, their mouths open behind sniggering hands. A red-hot flush swept through her like a volcanic eruption; she fainted and fell off her chair onto the hard wooden floor.

* * *

A damp flannel wiped across her brow. She reached out her arms, her eyes slits. Then she saw Charlotte and Miss French leaning over her.

Adeline tried to prop herself up on one elbow, but wooziness made her fall back onto the hard pillow of the sick bay.

'There, there, Adeline. Lay back, no point in pushing the cart too hard. You have taken quite a spin,' said Miss French leaning closer, her brow crossed, the gentle tone of her voice quite unfamiliar.

'Your mother is on the way,' said Charlotte. She glared at Adeline, her wide eyes sending a warning that she'd be wise to stay quiet and do as she was told.

Adeline lay back. What on earth was all this about? Dizziness, a hounding thirst, needing to use the lavatory all the time and as her mother had pointed out, her dresses were quite hanging off her of late. And yet she was always hungry and ate everything that was put in front of her. She sighed. And this devastating display of fainting and vomiting in class, it would just not do. She would get quite the reputation as the sickly child. She sneaked a quick peek at Charlotte out of the corner of her eye.

'Shhhh, shhhh,' Charlotte patted her hand, her face full of sympathy.

Adeline squinted, puzzled. Why was she being shushed? Then, horrified, she saw what the fuss was about. At that moment, Adeline knew something must be terribly wrong with her. She jerked upright. Urine was dripping off the starched sheet onto the floor, and Adeline had not even been aware that she had relieved herself. 'Dear God, whatever is the matter with me?' she said, her hands covering her face.

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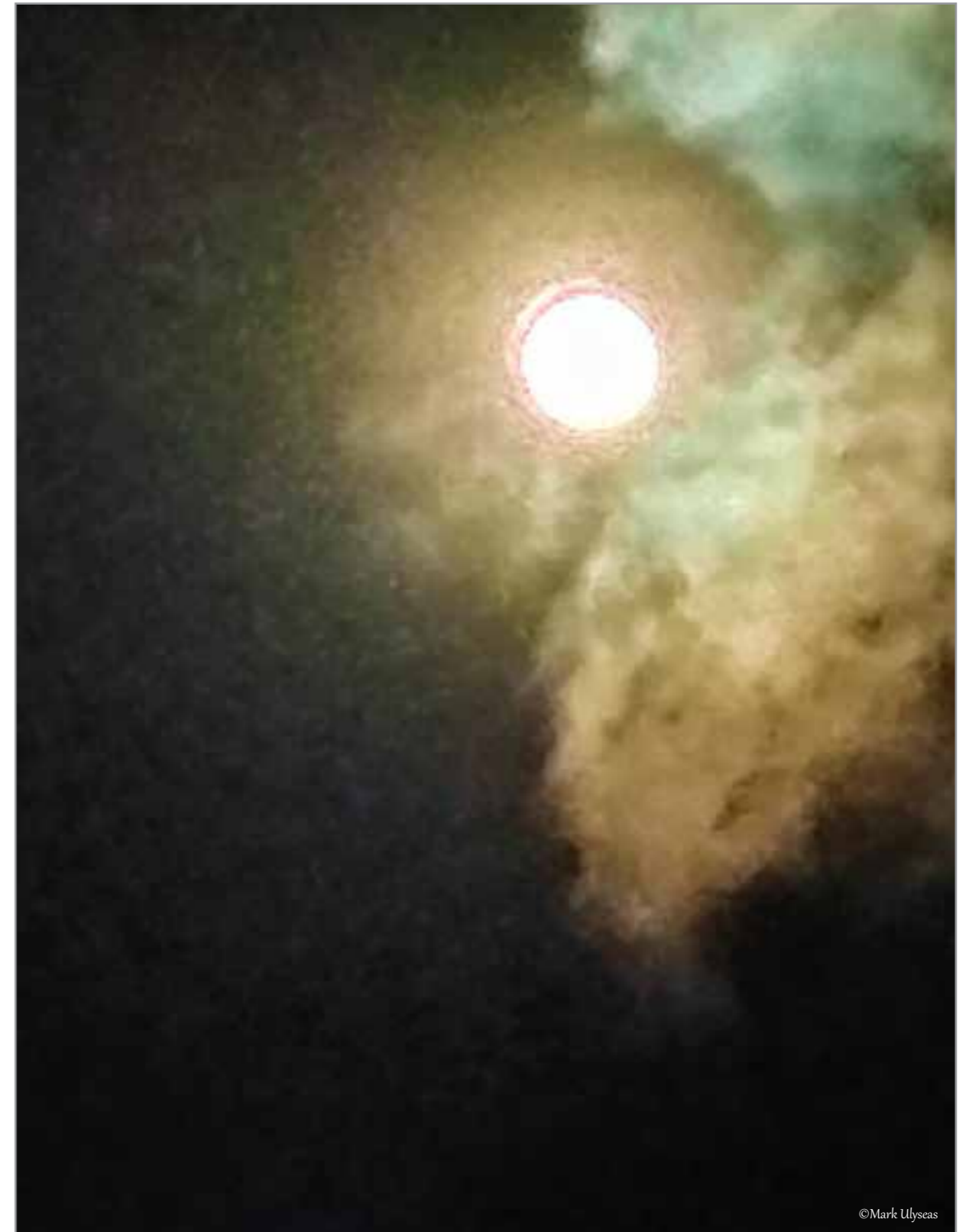
The whitewashed walls of the hospital room zoomed in and out. Adeline tried to focus but nothing stayed fixed like the tintype images in frames on top of the piano at home. She spied her mother propped in a chair next to the bed, her burgundy gown cascading around her. Surely, she must be angry for Adeline's failings. She wanted to say sorry for this imprudent invasion into their lives but couldn't muster up an apology, even though this misfortune must be her fault. She'd been taught one should never blame anyone else for one's failings under any circumstances.

Adeline's forehead creased like the neatly folded top sheet as she searched Mama's face for an inkling of mercy. But her frame stayed as stiff as the maid's ironing board. A nervous giggle escaped from Adeline's constrained throat. Fortunately, it emerged as a squeaky cough, quite permitted when confined to a hospital bed in broad daylight.

Mama stood to full height and began fluffing her pillows and pulling up the covers, as if she was the matron. Adeline blinked, taken aback with the attention.

'You're going to be fine,' she said, not looking at Adeline. 'Doctors aren't always right by any means, don't know what they're talking about, just talking gibberish...diabetes mellitus...what's that anyway, some fandangle disease? The pissing evil. No cure...my goodness, what do they know? Not to mention the talk of sweet urine. What next! I'll get Richard in here and he'll tell them what oh, and before you know it, they'll be treating you for the flu and sending you home like any good doctor would for hard working God-fearing citizens.'

Adeline blinked, unaccustomed to all this attention, let alone such a display of emotion from her mother. More curious still was when Mama reached under the covers and held her hand. The unfamiliar soft warmth made Adeline tingle inside, the experience rather pleasant. She didn't know what to make of it all. Her glazed eyes searched her mother's softened face. Then blackness descended over her again, as if someone had blown out the candle.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

continued overleaf..

Edna Heled is an artist, art therapist, counsellor and travel journalist living in Auckland. She studied Film & TV, Visual Arts, Art Therapy (MA) and Psychology (BA Hons). In the last ten years she has been writing in different forms including short stories, poetry, flash, travel articles and non-fiction. She is published in NZ, Australia, USA, UK and more.

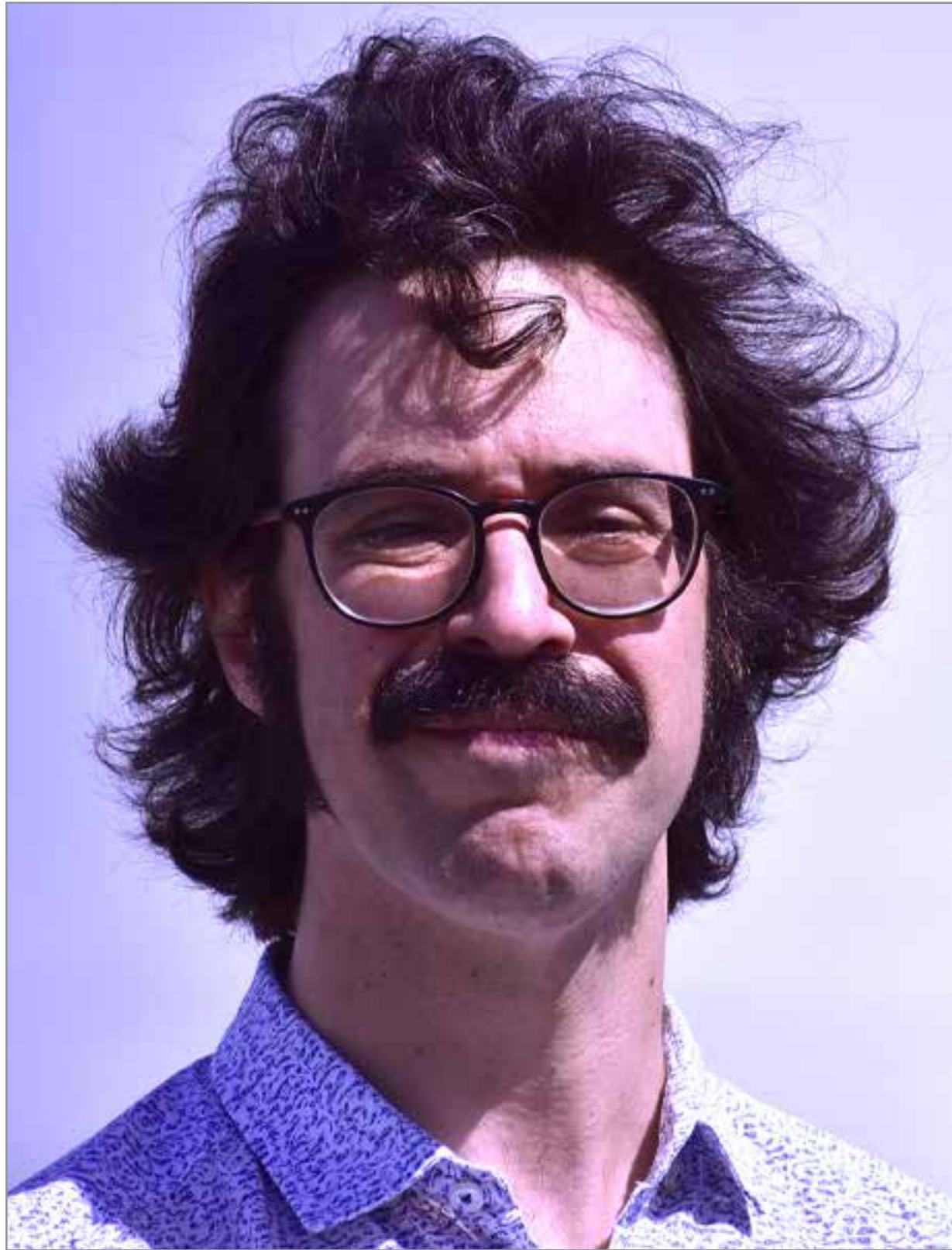


MAMA-WAR

A female wolf
 with multiple teats
 breastfeeding myriad babies
 fostering infants with sweet maternal juice
 saturated with righteousness
 splattered with sprinkles of
 courage and bravery
 a ravenous
 wolf
 nourished
 by eager sucks
 of tender newborn lips
 to produce eternal springs of tar-milk
 granting permission to horror
 commanding the halos
 enhancing fortitude
 promises
 that every war-murderer
 each man who marches to battle
 to prowl for enemies with prey-seeking jaws
 to sow terror in cold blood to kill the other
 to make a stranger unknown woman
 a grieving bereaved mother
 will forever remain
 The Heroic Son
 apple of his
 mother's
 eye

Edna Heled

Erik Kennedy is the author of the poetry collections *Sick Power Trip* (2025), *Another Beautiful Day Indoors* (2022), and *There's No Place Like the Internet in Springtime* (2018), all with Te Herenga Waka University Press, and he co-edited *No Other Place to Stand*, a book of climate change poetry from Aotearoa and the Pacific (Auckland University Press, 2022). His poems, stories, and criticism have been published in places like *Anthropocene*, *berlin lit*, *Cordite*, *FENCE*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *PN Review*, *Poetry*, *The Poetry Review*, *Rabbit*, *Threepenny Review*, and the *TLS*, as well as across New Zealand. He is the poetry editor of *takahē* and an adjunct fellow in English at the University of Canterbury. Originally from New Jersey, he lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch.



THE NEW TOWNHOUSES

The new townhouses hit 50 degrees inside on 20 degree days. That's hot enough to *talk about* frying an egg on the floor while *actually getting* heatstroke. What would you do with an egg you fried on the floor anyway? A forlorn floor egg with its memories of dust and dead skin? The heatstroke is the more interesting problem. The heatstroke is where the personal meets the political, where thermoregulation and building regulations are brought into the same space and not let out—the issues are kept in by big, unopenable floor-to-ceiling windows that look clean and premium in the rendering and really let you take advantage of the late light that saturates this locale in summer. If you threw a brick through the big window you'd be enacting individual change and not system change, and you're the kind of person who, when presented with the facts, goes away to superintend their life and then, in the middle of lunch or a conversation, up and says: right, how many bricks and how many windows.

Erik Kennedy

A SUMMER SO HOT IT MAKES YOU SUSPICIOUS OF EVERYTHING

I was one of those children
who was never afraid of monsters,
just things like fire and war.
What did I know about fire?
Only what I had read—
that it consumes everything.
What did I know about war?
Again, only what I had read—
that it steals everything.
And what did I know about monsters?
I had heard from them before
in their own words,
and I wasn't impressed.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Gail Ingram (tangata Tiriti, she, her) writes from the Port Hills of Ōtautahi Christchurch Aotearoa New Zealand and is author of three collections of poetry. Her latest, *anthology (n.) a collection of flowers* (Pūkeko Publications 2024) weaves poetry and botanical and mountain art. Her second collection *Some Bird* (Sudden Valley Press 2023) was selected for best books 2024 by The New Zealand Listener. *Contents Under Pressure* (Pūkeko Publications 2019) is set in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes. Her work has been widely published in local and international journals and anthologies, such as *Poetry New Zealand, Landfall, Atlanta Review, The Spinoff, Cordite Poetry Review* and *Barren Magazine*. Awards include winning the Caselberg (2019) and New Zealand Poetry Society (2016) international poetry prizes and being placed or shortlisted for many others including the 2025 Fish Poetry Prize. She has edited for NZ Poetry Society's flagship magazine *a fine line, Flash Frontier: An Adventure in Short Fiction* and *takahē*. She teaches at Write On School for Young Writers, holds a Master of Creative Writing (Distinction) and, in 2025, received a residency at Robert Lord House in Dunedin.



A SONG FOR TINĀ

we knew it was coming, her daughter
under the rubble, under the chest, stopping the [song]

trauma both slows and speeds the heart,
a woman flees her job, can't open her mouth in [song]

the girl at the bus stop is fair, that Canterbury fair;
no matter blood looks darker on skin, gets under the [song]

male teacher pushes student, a caricature of a bully –
it undermines the effect; racism pricks the [song]

hissing woven into the fabric – it is Christchurch,
synonym for 'racism' – same old [song]

Tinā is bigger than the myth, bigger than a shooter,
the earthquake dislodged us; Mother solid as blood of a

city, brown as the earth moves; it is well with my soul,
this melody for multitudes, a song for a new faia'oga*

**faia'oga (Samoan) - teacher*

Gail Ingram

ON THE FIRST DAY OF TERM

stroking the spine / of the land /
 with my walking shoes / on a hollow day / trying to focus
 on the furred earth / its lichen / its branches /
 on my route / my mind busy as sticks / clickety-clack distracted
 by nothing / as good as wood / at the core but
 'furries' / manufactured American furies / in my feed
 this morning / politicians as usual / distract
 the masses / an evil waste / of good
 public time / in halls / once hallowed ... / come on /
 switch off / switch on / note
 the fresh faces / looking up / looking outwards /
 to think / to write / to show me pictures / engaged
 in characters called Hope and
 Rhythm / their pointed-ears reality / a wish /
 really / for change / they 've seen
 fantasy / crime / science fiction /
 horror the same as me /

COMFORT SHOPPING

I found these sheets in green leaf
oh crap they're cheap! our old ones
 are holey but I've been putting off
 the shop for the cost I carry them
 to the counter with glee *everyone*
gets a bargain when it's New Zealand-owned—
 goodie they have their own bag
 of the same soft fabric and cardboard
 bulk in the unwrapping I see
 they're thinner than I thought on his bed *but g*
they look so good I'm thinking *jungle*
 or *jasmine vine* no wrinkles
 no ironing but

my stomach drops already
 I feel the petroleum problem under our limbs
 when we sleep it's warm alright
 (and *cheap*) the small particles
 of plastic trickling through the wash
plinkety plink into the river
 my family's been trying to restore
 with days of planting under the pines
 sucking the goodness from earth g
 the plastic accumulating in our bird
 brains a bottle-cap size according to all sources
 floating in the grey matter so what leaves
 of all the books at the library
 might tell me what to do now – throw up
 this non-vegetable mass,
 snuggle deeper?

Jack Ross is the author of seven poetry collections, four novels, and five books of short fiction, most recently *Haunts* (2024). He was the managing editor of *Poetry New Zealand* (now *Poetry Aotearoa*) from 2014-2020, and has edited numerous other books, anthologies, and literary journals. He retired from his job teaching creative writing at Massey University in 2022, and lives with his wife, crafter and art-writer Bronwyn Lloyd, in an old Art Deco house in Auckland, New Zealand. He blogs at <http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/>.



WHY I WRITE

*I have no idea how to write
a book without violence in it
states the aptly-named*

Stephen Hunter
author of *Point of Impact*
I'm glad to say

that's not my problem
in my case
writing a book

without a self-questioning
nameless protagonist
hard to distinguish

from the author
intent on working out
some personal trauma

is almost unthinkable
as usual Orwell
puts it most succinctly

his four motives for writing were
1/ egotism
2/ an abstract

love of words & language
3/ desire to feel less alone
4/ political purposes

Jack Ross

continued overleaf...

one once potent in me
has now fallen off
almost to nil

as has *three*
to tell you the truth
I don't really want

most people reading my books
but I do enjoy solving
the conceptual problem

of how to put things so clearly
that nobody thinks
you're even 'writing' at all

as for *four*
I hardly think about it
but perhaps it's behind

that stubborn sense of duty
that keeps me scribbling
although at times

there seem more reasons to stop

SOCIAL MEDIA MANNERS

Something about the algorithms
inspires us to send
birthday best wishes

not only to those we know well
and would like to be with
but also those

whose feed
we've somehow chanced upon
the etiquette

used to confuse me
I didn't know whether to thank
people or whether that

would embarrass them
never such innocence again
now I take care

to acknowledge each one
throw in some folksy
reference

add exclamation marks
because if I just stuck to those
who sent birthday cards

continued overleaf...

the tally would be too depressingly slim
it's a bit more complex
when it comes to complete strangers

whom I've never met
at least to my knowledge
those I just like

I can't quite bring myself
to thank them by name
you have to retain *some* sense

of life offscreen
of the actual bar
 or classroom
 or venue

where we used to hang out

TEKELI-LI

I suppose that it's part of the paradox
of being a collector
of anything

say you mention a book
and the person
you're talking to asks to borrow it?

in the interests
of the free dissemination of knowledge
you pretty much have to say yes

then you forget
just who it was you lent it to
or they forget who they borrowed it from

unless you're organised that is
and write it down in your diary
then start the long countdown

after a month or two
you can issue the first reminder
oh did I borrow that from you?

no I haven't finished it yet
- give it back!
I want to shout

continued overleaf...

on one occasion
I actually bought a new copy
and gave it to a colleague of mine

to stop her asking
to borrow my book again
for the umpteenth time

most times the animosity starts quickly
I deserve it
so much more

so how could you think it belongs to you?
or else *it must have been*
somebody else who took it

in the case of my Penguin paperback of Poe's
Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym
after many denials

and claims it had already been returned
it eventually came back
with a dented back

and a haunted look
as if it had seen
something akin to

the scoriac rivers that roll
that groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
in the realms of the boreal pole

Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman writes poetry, short fiction, history and memoir. He has published seven volumes of poetry; *Best of Both Worlds* (history, 2010); *The Lost Pilot* (memoir, 2013); *Now When it Rains* (memoir, 2017). *As Big As A Father* (Steele Roberts, 2002) was shortlisted in the Montana Book Awards, Poetry, 2003. *Best of Both Worlds: the story of Elsdon Best and Tutakangahau* (2010) was shortlisted in the Ernest Scott Prize, History (2011, Australia). His most recent work, a family history, *Lily, Oh Lily – Searching for a Nazi ghost*, is published by Canterbury University Press.



UNLIVED LIFE

for Saige

You never hated death, before.
 You hate him, now.
 No apology, no repentance
 turns back this.
 No floods of grief
 that dam the eyes
 can raise her. If only
 you were Him, in
 that black book, the one you
 loved to hate, if only, Him.
 Anything but this, the knife
 that knows just where
 you hide, and why.
 Let me assume she loved
 you, knew you well.
 She'll want to tell you, this
 is not the worst - that the unlived
 life is hell, the coldest death.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman

AERIAL ODES

For Adele, Damian and Esme Mora. 10.1.26

Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland, 1950 -1954.

My spirit flew to me, and made me
wings, when I was deep
inside my mother's earth. I was
the child of flying things, surging
into the moment, birth. Like a squab
I nestled at her breast, squawking
with open gob to get my fill: me first,
me first, me first, the hunger squalled.
Into the air and onto earth, my heartbeat
stalled, a feathered will, climbing
blind, nursed in the aerial world.

BIRDS OF PARADISE

A rainbow in a tree was my first bird.
All I could hear was colour, singing songs -
crayons, paints and eggshells, all at once.
I stumbled home with my tropical hoard,
jumbled nonsense in excited lungs, to
jabber at Mum of the happenstance.
"I saw a bird, a bird, it was gold and red!
It had two silver, silver wings!
It flew inside me, Mum! It's true!"
& radiance came to nest
at the end of my bed.

Jeremy Roberts is a resident of Napier, New Zealand-Aotearoa, where he lives with his wife and daughter. He MC's at Napier Live Poets, interviews poets on Radio Hawke's Bay, and is poetry editor for the *VINES* journal. His work has been published widely – including NZ Listener, Landfall, Takahē, JAAM, Poetry NZ, and Phantom Billstickers. Jeremy has performed and recorded poems with musicians in Aotearoa, Austin, Saigon, and Jakarta. He regularly makes poem videos and these can be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@jnrpoet>. Jeremy's first poetry collection was 'Idiot Dawn' (poems 1981-87). 'Cards on the Table' was published in 2015 and 'The Dark Cracks of Kemang: The Bajaj Boys In Indonesia' was published in 2022, by IP Australia. He was awarded the Earl of Seacliff poetry prize in 2019. For further links, visit: <https://www.read-nz.org/writer/roberts-jeremy/>



FIREBUG

Have you ever set fire to spider silk?
 We were under my friend's house with stolen matches,
 eight years old,
 watching silver webs ignite,
 spiders curl into little legless balls of carbon.
 Look at them go!
 Perhaps, we were scorching anxieties not yet known.
 No doubt, we were excited by tales of Napalm
 in Vietnam,
 where my friend's uncle was fighting.
 We didn't like spiders.

Next – the backyard bush.
 Early one autumn morning, we draped newspapers
 over branches and lit them up.
 "To keep the dog warm" – we told each other.
 After the flames died, time for brekkie!
 An adult spotted smoking embers just before
 the whole damn bush was lost.
 "I've had to bring your son home in disgrace," my friend's
 mother declared.
 But I wasn't done with fire.

Not long after, Dad left home.
 In an erased memory later recounted by Mum,
 I took everything my father had given me to the garden
 incinerator and burned the lot.

Jeremy Roberts

THE MAGIC OF SUDDENNESS

In a world of triggers,
that which is trapped deep inside,
may come out into the world,
crying and screaming like a baby –
stopping you in yr tracks.

That was never my bag.
I was good at locking things down,
happy enough without paroxysms
of purgation,
content with small agitations.

Rain on the final day of summer
touched my face – put me in my place.
(Where was that, exactly? – I wondered.)

Burning firewood on the first day of autumn
bewitched me – and something stirred.
(What were we talking – ignition or transition?)

How wonderful to grasp at things
barely understood,
knowing that suddenly it all
changes.

BAGS OF DATA ON TWO LEGS

'They'll be finding bits of him for days' – cop said,
Nov' 18, 1982, outside Whanganui Computer Centre.
Remnants of his chest – with tattooed "This Punk won't see 23",
found in debris. The only victim.

Why?

First comprehensive list of New Zealand citizens' info':
cars, guns, criminal convictions ...
Data surveillance of a nation.

'We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity'*-
he'd spray-painted on a toilet wall nearby.

Already told his girlfriend he was going to die ...
making a political statement.

Big Brother monitoring?

Bugger that.

Final steps, final breath ...

2 kg of gelignite ...

"He wouldn't hurt a fly" – a friend reminisced.

Today –

We are all bags of government data on two legs.

Bags of data for 'big tech', too.

Should we have cared as much as Neil Roberts?

** Neil Roberts borrowed this statement from the
Revolutionary Proclamation of the Junta Tuitiva, La Paz,
South America, July 16, 1809.*

Josiah Morgan (Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Maniapoto) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Ōtautahi who has been described as “one of Aotearoa’s finest young writers.” His latest book is *i’m still growing*, released by Dead Bird Books in 2024. His other books were all released in the United States, including his hybrid text *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which was performed as a six-hour-long performance artwork in Auckland Pride 2024 and set to be reprinted by Index Press (Washington State University) in 2026. Also in 2026, his work *Black Window* is set to release as the featured chapbook in *Poetry Aotearoa Yearbook 2026*. He believes in magic and the power of words to transform.



PANICKING UPWARD

More often having too much of something
stored away somewhere for safekeeping
where it might wait for a year or two
until the decision. Does this spark joy?

What are the measurements of your
house? Never liked being watered much.
Strange thoughts reflect but things.
The tide will rise, the tide will fall.

Then don't let the boat rock you.
You have to have enough to be
the kind of person who likes to
keep things around. Been burning

the candle at both ends or anything
at any time, fluid. It's easy to light a fire
without kindling. You just have to believe
it'll start. Does this fit within

the measurements of your house?
How much does the room cost
and how much room is there? For example
an object might wait a year or two to find out

if it may be preferable in Tāmaki
if the present is unwrapped
if it's stuck in this poem or...

Josiah Morgan

STAYING PUT

today a man flirted
with leaving
each time
the bus stopped
so he could light up
without judgement
when he finally exited
he found himself boxed in
in lieu of other options
insofar as what to do
he took off
his suit jacket
and waved it around a bit

I mean to I say neither saw him light nor smoke the cigarette between his lips

UNTITLED

The voice ventriloquises.
The feeling rises.

There it is! In shards, tripping up,
dialling through static, tripped up!
There's an invisible index to this world.
What else is time?
As a statue grows its patina
the inside speaks what the outside suffers.
The web's the spider's laboured sculpture
we destroy like oxygen.
Before long the body signifies all.
The tide will rise, the tide will fall.

Don't forget
some things need neglect.

Kaiata Kaitao is a young, proud, Cook Islands Māori creative currently studying in her first year at Victoria University of Wellington. She has been previously published in *Toitōi* and *Te Rōpū Toikupu o Aotearoa's 2023 Anthology*. She also appeared as a guest poet at the inaugural Hawkes Bay CREATE Symposium, Matariki Mahuika, the 2025 Ahuriri All in for Arts Breakfast, and multiple of the Nevertheless Trust's Rhythm and Brownie Nights. When not writing, she is an avid public speaker, having advocated for both women's rights and the importance of supporting the written arts at both the 69th Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York City and the 2025 Aotearoa Youth Parliament.



SISTER-IN-SALT

For Iris Pouao, my sister in salt.

In my first and last memory of you
we're toe-tracing surfacing ripples
thickly wrapped in neon nylon
the size of prized apples,
and bobbing like them too.

Already, the fluidity was
settling into our marrow
circling our irises
reminding us of our duty
to inundate
to waterlog
to draw the world's channels
to chin-height.

Daughters of the deep, we were
hitting every party round
the water's edge
quacking about
in extra-small flippers

These days, my sodium intake's down to
tongue-tracing around
stingy, shatterproof rims
sodium stifling my breath
as the bar's bassline attempts CPR

Kaiata Kaitao

continued overleaf...

And you linger on the skin
of all those you left behind
etched into wounds so deep
they're more fillet than flesh.

That day, my mother gently tore away
a fraying thread from my togs
and I held my tongue
until she next dipped me under

The next thread, I'll stitch
around the curve of our hips
weaving memories together
until we're embroidered into
a tivaevae of our own

When the rain's at its hardest,
I'll sashay down Courtenay Place
let the salt soak into my curls and calves
and together
we'll tuck away one last shot
for the road.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Kate Kelly has always loved language. She believes that the written word can be powerful. English is not her birth language, which is Irish, which she is yet to learn. She feels lucky to have learnt English, in all its hypocrisy. Communication with others is a gift.



WHY DO YOU THINK?

Why do you think that I need you?

Whatever.

Why do you think this?

I see the way you look at me.

I hear you.

I do.

“Are you sure you don’t want to have sex?”

Under your breath.

I heard that.

Are you aware that there are security cameras in the lift as you brush past with that smile on your face?

Arsehole do you think that your 6 children and your wife would be proud of you?

All I have to do is wave at the ceiling

Push the green button on my radio.

They will come. Unlike me in your presence.

Master Control will come. Unlike me.

Kate Kelly

UNTITLED

Tupuna, Tupuna, Tupuna
 Atua, Atua, Atua
 I learnt a lot in the prison.
 To listen to the Taonga
 Taonga being the Prisoners
 Taonga being the stories, I was told, by strangers.
 One who appeared out of nowhere,
 Then disappeared.
 A Rangatira hung for murder not committed
 Buried upright so he would not rest.
 He will never see a Christmas
 He is with his Tupuna
 Other's dug up in the 80's
 With a Tohunga pointing at the ground
 Then Karakia in the Bay of Plenty for reburial.
 Now – the Prisoners will not see the Sun they will have to call on their Tupuna
 For many, only survival is imperative
 Chicken and Tupuna on the day
 On Rangitoto see the roads, built by Mt. Eden Prisoners by hand.
 Scoria, 5 degrees hotter than Auckland city
 The playground of day trippers at summertime.
 Ham and Christmas perhaps?
 Tupuna, Tupuna, Tupuna
 Atua, Atua, Atua
 What does Tapu mean these days?

LOSS SERIES #4

So you threw yourself out of your window
 I really wish you'd gotten on a plane and come and seen us.
 We could have made you cups of tea
 We could have given you hugs and taken you to the beach.
 The NZ beaches are just as nice as Cornwall you know.
 So you threw yourself
 You loved sport as a Woman and as a child.
 Nothing like a bit of tennis on the lawn
 So you threw
 I wish.

Kit Willett (he/they) is a bisexual poet, English teacher, and executive editor of the Aotearoa poetry journal *Tarot*. His debut poetry collection, *Dying of the Light*, was published by Wipf and Stock imprint Resource Publications in 2022.



THE SUN MAY SET

The sun may set
on your morning coffee,
slip behind frosted peaks,
casting shadows
on the empty page.
Perhaps the washing
is left unfolded,
the bed is still unmade,
but at least the cyclamen
has been admired,
the lemons tasted,
and isn't that the point?

Kit Willett

A REVIEW OF THE SECRETS I KNOW

I'm surprised
that, of all the poets
in all the world,
none has stopped
to look up at the full moon
and remark on its mystery
as it pierces a single hole
in the cloud.
But I am alone
on the stage of this street,
and the moon has chosen me
to stand in its single spotlight.
Perhaps one day,
the moon will share its secret
with another, more worthy writer,
and it will stop begging
to be noticed.

Perhaps then
I could pay attention
to the leaves I saw
yesterday afternoon
in the cathedral canopy
with the light refracting
through their mosaic
stained glass panels
and the birds resting
in the branches behind,
or the sunrise, waiting
patiently each morning
for me to reach the vantage point
and probably getting quite annoyed
on weekends
when I sleep in.

I am 64, and the author of *Bent Not Broken*, *Life on the Line*, *Mila and the Bone Man*, and *Julia Eichardt; A Life of Grit and Grace*. In 2019, following a debilitating spinal cord injury, I retired as a medical doctor and had to reimagine my working life. This opened up the opportunity for me to pursue my other love: writing. In 2020, I completed the Northtec Diploma in Advanced Applied Writing. In 2021, I graduated from AUT with a Master's in Creative Writing. My partner Graham and I share our Tūtūkākā home with Bill, the half Manx cat, and Lucy Jordan, a significantly entitled and over-capitalised Bichon Frise. I am currently working on four new MSS, three of them historical fiction. I am not a trained historian, but I enjoy spending hours immersed in and imagining the past.

This short piece refers to the practice of Senbazuru. The folding of 1000 origami cranes traditionally confers a blessing of health, longevity or peace. I have recently gifted a close relative 1000 cranes, folded with loving mindfulness as she journeys with cancer.

1000 ORIGAMI CRANES FOR HEALING

1 - 500

Make the first hundred from printouts of your secret internet searches. Symptoms are always worse in the dead of night, as is the fear that your body has betrayed you. Fold the papers into the prescribed shape. Your first birds may be misshapen, but you'll soon be able to make them without thinking.

Make the second hundred from the words you'll use to talk to your GP. You'll be cautious but clear enough. You practise the words in front of the mirror. 'I think I might have cancer'. Words you hoped never to say.

The material for the third hundred will come from blood test, ultrasound and X-ray forms. You are now in the system. You'll need patience. A new language awaits you. Make lists of the words, and fold them into tiny, coloured birds.

The fourth one hundred are messages from friends and family. There will be cards, emails, voice messages, thoughts and prayers. Most will not blame you for your predicament, but they will offer advice. 'If you'd just stop eating meat. Drink lemon juice and water instead of gin. Take ivermectin. My hairdresser's cousin's boyfriend cured himself of everything on a carnivore diet.'

Fold all unsolicited advice alongside your reactions, crease the edges tightly, and let your nimble fingers turn them into tiny promise birds. Everyone means well, even though you sometimes wish they'd zip it.



Lauren Roche

continued overleaf...

By the time you get to five hundred origami cranes, any treatment will have started. Make your next hundred from the pages of the novels you tried to distract yourself with while your body was filled with chemotherapy drugs. Maybe weave in a few strands of merino unravelled from the cap you wear to cover your thinning locks. It would not be wrong to make a few from flypapers. Hang them in your doorways, just to see if they will trap Death in the act of entering.

Your 500th bird!

Halfway there.

Your achievement is astounding. Rest here a while. Catch your breath.

Watch the jewel-bright clouds outside your western window.

Moisturise your skin.

Let a volunteer read to you.

Do something that goes totally against all advice. Enjoy your fierce rebellion.

The second 500.

The sixth one hundred marks a turning point. Fashion these from the Lotto tickets that never had the right numbers. It's all about the numbers. White counts, tumour markers, and doses given. Don't worry about the traitorous Lotto fairy. More money will not help you. The very rich also die, just in higher thread-count bed sheets.

The seventh one hundred origami cranes should be bright and cheerful. No words, no numbers, just joyful patterns. Rainbows, flowers, clouds, the deep bruising sea. Your fingers are not so nimble now. Neuropathy makes them clumsy and weak, so the folds you make must be deliberate and contemplative. Use bigger paper if you need to. No one else is measuring this one activity of yours.

The eighth hundred is fashioned from lists of instructions. Just in case. Who will care for your dog if you don't recover? Who will call your father on his birthday? Who gets the task of sorting through your spare room? How many of your possessions will the Hospice shop want? Add these cranes to the piles you have accumulated. Let their colours revive you a little. See how much you have conquered.

The ninth one hundred. Last will and testament – in case. Do not resuscitate order – yes or no? Thoughts about the afterlife. Examinations of faith. Write out your fears. Scrutinise the words. Fold them, crease them, turn them into winged messengers.

Keep the box of cranes by your bed or chair. Take comfort from them.

The last one hundred is folded from old airline tickets, floor-stub receipts from the downtown ferry terminal, and photocopies of your passport and birth certificate. They come from brochures about the place you want to travel to if your treatment is successful. The place you could live in, eternally. You've gathered the documents for your last big journey. Carefully, methodically folded. Each crane has its beak aligned perfectly with its tail. Write an encouraging word on each wing.

Stop at 999. Take a breath. This is the threshold.

The very last crane could be a gift for the Ferryman. Just in case.

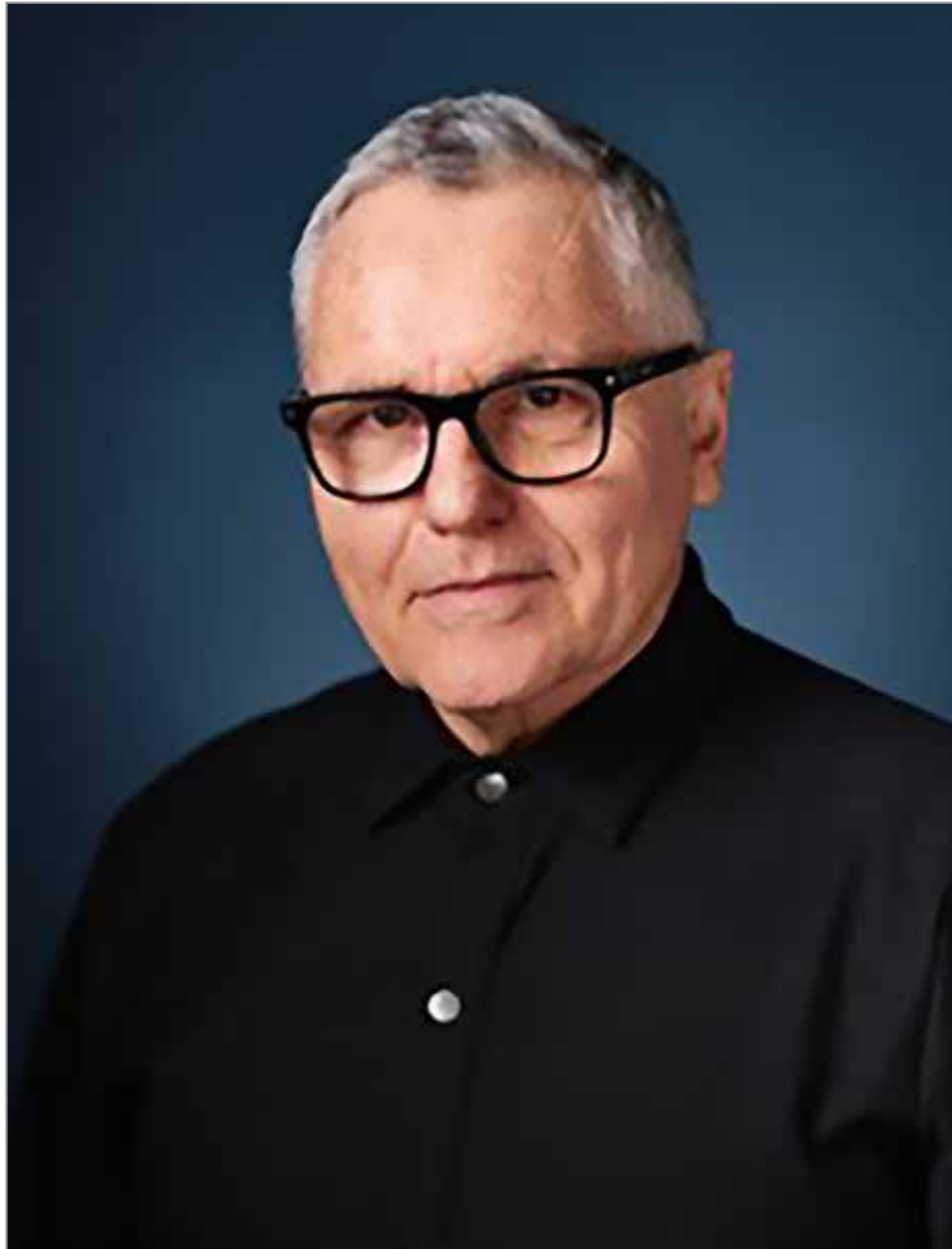
While you cannot bribe Charon, you can certainly make his day.

He likes Tim Tams, I hear.

The biscuit wrapper will feel impossible to fold but keep at it.

It will be your final gift.

Michael Giacon is a central city Tāmaki Auckland poet. His work has appeared in a wide range of journals and he published his first volume, *undressing in slow motion*, in May 2024. He's a Samesame but Different Writers' Festival board member where he presents the PRIDE Poetry Speakeasy and Open Mic.



BUDDIES

If love is not forever, then what is love? We give it the span of a week or two six or so months an hour, arms flung across our hearts against belief but if love is not forever what is?

If my heart were not so cold I'd cry and fill the empty Valentine with at least the shadow of passion.

What is love if not forever?

We meet in secret society to spook the haunt of happiness volunteer a life on earth limbo too droll hell just awful On the first of our rounds through a vague enough day of domestic bliss one that would says to one that might I love you.

Some of the buddies feel warm others swear vows on mute lips I break our code to sink in a vale of doubt that's lost its echo calling me for inspiration.

Afraid to fear it's no surprise I notice your eyes dark with shaded love and lost in a day without a date if you're attractive there's something pale in the black hole of me warmed honestly.

To be honest I'll pronounce myself dead to the inner circle when we meet next week on the ladder of love To believe is true always if love is not forever what is love?

Michael Giacon

THE BOTTOM LINE

The note says your brother has advanced macular degeneration.

Is that correct?

a sudden wave breaks through me opening me up closing me down

Can you read the bottom line?

I can't anyhow and not at all through tears

Could I have a tissue please?

I update the information correct the correct

I'm sorry, I'll add 'Deceased'.

When you're ready we can try the bottom line again.

THE WEIGHT

A morning call unusual as when we do speak
it's always of an evening, always. Out and about,
he got an enthusiastic greeting from someone
he didn't recognise, a lawyer he'd worked with
for 21 years. Not the first time it's happened.

He's been watching the TV programme
where people with dementia run a restaurant
that makes mistakes. Things made sense.

Blood tests 'largely normal' Dr said in txt then Dr
taken ill so won't see her til Thurs after cognitive tests
tomorrow then today/tomorrow cognitive person has a
bereavement in family so no appts this wk have to
rebook for next wk.

I've taken to making mental lists of names
sometimes I write them on my kitchen whiteboard:
Chico Groucho Gummo Harpo Zeppo - alphabetical
the characters in *The Big Bang Theory* - S&A/L&P/R/and...
(from the internet H&B)
for Robert Palmer think Robert Plant/Led Zeppelin
and then there's The Band, five of them -
Robbie Robertson, Levon Helm, Richard... ,
Garth Hudson and...

I can sing every line of 'The Weight', though.

I'm doing that now.

Mike Johnson is the award winning author of forty books, poetry, novels and non-fiction. In 2002 he received The University of Auckland's Literary Fellowship, having been Literary Fellow at Canterbury University in 1987. His first novel, *Lear, the Shakespeare Company Plays Lear at Babylon* was short listed for the New Zealand Book Awards in 1986. His novel *Dumb Show*, published by Longacre Press, won the Buckland Memorial Literary Award for fiction in 1997, and he won the Frances Kean Award for his short story, 'Magic Strings' in 1999. His first book of poetry, *The Palanquin Ropes*, (1983) was co-winner of the John Cowie Reed Memorial Competition. His most recent book of poetry is *Love in the Age of Unreason*, and his most recent novel is *Speechless*, both published by Lasavia Publishing. He taught Creative Writing at The University of Auckland and AUT University and is now retired. He lives on Waiheke Island.



LORCA – THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF A POET

'Then I realized I had been murdered.
They looked for me in cafes, cemeteries and churches
.... but they did not find me.
They never found me?
No. They never found me.'
From "The Fable and Round of the Three Friends",
Poet in New York (1929), García Lorca

on the nineteenth of August 1936
fascist militia took Federico Garcia Lorca
put him up against the rough stone walls
of an old barn
and shot him to death

he was thirty-four years old

he had committed two crimes
he was a socialist and he was gay
a double truth, like two horns
on the devil's head

he was too much for them
their fear was great, these killers
who lived their lie in the shadow
of his veracity,
lived their lie in the shadow of his words
which blazed on their foreheads
and went on blazing long after
the poet had bled into the dust

Mike Johnson

continued overleaf..

afraid
of the theatre of weeping and of laughter
shouting and despair
of 'the eternal norms of the human heart'
afraid
of their own shadows
and the shadows of their mothers
afraid
of one manacled to the stars

afraid of their dreams as they dragged his corpse
off to an anonymous grave
(his remains would never be found)
while the fascists banned Lorca's works
afraid they might set cities alight
with joy and dancing
his words crawled out through a sea of bones
and the stinking flesh, through the ecstasy of worms
the mass graves of the slaughtered
into the light of day

to bubble free
lit with the essence of darkness

naked and unashamed

LAKE ROTOPOUNAMU

it wears its beauty lightly
in the overcast windless air
quiet, almost unassuming

the lake itself seems to be floating
the giant rimu all around
seem to be floating

I have to ask, what's holding it up
what's holding it in place
what sustains it
why doesn't it fall?

a nonsensical question yet the feeling persists

it carries itself with all the weightless
serenity of contemplation

to the north a break in the weather
a silent glimmering

off to the west, a line of rust-brown reeds
lights up

PASSING THROUGH – FOR HARRY RENFORD PARKE

children play tag among the headstones
their laughter flies up
caught in the throat of tui

*

as memories are lowered into the earth
someone throws a flower
someone rides a tear
someone pockets a smile
memories play tag among the headstones
dates get lost to time
an ocean dreams up the land
the land surrenders to the ocean

*

voices murmur
kanuka tosses its flame skyward
somebody prays
somebody talks backward into their mouths
somebody walks over your blooms

*

after the eulogy, the silence
nobody knows how to escape it
it follows the mourners though the city of stones
it follows everybody like a nobody in bare feet
it makes holes in their words
it makes for awkward elbows
it forgets the words to the song
it forgets how to sing

*

after the silence, children wonder
I knew them well, somebody says
others have their doubts
whoever knows anybody?
everybody thinks

*

death is no more than a gesture
a funeral the bouquet
everybody huddles together
looks somewhere else
words are hidden inside themselves

*

I've only so much to give, the earth says
I have to turn all this rock into blood
I have to make the blood run uphill
I have to set the sky beating
I have to turn the bird into an egg

*

I didn't think it would turn out this way
there's always a light at the end of the street
there's always a seed in the dust
a candle that never goes out
an aria that catches the throat

*

continued overleaf...

I see this dwindling speck of blue
hear the thump of lilies on wood
feel the jostle of stones
taste escaping heat
smell yesterday's breath

*

the sky pilot pulls a blessing out of the air
the body remembers all that has been forgotten
far off singing is suddenly very near
everybody dances to the moon's drumbeat

*

it's not yours or mine or his or hers or theirs or ours
it resides in everyday abstractions
in the bits between the bits
the thoughts between the thoughts
the shadows between the shadows
the left-handed stars
the understated passions
the invisible breath between breaths

*

everything that begins ends
one foretells the other
the mourners turn their feet towards the world
shuffle in procession

*

the first laugh is a heedless thing
the children drape themselves in years
nobody reproves them
the solemn becomes ordinary
a dog mourns for its bone

*

tea & sandwiches normalise the world
everybody finds their own way back
they step into the flesh
they step into the world
they have everyday thoughts
slosh a little brandy in the cup
wonder when their turn will come

Mike Kilpatrick is a former scientist and journalist, who turned to poetry writing later in life after realising it wasn't as scary as he remembered it being from English classes at school in Scotland. He now works as a communications professional and annoys those in his life by trying to reply with haiku or senryu in any conversation.



COMING HOME, ALONE

I march into my sloping driveway as the rain smashes
Upon hot summer concrete. The cracked earth
And brown grasses greedily swallow water as bubbles
Of petrichor explode, a sweet-smelling congratulations
For my exhausting run. Sweat from my forehead blinds,
The stinging salt reminiscent of oh so many tears.

Before I'm distracted by the laundry list of problems
Waiting behind the cool grey door, the kereru
Standing to attention on its nikau palm rampart
Offers up one if its juicy red berries. It floats along
The gushing water towards the overflowing gutter.
Saluting the brave bird's kindness, I soldier on.

As the berry circles the drain, I start up slippery steps
Knowing someone is waiting for me, but no-one
Is present. Moving from our own worlds seemed idyllic
In those heady moments of love. Before the battles
Commenced. Hindsight is a bitch. White flags wave,
I venture across no man's land. Loneliness persists.

Mike Kilpatrick

DISAPPEARING

She was a tiny ball of energy, a tight grey perm
 Forever making soup, challenging me to games
 When I was a wee boy, it was 'Stop the Bus'
 Played with pennies from a bright yellow jar
 With cards smelling of stale smoke from a pipe
 Sitting on the fireplace, Saturday afternoons
 Grandad shouting at wrestling on television

*I remember the night I met your grandad
 Leaning on his bike up on South Street
 A lovely warm evening, tall and handsome
 He was waiting for me and Mame to pass
 He wanted a word, at the end of the close
 The one the runs up the side of Boots*

She was a tiny ball of energy, a tight grey perm
 Introducing me to Uncle George, he bets me
 A pound I can't solve his sliding puzzle games
 A pound? Victory, Sherbert Fountains galore
 She celebrates with a tiny glass of sherry

*I remember the night I met your grandad
 I think it was on South Street, up from Boots
 Did he have his bike? He was leaning on it
 At the end of the close, I was with Mame
 And he asked me out as we walked past*

She was a tiny ball of energy, a tight grey perm
 Always wanting to feed me up, even if I was full
 A refusal always blamed on me being in love
 Though I'd just finished soup and her gateau

*I remember the night I met your grandad
 He was waiting for me and... Mame?
 Somewhere up on South Street I think
 He asked me out as we walked past*

She was tiny with a tight grey perm
 I hugged as hard as her fragile bones
 Would let me, I never wanted it to end

*Have I told you how I met your grandad?
 He waited for me as I was out with Mame
 Somewhere up town, not sure where*

She was tiny with a tight grey perm
 Why didn't I spend more time with her?

*Do you know how I met your grandad?
 I can't quite find it in there any more*

She was tiny

I don't remember how I met your grandad

She was

FADE TO BLACK

How I longed to be invisible
While all could see the black dog
Dragging me down living streets
Sickness dripping from pores
Threatening to infect those
Surrounding me as they wait
To see if I'll pull back or let go

The gaping pit in my stomach
Left unfulfilled by binges
Trying to satisfy desperation
Clothes always getting tighter
And I'm more visible than ever
Struggling to keep up the pace
The black dog dashing onwards

Doctors prescribing rainbow pills
Some bringing sleep like death
But when I try to kick the habit
I'm left bleary-eyed, zombified
Withdrawal worse than disease
How close to the edge of the cliff
Was I dragged on my worst day?

I didn't need to fly that morning
But I'm wondering if wings
Will unfurl when I need them
To flap and chase away words
Which cut through pallid skin
"Cheer up, it could be worse,
At least you're alive." Barely

Then one day I'm disappearing
A snarling hound's grip easing
Muscles moving, not groaning
I'm demanding human touch
Side-effects of drugs fading
From a chrysalis I'm emerging
The man in the mirror familiar

I sometimes see the black dog
In the corner of my eye, growling
Far enough away I don't panic
The mocking hound of depression
Has taken its leave, temporarily
I have my wish, I'm all but invisible
While those who need me, see me

Montana Sefilino is a Samoan poet based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. She is the author of *Crossing*, her debut poetry collection, released in August 2024. Her work explores themes of nature, healing, self-love, motherhood, faith, culture, migration, and identity.



Montana Sefilino

PRAYER FOR THE SHOWER

Coming in from the heat,
I exhaled into the quiet walls,
the day hanging heavy on my shoulders,
its weight settling into my bones,

my feet, leaden as wet sand.
The shower walls held me,
a bed I could lean my tired body against;
and it asked for nothing.

I slipped beneath the water's curtain,
Silver rain fell
like prayer onto my skin,
baptizing,
hugging,
kissing
washing
the world away.
A different kind of heat wrapped around me,
a forgiving cloak.

My body drew in breath,
deep and aching and

unfinished thoughts, weary words
dissolved in the foam. Steam
pulled me home,
my shoulders dropped
my breath slowed,
warm water unknotted
my muscles and bone.

I closed my eyes
and sang praise
to the warm water.

YOU ARE HOME

Who Am I?

you want to know who I am?

I am the hopes and the sacrifices
of my parents, I am the child's
pocketed one dollar coin, no
silver spoon, only bare
hands

I smell of koko samoa,
taste like umu on Sunday
fresh baked bananas and palusami,
warm, grounding, alive.

I was not born into silence, I am
unnoticed, I grew like moss on stone,
green as seaweed, stinging
like a centipede, of the same earth
that bears this island,
where the ocean sings without words
and the wind knows my name.

I am a hibiscus in full bloom
barefoot in grass, valiant
and unbent,

my worth is not counted in dollars.
it is carried in breath and skeleton,
in prayers answered forward.

I am —
palm leaves whispering at dawn,
chickens crowing sharp and early,
ancestors leaning close to see
what they could not finish.

when I look in the mirror
through unborrowed eyes,
the land looks back and says:

You are home.

MERCIES

clean sheets | cool against bare feet | rain tapping on the window | a soft lavalava wrapping around your waist | someone saving you a seat | a child's laughter blooming in the hallway | an inside joke lining your chest in gold | frangipani scents slipping through the doorway

you are believed, you are held in his eyes | you are forgiven, you let the weight slip away

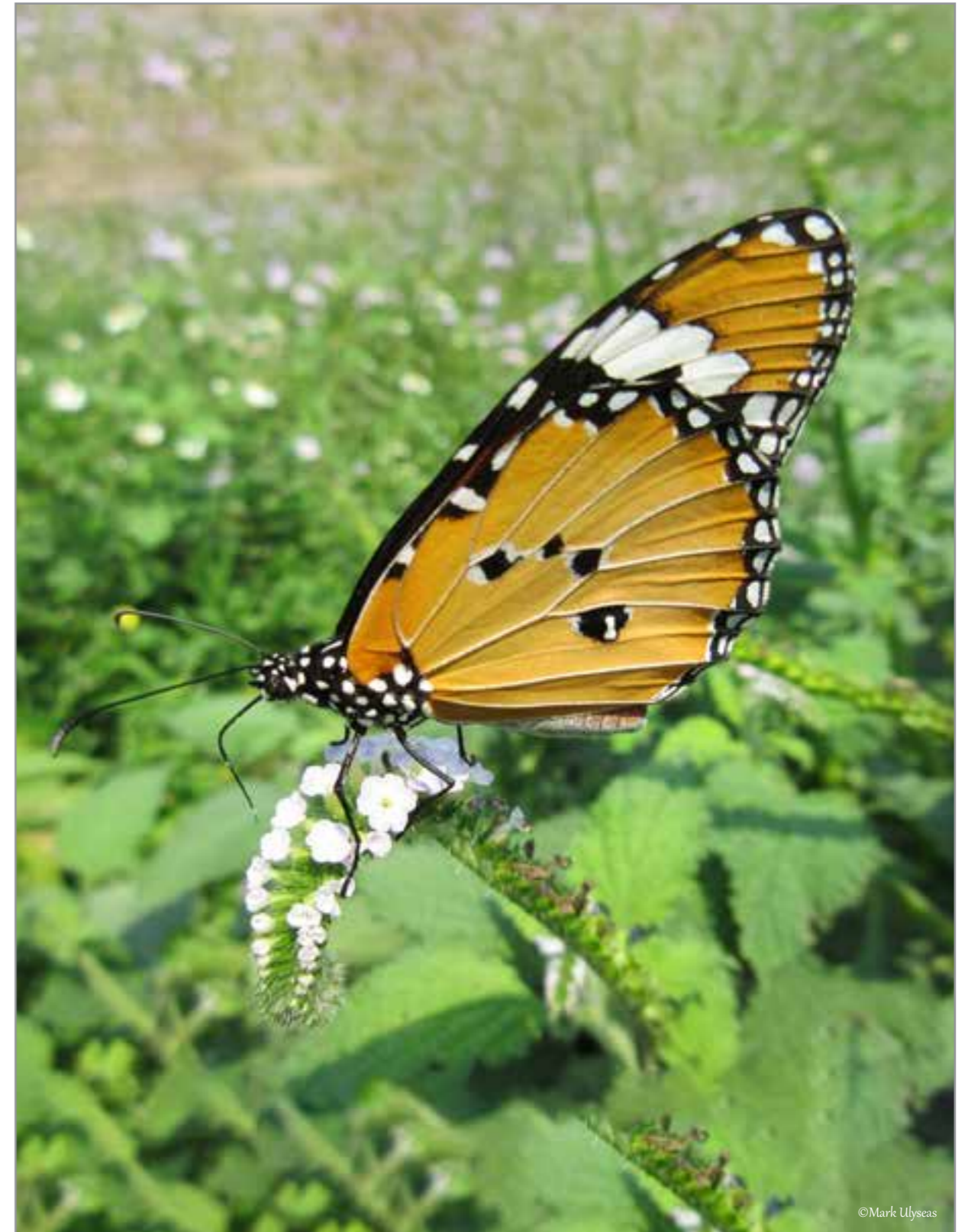
turning the page | finishing a task | slow mornings easing into the day | sleep curling around you | candles smouldering in quiet corners | handwritten notes feeling like hugs | your lover saying take your time

mama's flounder swimming in coconut cream | my parents hugsandkisses, their warm, silent language | the smell of freshly baked taro | a compliment from a stranger | the cool breeze brushing your skin on a hot day | coconut buns puffing up proud, sweet and golden | sunlight warming your face after a squall

moonlight over the lagoon | writing your thoughts | a bath melting tension like honey | someone holding the door for you | Tiresa remembering your birthday | sitting barefoot on warm sand

getting through a hard day | you made it

and all of it
these tiny mercies | carry you forward | one step at a time



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Piers Davies was born in Sydney, Australia but has lived most of his life in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand and is a Law of the Sea specialist. He is a long-time writer and reciter of poetry. His poems have appeared in journals and anthologies in New Zealand, Australia, U.K, France, Switzerland, South Africa, Poland, U.S.A., and India. Four books/chapbooks have been published. He is involved in the administration of Titirangi Poets and is the co-editor of Titirangi Poets Ezines and anthologies. He was the scriptwriter of feature films (Homesdale and The Cars that Ate Paris (Australia) and Skin Deep (New Zealand)), short films and documentaries. He was sometime Poet Laureate of Haringey, London.



NIGHT IMAGES

1
A phoenix arising
from its nest
of red and yellow balloons
sings with delight
its wispy call
echoes through
the hall of mirrors

2
ZIP line rushing down
reveals exotic rabbit holes
each an alternative world
seductive but unreal.

3
Acres of soft coral
shimmer on the seabed
their steroid limbs gilded
and translucent.

4
A whirlpool
of kaleidoscopic colours
spinning in a jet black sea.

5
A tree burns
in the verdant forest
flames surging upwards
consuming and being consumed
a beacon of light
in the darkness
subsiding to a charcoal crust.

6
The blue flamingo strutting
in the vermilion lake
croons its last song
to the gallery of grotesques.

Piers Davies

Piet Nieuwland lives in Whangarei, Aotearoa New Zealand. His poems and flash fiction appear in print and online journals in Australia, USA, India, Aotearoa, Antarctica and elsewhere. His latest books, *As light into water*, and *We enter the*, are published by Cyberwit and his next one *Anticipation* is due out this year. He is managing editor of *Fast Fibres Poetry*, an annual anthology from Te Tai Tokerau Northland. He participates in visual art exhibitions, live poetry performances, writes book reviews and occasionally judges poetry competitions. He once worked as a conservation strategist for Te Papa Atawhai. www.pietnieuwland.com



AN AFFIRMATION

To the raven black haired pale cheeked romantic
woman who knew the softness of men and the sadness of rain:

When the clefs and notes jumped from their strings as Nijinsky into the air
and pianists flourished their keys in cascades
to the applause of cumulus bouncing from the dark polished lids

To the joy in her eyes in the motionless abundance of afternoon
with the garden soil dark like her clotted blood nourishing
plots of beans, sweet orange and fig

To a diffuse memory of possibilities
a sleeping manifesto of bodies under a light emitting diode
with the silken water weaving and weaving
the language of fire, scorched syllables, roasted vowels
mutations of white mist

To the nickel sea beaten level, by its generosity
flattened blue, glistening, before the next tipping point
that strafes across the bruised landscapes and black mountains
strewn with hollow knots of grief
their rivers of a thousand eyes
and ridgelines of arms, raised

Piet Nieuwland

DOWN THE LONG SLOW CURVE

With the grace of a heron landing
the women swim in invisible rivers
shrouded by a silent laughter of mist
and cavalcades of eyes

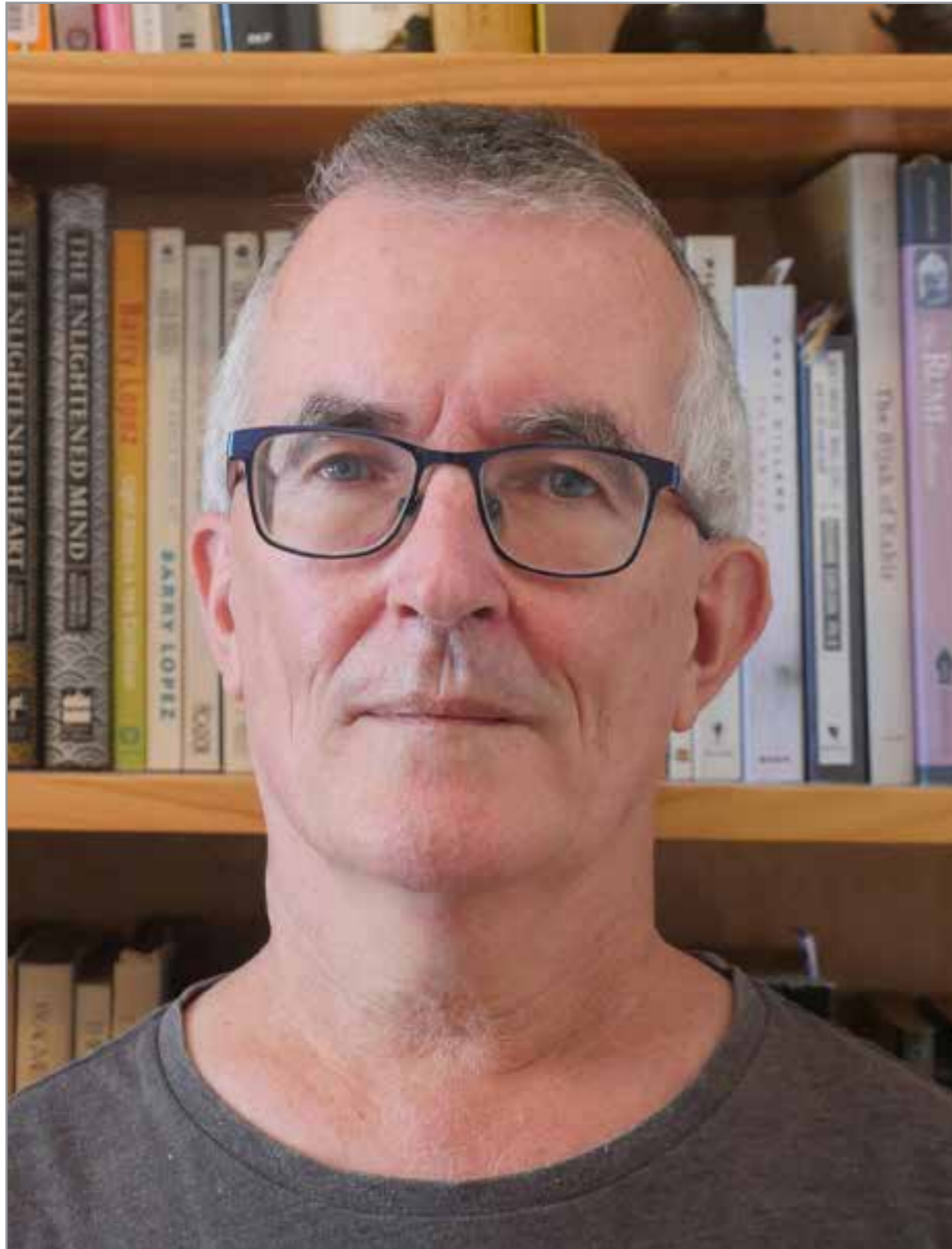
At the white limit of night, a wild flood of lilies
and colorless flowers of soft air play
with the crystals of enigmatic candelabra

On thighs of a summery epicenter and hypothesis of belly
incandescent lips and phosphorescent breasts
the immaculate symmetry of your you
slips into a downpour of gush
like euphoria's of muezzin

UMBILICUS OF SAND

Under a sky wrapped in feverish clouds
the air is wet with the weight of dreams
as a woman with a red violin
Vivaldi's the black swans of summer
a cataract of leaves fills the nocturnal estuaries
and a train loaded with burden of the world shuttles through

Richard von Sturmer is a New Zealand writer. He was born on Auckland's North Shore in 1957. His recent works are the acclaimed memoir, *This Explains Everything* (Atuanui Press, 2016), *Postcard Stories* (Titus Books, 2019), and *Resonating Distances* (Titus Books, 2022). In 2020 he was the University of Waikato's writer-in-residence. His book *Walking with Rocks, Dreaming with Rivers: My Year in the Waikato* (Titus Books, 2023) was written during his residency. In 2025 his new collection of poetry, *Slender Volumes* (Spoor Books, 2024), was shortlisted for the Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry at the 2025 Ockham Book Awards.



ON GOING

1.

What face will you wear
when they come for you?
I'll wear the face
I wore on stage
when my heart was ablaze
with the energy
of being exactly
at the right place.
Yes, that's the face
I'll wear
when they come for me.

2.

Infinita tristeza
infinite sadness
is a bridge I cross
to the ruined cities.
Infinita tristeza
humbled with
my head lowered
humbled and
painfully human.
Infinita tristeza
is a bridge I cross.

Richard von Sturmer

continued overleaf...

3.

Somebody made the handbasin.
Somebody made the window.
Somebody made the doorhandle.
Somebody made the bathtub
the taps and the bathplug.
It's amazing how people make things.
Somebody made the armchair.
Somebody made the carpet
and the floorboards underneath
and the pipes that run
through the house
invisible until they rattle.
It's amazing how people make things.
Not to mention the electric wiring
and the power pole outside
the water meter embedded in the lawn
and the stormwater drain
that overflows in a deluge.
It's amazing how people make things
and how they can be unmade.

4.

I sit on a bench
and watch people passing by.
It's almost certain
that I will never see
a single one of them again.
I can observe only a fraction
of the population of this city
let alone this country
or the world.
And with their arms swinging
and legs moving
through the afternoon light
each person is simply
a ghost of time
just as I am
a ghost of time.

Siobhan Harvey ninth book, a memoir, *What We Remember, What We Forget* will be published later in the year. She's longlisted for 2026 Heroines Women's Writing Prize (US) and has won 2023 Landfall Essay Prize. She was awarded 2021 Janet Frame Literary Trust Award for Poetry, 2020 NZSA Peter & Dianne Beatson Fellowship, 2019 Kathleen Grattan Award for a Sequence of Poems, and 2016 US Write Well Award (US).



BELONGING

for Bob Orr in mutual admiration of Akhmatova

It's not the mud on our boots,
the dust and ashes we flatten
beneath our feet, our hopes
squandered nor our dreams.

It's not our inheritance,
the burning heat, the invocation
we offer our gods, our songs
surrendered nor our children.

It's a language, cadent to us
who hear it as the thrum
of a city, an instrument,
our heart. The life of

a lexicon we hold precious
as a butterfly, yet sets free
our tongue, our poetry
always chasing after it,

wanting to attain it,
here, there or anywhere,
we who find belonging
exists only in our words.

Siobhan Harvey

A WIDOW'S QUILT

She stitches together her life
with the one who's now gone.

There's a heaviness to this act
of surrendering to age, normally.

Deteriorating eye. Irregular heart.
The cruelty of a body bearing

its' suffering. Normally, the past
would have surfaced in pieces

of trousseau, wedding and maternity
dresses, aprons and hand-me-downs

mothballed. A lost time, lost life,
though, the possibility of this

deserted her when he deserted her.
So now, this is different. A quilt

she arranges from choice, a body
representing its identity and love

for another in various milestones:
a first kiss; a first Pride parade;

a civil union; a rainbow badge;
portraits of icons: Anne Lister,

Josephine Baker, Sylvia Rivera ...
Her thread completes its' work,

draws the night in like a net
raising its catch. The moon

is full as the quilt enfolds her
in its warmth. The clock ticks

on as she closes eyes, dreams
her heart at one with her wife.

Sophia Wilson is currently based on Maungatua outside Ōtepoti Dunedin. An arts graduate and former health worker, she is the author of *Sea Skins*, a poetry collection published by Flying Island Books in 2023. (@bluetree_poet, <https://sophiakwilson.wordpress.com/>)



STEEPED IN THE FRAME OF INSEPARABLE SELVES

what is 'I'?

if not the space between dark sheets of memory
laid down inside night's tented skull —
a stained and sagging hippocampus
its overwrought mattress sprung for fight or flight

a spectre scraping coal across the pane, again —
eviscerated hills, dry riverbeds, silently marching trees
forests working themselves loose as mouthfuls of ash
— the blooded jaws of burning bungalows

what is 'I'?

if not desperation beating at a cage's ribs
the yearning for 'safe' —
a square of afternoon sun on carpet

before the wolf enters
before the walls close in

before the inevitable casting out
to concrete plinths and bitumen

Sophia Wilson

continued overleaf...

what is 'I'?

if not the figure haunting a mountain pass
fleeing rubble, a vertiginous letting go
at the borders / barricades / bombs
ghost bones rising from earth again
and again the shifting mirage, refuge —

seasons of heat and betrayal, a child's feet planted
at the margins, before dismantlement
turns over turmoil, a continuum of dark clods
shed cells of hope —
curtains opening and closing, again

what is 'I'?

if not dust collecting on a ceiling fan
a hypnotic rotation of blades, or butcher's knife
the resinous remains of flies
resolidified clumps / clots flung across white linen
slippery narratives loosed from their moorings

weeping wombs, weathered casements
the leaden history beneath acrylic sheen
fragile filaments, a goitre of heavy metals
in the gloaming —
light pooling, before revenant darkness

here and again at the cornices of white matter
nothing is as durable as it seems
violence rubbing up the cavities of us
gaping floors opening to territories beneath
myriad repetitions

what is 'I'?

if not an ink slab collapsing at the stop
dry rot, and rats
damaged air bordering the point
at which a doorknob becomes the safest part of a room
exit to a severed sea, fake pond, immaculate lawn

a clutch of eggs incubating beneath tangled, dark bush
gentle rain descending through blossoms, again
undone by guttural cries —

drakes vying for supremacy
aggressive, and territorial

the exhausted duck trapped
in airless occupation
between bodies and turbulence

it's hard to tell whether she is resisting
surrendering
or drowning

NARCISSUS POETICUS / POET'S FLOWER

momentarily
unfurls

genuine beauty
despite the odds

I could make a list
of everyone I've failed

or everyone I haven't
because in this war

everyone is comorbidly
guilty and innocent

consuming at the mercy of
public safety, another bench

arrayed with narcissus
narke, nukes, narcotics

Who doesn't crave easy care?
— or to be that beautiful plant

herbe a la vierge
'virgin's weed'

sulphur yellow
delicate white

while simultaneously
delicious red strumpet

with nothing
to lose

at least nothing
we acknowledge

while the perfume lasts

PAGAN PARTICULARS

floors inlaid with deathly orbs /
truths we cannot bear

the seasons are inscrutable
and daylight sick with moths
rust, and official blood sacrifice

our bones strike new notes —
sharply defined caskets ornament
capitalism's illimitable surfeit

improbable, fragile universe!
fire in hand, land —
war's teratogenic wilderness

devour each other, we
gaunt vengeance
are the impossible tasks
of peacemakers

hyperbolic stones set in silver seas
spill too late to be heard
skies ripen, searing
we bear the sun like a badge

deposed the magic wooden bowl
and walking staff, cursed the plants

random chains and tyrants
ghosts and shadows
haunt our great divide

such dramatic histories —
bovine keepers, soured milk
and slaughterhouses

when all I want
is to be a willow cabin
at your gate

Susan Glamuzina's an author, artist and poet who feels at home when there's sand between her toes and her thoughts are in the clouds. Susan's been published nationally and internationally online, in print, journals and anthologies. Susan was runner up at POETRY AT THE BEACH 2022. Susielee.co.nz



NOT YET

He lies there
at the edge of living and not
breathing and not
being and ... not

I can't handle the heartbreak
of watching him like this
I can't handle the heartbreak
of letting him go
I can't handle anything

so we put our lives on hold
and wait
wait
wait
for the call we don't want
the call we know is coming
but we will never ever be prepared for

Susan Glamuzina

ZIPPED

I'm on one side
keeping to me
he's on his side
being just he

slowly sliding up
the pull tab lever
zips we two up
connecting us together

shoved tight
our teeth woven
gripping tight
fate chosen

HAIKU

inked dreams
pages wait for readers
to devour

Tim Wilson lives in Auckland with his wife and their four boys. The other day he opened the bonnet of their SUV to discover a nerf gun bullet in a ventilation grate; he finds poems in much the same way.



REQUIEM

We were in a room lined with taxidermy tiger, eagle and Moose heads, all shot.
The Moose had been strengthened to
hold SAS guys who, after drinks, would ride her, meters above the floor.

We sipped our grief, having just farewelled
one of their own, eulogised by his son via YouTube
from Covid-stricken New Jersey.

Military posture prevailed. Details from secret missions
were omitted and inferred. That time they were found in the jungle,
drunk on Gurkha rum. Or crashing the Auster, while transporting Santa.

'Nessun dorma...' sang an opera star, 'Let no-one sleep'.
A plane buzzed us, lost, just before the 21-gun salute. The last Post
played inconclusively.

Leaving the military, he went and stayed
sober, spent the last 17 years of his working life counselling
alcoholics, addicts and prisoners in places like Tokoroa.

In the mess, over cups of tea and flammenwerfer-ed savories, Andy recognized me,
and we discussed Kiwi bodies failing to return from the Malayan insurgency.
Above us, the Moose wept at an era's passing, also its masculinity.

Few cocktails are stronger than absence or nostalgia.
We need more, always more.
Driving back from the base I phoned a deputy-principal who decades ago scolded,
'You know what you're against, one day you'll have to decide what you're for.'

He wasn't home.

Tim Wilson

INTRODUCTION TO MY AS-YET UNPUBLISHED POETRY COLLECTION

Initially these poems were pitched to the agencies as a Facebook page with 240K likes. How likeable, really?

They knew it, themselves, waiting to be born:
gap-toothed, self-possessed, forlorn.
Their features aren't Instagram symmetrical, their
besetting tendency? Semi-hysterical.
Big conversations play in their heads
but they end up doing the gag about the four-foot pianist.

A Polaroid of my soul, ejected from your Land camera.
Bullied on X, their peers think they're dicks.
Rarely asked out...And when they are, they say stuff like,
'No Eros without Theos.'

Before leaving the house, they ventured three outfits,
which remain crumpled on the mouldy Axminster.
Fat-backed, slope-shouldered,
varicose veiny; nude and proud and sullen;
humming *Tower of Song* by Leonard Cohen:

Poems with more moles than body hair.
Poems nursing hurts, and a warming splinter of Lindauer.
Poems dying for someone (anyone) to sidle over, be a bit true
or even a friend.

You are?!

Um... may I borrow that red pen?



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

TWELVE SIGNS YOU'RE A DAD

12. Shopping bags (or baby) in your left hand. Car keys in your left pocket.
Zero hands free.
Your ringtone? A toddler bawling.
They call constantly.

11. Lying on the trampoline, panting, choleric. 'Play, Dad!' they say, 'play!'
The sky whirls. Once upon a time, you were unique, isolate, fey. Now?

10. The left lapel of each suit jacket (even the corduroy one) bears sepia drool
in the same spot, the bullseye where tiny incisors stiletto
and inhale. Night...

9. ...arrives at noon. You and your darling are up all hours, refugees petitioning
The Embassy
of Sleep, slipping notes into bottles, watching them bob on the seas of 2.38 a.m.

8. Your Dad pants: too tight. A carving knife gouging a new belt hole, scars the bench.
Your wife: 'Why didn't you use the bread board?'

7. Naked, you look ridiculous. You scrutinize it, seeking peace with incompleteness.

6. You used the bread board because you used to be a spy, a gun-runner; bootleggers
were friends. You know what Infacol does, and Omaprezole.
You're still a star... in the Netflix series *Jason Bourne Goes To
Countdown*.

5. Spot-cleaning, you can't resist the Chux multicloth, flicking your
tongue into iridescence. Your children are ice creams melting selfishness.

4. It goes everywhere: over your wife, the stairs, the leather couch obtained on Black
Friday from Target, the igloo where you used to crouch.

3. A bedside lullaby: 'Don't turn out like me.'

2. But, they are...

Trisha Hanifin lives in Auckland and writes novels, short stories, flash fiction and poetry. Her work has been published in a range of literary journals and anthologies, including *Bonsai: Best small stories from Aotearoa New Zealand*, *Landfall*, *Headland*, *Fresh Ink*, *Flash Frontier*, and the 2021 New Zealand Poetry Society Anthology. In 2019, the unpublished manuscript of her speculative fiction novel, *The Time Lizard's Archaeologist*, was runner-up in the Ashton Wylie Mind Body Spirit award. *The Time Lizard's Archaeologist* was published by Cloud Ink Press in 2021. Apart from continuing to write poetry, her current writing project is a crime novel set in New Zealand in 1951 during the infamous Waterfront lockout – the longest industrial dispute in New Zealand history.



THE LIMPING DANCE OF GHOSTS

We watch a film on the life of Samuel Beckett
 each scene no matter how dark
 lit from within like a Rembrandt painting
 every utterance a linguistic caress
 (and our father's ghost shuffles between us)

Afterwards we walk through a courtyard
 white stones and orange flowers, and under a tree
 on the grass verge an old chair and foot stool
 it could've been an image from the film
 an invitation to sit and ease a burden
 (and our father's ghost limps between us)

Under the last of the cherry blossom in the park
 we talk of our father and brothers
 she says, those stories they tell
 they don't respect his suffering
 but to me it seems so much is gallows
 humour; they got the worst of him
 (and our father's ghost stumbles between us)

Each of us carries the weight differently but none of us ever lets him go.

Trisha Hanifin

TURANGAWAEWAE*

The sadness is upon me
and everything I'd planned
must retreat to shadow
and wait for light to return

Meanwhile, in my mind
I'm on my way south
driving through Burkes Pass
where, as a child, my mother planted trees
on the roadside with her father,
then travelling on, past Pukaki's turquoise waters to Aoraki
my heart seeking the freedom highway
Woody Guthrie sang about, where all roads are held in common
and we the people have liberty to walk them at will

On this journey the sound of our marching feet
recalls the memory of our mothers' heartbeat
and together we sing the old songs and all roads lead home.

*Te reo: turanga standing place; waewae feet –
a place to stand; a home place; a place of belonging.

OGHAM LINES *

Every poem is an act
of remembering
and resistance
every line an arrow
to the heart
of the unspoken

And the young rise up like flames
for our warmth and illumination

Be like waves
rise and break
and rise again

Carve words
on the broken bones
of the world.

*Ogham – pronounced om – an ancient Irish alphabet consisting of lines and strokes often
carved on stones and trees used, among other things, to mark territory and record the names
of the dead.

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