

*Fifty Poster Poems*

**NATIONAL  
POETRY  
DAY 2012**  
**FRIDAY 27 JULY**

in association with the New Zealand Post Book Awards

*A Free Download from Oceanbooks*

Raewyn Alexander

## ALL I HAVE HERE IN A CAVE BY THE OCEAN

the roar of water reminds me  
time moves in every direction  
whether or not a clock stops

while soldiers pour into Tibet  
while depleted uranium poisons Iraq  
while a big 'sorry' rings across Australian red earth  
we find every chance to lift up something softly  
we find our best songs still have words  
we find an embrace as potent as plankton

small things  
in this secret place  
I keep them in the dark  
the sound of my son's baby voice  
the day he brought me hexagonal tiles he found  
the way he smiled and thought of me sometimes  
a collection of laughter my daughter made at nothing at all  
a reminder she gave me to always think first 'will this hurt anyone?'  
a box covered in fabric scraps with tiny gloves inside to protect me

Maori kept precious feathers in a lidded carved box  
they wore such decorations in their black hair  
perhaps some even now place what flies and swoops under cover  
every time I bring out into the light what those close give me  
I hear such a crowd in a breath and see people run across a beach  
where the surf rolls and rolls and rolls a breakthrough

welcome then into this darkness and secrecy  
the open mouth of a recess into the rock and under a mountain  
where we may find the finest gifts we kept safe always from harm

*Raewyn Alexander is an Auckland poet published worldwide and known for her original take on things less ordinary, both as a poet and a writer of fiction.*

Agha Shahid Ali

## STATIONERY

The moon did not become the sun.  
It just fell on the desert  
in great sheets, reams  
of silver handmade by you.  
The night is your cottage industry now,  
the day is your brisk emporium.  
The world is full of paper.

Write to me.



*Contemporary poetry is often a blend of many cultures. This world-famous poem was written by a Muslim Kashmiri American poet.*

Wendy Cope

## AN ATTEMPT AT UNRHYMED VERSE

People tell you all the time,  
Poems do not have to rhyme,  
It is often better if they don't,  
And I am determined that this one won't,  
Oh dear,  
Never mind I'll start again,  
Busy, busy with my pen.....cil,  
I can do it if I try,  
Easy peasy pudding and gherkins,  
Writing verse is so much fun,  
Cheering as the summer weather,  
Makes you feel alert and bright,  
Especially when you get it more or less the way you wanted.



*Wendy Cope is a British writer who is well-known for her witty contributions to poetry in performance and on the page.*

Jenny Argante

## WRITING AN ESSAY

You need to focus on your theme,  
how best to make your meaning plain.  
Write clearly to a preset theme:  
such preparation's not in vain.

How best to make your meaning plain?  
Read widely and take careful notes.  
Such preparation's not in vain,  
providing many valid quotes.

Read widely and take careful notes.  
List each resource with published date.  
Providing many valid quotes  
confers some academic weight.

List each resource with published date,  
then concentrate on argument.  
Confer some academic weight  
your own ideas to supplement.

Keep sentences controlled and short.  
Write clearly to a preset theme.  
Add what you've learned to what's been taught,  
but, mainly, focus on your theme.



*This is a pantoum - the repeating lines make it an excellent choice for emphasis and education! Jenny Argante is a Tauranga writer and editor of 'Poetry Pudding' (Oceanbooks), a collection of Kiwi poems for Kiwi kids!*

## Simon Armitage

I thought I'd write my own obituary. Instead  
I wrote the blurb for when I'm risen from the dead:

Ignite the flares, connect the phones, wind all the clocks;  
the sun goes rusty like a medal in its box –  
collect it from the loft. Peg out the stars,  
replace the bulbs of Jupiter and Mars.

A man like that takes something with him when he dies,  
but he has wept the coins that rested on his eyes,  
eased out the stopper from the mouthpiece of the cave,  
exhumed his own white body from the grave.

Unlock the rivers, hoist the dawn and launch the sea.  
Set up the skittles of the orchard and the wood again,  
Now everything is clear and straight and free and good again.



*Simon Armitage is a British writer famous for his Poetry Testing Kit, which should be mandatory reading for any would be poet - and for the readers of poetry, too!*

James K. Baxter

## TANGI

They have taken the piupiu from the body of the land  
Baring those wild timid limbs and thighs

Not in love, but in order  
To see her as a thing. The crooked tree

On the cliff face is an old woman mourning  
At the tangi of her daughter. Nevertheless

Day and night the waves move  
On the unbroken dunes, caressing and reshaping

What will outlast the asphalt and the towns.



*The late, great James K. Baxter, a man of dreams and aspirations who in spite of his own and the social limitations of his time remained true to his art. A New Zealand icon. Buy or borrow his poetry and read it regularly.*

John Berryman

## HE RESIGNS

Age, and the deaths, and the ghosts.  
Her having gone away  
in spirit from me. Hosts  
of regrets come & find me empty.

I don't feel this will change.  
I don't want any thing  
or person, familiar or strange.  
I don't think I will sing

any more just now,  
or ever. I must start  
to sit with a blind brow  
above an empty heart.



*Poetry often teaches us how to come to terms with loss. You can let go of grief by sharing it with another or writing it down. Sometimes we must let the poets do this for us. Berryman was a Pulitzer Prize winning poet who made the confessional school of poetry popular with literary critics and the poets who came after him.*



Ursula Bethell

## GARDEN LION

O Michael, you are at once the enemy  
And the chief ornament of our garden,  
Scrambling up rose-posts, nibbling at nepeta,  
Making your lair where tender plants should flourish,  
Or proudly couchant on a sun-warmed stone.

What do you do all night there,  
When we seek our soft beds,  
And you go off, old roisterer,  
Away into the dark?

I think you play at leopards and panthers;  
I think you wander on to foreign properties;  
But on winter mornings you are a lost orphan  
Pitifully wailing underneath our windows;  
And in summer, by the open doorway,  
You come in pad, pad, lazily to breakfast,  
Plumy tail waving, with a fine swagger,  
Like a drum-major, or a parish beadle,  
Or a rich rajah, or the Grand Mogul.



*In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century English-born Ursula Bethell did good works, created gardens and wrote many poems inspired by her activities in New Zealand and her homeland*

Margaret Beverland

## SIN AND TONIC

In reply to your moot,  
dear daughter,

that your mother drinks  
too much gin;

to be steeped in a jus  
of juniper berries,  
pink elephants,  
and a tinkling tympany  
of ice cubes

is a tonic

not a sin.



*Margaret Beverland is a Katikati poet and the editor of 'Kokako', a New Zealand poetry magazine dedicated to Japanese forms of poetry.*

Peter Bland

## THE SILENCE

A mountain hut, an old stone bridge,  
skies torn apart by cliffs, and a stream  
babbling in praise of the picturesque ...  
Like most good things I stumbled upon them,  
taking the wrong path, thinking it led to the sea  
then, suddenly, looming up, saw these ruins  
quarried out of the living rock.  
The silence here must have drawn me inland ...  
the way it goes further and further back  
beyond bee-stir, spider-scratchings,  
the creaking skins of ripening plums.



*The winner of this year's Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry recently crafted a shining new collection of poems called 'Coming Ashore.'*

Sheila Brice Bolsover

## AN AMERICAN QUILT

Born in vision real or imagined,  
Genesis: patches, blocks, and triangles  
Log Cabin, Rail Fence, Dresden Plate  
Develop their themes with colour and value -  
Ruby beholder a wizard's eye.  
Slice fat quarters with rotary blades;  
Join the pieces, and press them firm;  
Building towards the creator's design.  
The plan emerges in multi-hued patterns;  
Sashing, bands adding colourful contrast,  
Expanding in body, almost full term.  
Stitch the layers, stippling and winding;  
Bind all around, with neat mitred corners  
Record date and maker, send out to the world.



*An American who found inspiration in  
New Zealand-Aotearoa, especially the  
Bay of Plenty.*

Don Campbell

## AFTER CAVE CREEK

"One fact," I alleged, "can't be altered.  
It's certain from all that I've read  
that the frame to its base wasn't bolted.  
Flimsy nails were driven instead.

"Can you truly maintain you're not guilty,  
When fourteen young people lie dead,  
And all that you did was so faulty?  
Be honest - admit it," I said.

The officer looked at a wall chart.  
ENDANGERED SPECIES, it read.  
"You'll notice that people aren't listed.  
But we saved the black robin," he said.



*Don Campbell is a Tauranga writer and former teacher with a lifelong passion for history and incident.*

Ruth Dallas

## MAKING POEMS

From sun-whitened bones I make poems  
Not as a sculptor wars with stone,  
But sitting at an open window,  
Trying to keep cool behind curtains.  
Outside the sunlight beats the concrete  
Louder than the neighbourhood drumboys.  
Poems share with the shy pukeko  
A preference for unfrequented places.  
They are camouflaged like the gecko  
And show up where the air is still.



*A New Zealand writer whose work was informed by the history and landscape of the lower South Island.*

Nola Borrell

## HOW I KNOW I AM NO LONGER YOUNG

### *backpackers, Akaroa*

I am bemused by advice  
on how to fill a hot water bottle

I have a single room, en suite  
They sleep in the dorm, go outside to wash

I strain to keep up with the conversation  
against the pounding of Brooke Fraser

I exclaim at the wonder of the Mail Run  
He says, "My mother liked that too"

The Woofers are into texting  
I am happy to putter with emails

I buy a small pack of cut-up veg  
They create pasta alla carbonara

She thinks I can listen to music  
while I find my way round her laptop

I delight in The Giant's Mosaic Garden  
"Oh yes," she says, "I took my Gran to that"

My reading glasses hang around my neck  
I need them for that laptop

I take a book to bed  
They go off to the pub

I am the only one in the kitchen  
at breakfast time

I am not planning to go to Patagonia  
I have not just returned from Patagonia

I am going home  
to my granddaughter's fifth birthday party

Alison Denham

## DEAR MOON

*(Competition entry 1st prize poem beamed to the moon and bouncing back via radio-wave)*



Dear Moon, sweet lozenge  
I wish to reflect to you for a change  
something about the place where we find ourselves;  
in perfect danger, ignorance, boredom and bliss  
surrounded by ideas too late the moment they are born.  
Yes, I have the gall to complain, offer you just  
some slant rhyme, a meteor's near miss,  
rhythm, a wobbling orbit.

Dear Moon,  
you deflect our looks, shrinking your face in the tide's mirror.  
These words delivered via radio-wave will reach you as stones  
but add nothing to your pits and scars.  
You have long done with the static frequencies, the chants of men.  
My words will travel back like light no one owns,  
far from its source, lonely and illuminating none of the dark

to the Earth, lying sleepless in her curtainless bedroom  
too frightened to close her eyes  
hoping to hear a lullaby from another time  
where it was safe to let all the stars shine in.

*Alison Denham is a Dunedin poet well-published in New Zealand and the UK who likes to offer a different perspective on the known world.*



Lee Dowrick

## KEEPING THE PEACE

Peace  
is hard to keep  
if you're a lion  
at heart.

You will need to know  
when not to roar,  
when to stay in your den,

and how  
to lie quietly  
beside  
a tempting lamb.



*'Keeping the peace' was published in Poetry Pudding (Oceanbooks), and she is known for her poems of the 40s and 50s, published as 'I run in my stilettos.'*

Lauris Edmond

## SPRING AFTERNOON, DUNEDIN

We lay in the long grass on the hill  
high up near the crooked quince tree  
and out of sight of the house.  
The afternoon touched us with its  
fragile sun – and then the mountain  
suddenly reached up and took it.  
so early – it was barely three  
o'clock. Together we looked up

from our books and shivered,  
then pulled up the rug and  
hand in hand, talking of altitudes  
and moons, we wandered home. Just so,  
in a grass-sweet patch on a little  
planet were we spinning minute by  
minute out of our brightness and  
into the changed, unloving years.



*Lauris Edmond only came to prominence in her 50s and is increasingly recognised since her death as an iconic figure in New Zealand poetry.*

## SPRING

For a while it hurt, how every year  
the spring galloped in. Orange flowers crowded  
my study window, the scent forced its way in  
through the cracks. In a matter of days  
a twitch of green became a riot of leaves.  
The banal, insulting ease of it.

Meanwhile, degeneration.  
I could not find the spring inside me  
any more. My body was faulting all over  
like a badly wired circuit. I looked  
at the children with their apple tree eyes,  
their honeysuckle skin, their sappy,  
yawning mouths, and I hated them.

But eventually I gave up on it,  
kicked it away, my body, the wreck,  
the fantasy. And then it started.  
Daffodils sprouting between my toes.  
Fantails nesting in my beard. Blossom  
In my navel, daisies in my groin.  
Baby rabbits sleeping in my dressing gown  
pockets. And the smells on the breeze  
that wafted around my head! I let it be.  
Usually people go out with the winter,  
But I had a feeling that spring  
would take care of me.



*Sarah Broom's first collection 'Tigers at Awhiti' was published by Carcanet in the UK and then by Auckland University Press.*

Kathleen Foreman

## PLAYING WITH FIRE

For some it must be nature  
But mine is content to receive and return  
And to follow, if it can be led.  
I felt that Person stirring among her petals,  
And in a lightning strike I thought again of  
Printing her out, for you.  
But what can I show that some  
Depth of your connected self has not seen?  
Wouldn't it be just like you to know  
Every piece of me by mind  
Before heart, before touch?  
I know somewhere that any so-called  
Surprise would give both of us déjà vu.  
But when our hands together touching  
Cupped the tiny candle flame  
Something more was warm than my fingers,  
Something felt deeper than just the heat  
And I wasn't afraid of getting burned.  
And I finally saw the ember, cinderless,  
In the middle of the splinters  
You held, glowing in the dark air  
As you tried to keep it alive, and  
I thought I might be able to keep it with you  
But the answers disappear in your breath  
And someone's lighting up my favourite stars.....

*A talented and somewhat mysterious free verse poet you can discover  
more about at <http://www.hyperborea.org/alenxa/free.html>*

Janet Frame

## WHEN THE SUN SHINES MORE YEARS THAN FEAR

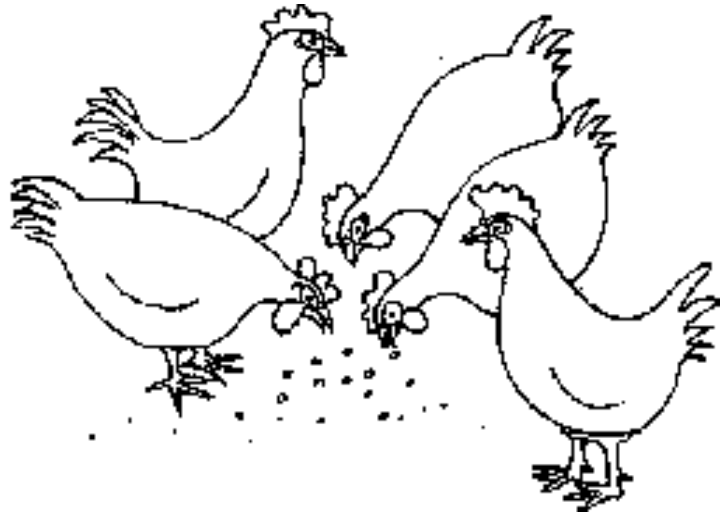
When the sun shines more years than fear  
when birds fly more miles than anger  
when the sky holds more bird  
sails more cloud  
shines more sun  
than the palm of love carries hate,  
even then shall I in this weary  
seventy-year banquet say, Sunwaiter,  
Birdwaiter, Skywaiter,  
I have no hunger,  
remove my plate.



*Janet Frame was such a fine and original novelist that it often gets overlooked how good she was as a poet, too. A posthumous collection *The Goose Bath* (Vintage) demonstrates this quality to the full.*

## PECK

a chicken's world  
    *peck, peck*  
is small  
    *peck*  
with eye and beak  
    *peck, peck*  
on earth and food  
    *peck*  
to scratch and seek  
    *peck, peck*  
with beak and eye  
    *peck*  
and seek and scratch  
    *peck, peck*  
and scratch and peck  
    *peck*  
and peck and seek  
    *peck, peck*  
unaware  
    *peck*  
of Kentucky fried  
    *peck, peck*  
or 'chicken's rights'  
    *peck*  
or that an egg  
    *peck, peck*  
is wondrous  
    *peck*  
    *peck*



*Janice Giles is a Tauranga-based poet and artist.*

David Eggleton

## THE BOOK REVIEWER

His tatty raincoat conceals a country,  
rolled-up sleeves reveal many wristwatches.  
He airily waves away rainbows of neckties  
and pulls a smoke from a dark pocket.  
But his book-side manner is a corrupt text,  
for, though professing no fixed ideology,  
he is a creature of –isms and –wasms,  
sibilant with pure vexation, and even now  
he is trimming his wick, getting the book in focus,  
preparing the performance, his pile of cadences,  
his cadences which lurk like police officers  
preparing to make a mumble of nouns,  
or like chefs proposing a sticky syllable pudding  
from the quicksilver promise of someone else's words.



*David Eggleton is Dunedin-based, but was brought up in Fiji and New Zealand. An award-winning poet he is known for his mesmeric performances.*

Robert Frost

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back!

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.



*Some poets are so much of their culture and yet what they have to say resonates worldwide. This is true of Robert Frost.*



Sue Emms

## DRINKING WINE IN RAEWYN'S GARDEN

where the sun rides the backs of fat black  
bumble bees  
dozy in the  
honeyed light

and over the back the pergola leans  
and the plum tree lies

parallel

with the ground.

It's all so green.  
New leaf green, new fruit green  
spiked green, and soft old green. But there

in the middle

a thrust of a scarlet canna. A flag blazing against the cool  
where poets gather like words on a page.

Sometimes, Raewyn says, I am in the mood to be impressed.



*Sue Emms is probably better known for her fiction, Parrot Parfait and Come Yesterday, and yet she has proved over and over again that she can turn a neat phrase in a poem.*

Alan Brownjohn

## ELEPHANT

It is quite unfair to be  
obliged to be so large, so I suppose  
you could call me discontented.

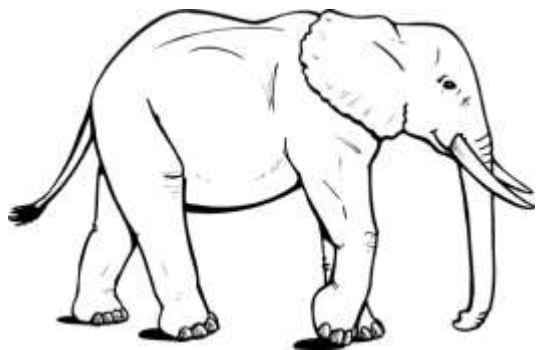
Think big, they said, when  
I was a little elephant; they  
wanted me to get used to it.

It was kind. But it doesn't help if,  
inside, you are carefree in small ways,  
fond of little amusements.

You are smaller than me, think'  
how conveniently near the flower are,  
how you can pat the cat by just  
,

half-bending over. You can also  
arrange teacups for dolls, play  
marbles in the proper season.

I would give anything to be  
able to do a tiny, airy, flitting  
dance to show how very little a  
thing happiness can be really.



*Alan Brownjohn is a British poet, now in his 80s, who says, "I write nothing without hoping it might make the world one grain better."*

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

## A PRISON EVENING

Each star a rung  
night comes down the spiral  
staircase of the evening.  
The breeze passes by, so very close  
as if someone just happened to speak of love.  
In the courtyard  
the trees are absorbed refugees  
embroidering maps of return on the sky.  
On the roof,  
the moon – lovingly, generously –  
is turning the stars  
into a dust of sheen.  
From every corner comes dark-green shadows  
in ripples, coming towards me.  
At any moment they may break over me,  
like the waves of pain each time I remember  
the separation from my lover.

The thought keeps consoling me:  
though tyrants may command that lamps be smashed  
in rooms where lovers are destined to meet,  
they cannot snuff out the moon, so today,  
nor tomorrow, no tyranny will succeed,  
no poison of torture make me bitter,  
If just one evening in prison  
can be so strangely sweet,  
if just one moment anywhere on this earth.

*Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a Punjab-born Urdu poet from Pakistan who died in 1984.*

Ross Gillett

## IN PRAISE OF MANIA

If for you the universe blazes  
like the biggest Catherine wheel ever pinned  
to a paling fence, and you rush to tell us about it,  
it means you are chosen, not doomed.

If you drive your Mini like Ben Hur,  
babble of chariots when the police turn up  
and dance in the dark of a paddy wagon,  
it means you are saved, not infected.

The world isn't apples, it's snakes,  
no move is really the right one,  
and the Lord loves those who have a go  
more than all of his cautious angels.

And the blessed who see no risk  
at all, but rush like saints  
straight to the heart of disaster, and get there  
ahead of the rest, are his special favourites.

They sing with Him in the burning bush,  
they glow like Tilley mantles  
and collapse into ash at a poke  
of his Finger. They are always remembered.

*Ross Gillett is a multi-award winning poet who grew up in the western suburbs of Melbourne and who now lives in Ballarat.*

Elizabeth Gingell

## THE LEARNING

Searching your eyes  
is like a visit  
to the library

You walk me through the classics  
wear philosophy like a sage

I see mystery behind the cover  
suspense as the drama unfolds

Searching your eyes is a journey of words.  
I could stay here 'til closing time.



*Elizabeth Gingell is a Golden Bay writer (New Zealand) and member of 'Live Poets'. Poetry published in New Zealand and the USA.*

Denis Glover

## THE MAGPIES

When Tom and Elizabeth took the farm  
The bracken made their bed  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies said

Tom's hand was strong to the plough  
and Elizabeth's lips were red  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies said

Year in year out they worked  
while the pines grew overhead  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies said

But all the beautiful crops soon went  
to the mortgage man instead  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies said

Elizabeth is dead now (it's long ago)  
Old Tom's gone light in the head  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies said

The farms still there. Mortgage corporations  
couldn't give it away  
and Quardle ardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
The magpies say.



*Possibly one of the most famous poems in New Zealand - and it is worth reading Denis Glover's other poetry, too.*

## ASHES

Finally,  
it was the last shovel  
of wet Shag Point coal  
that brought him down  
to one knee  
in the darkness of the mine

while the wind roared outside  
& the big seas swept the kelp  
& the seals across  
the glistening rocks;

for his ashes  
this would be the place –  
on the beach together –  
looking towards Roly's Reef

where he caught Sunday snapper  
from the family boat –

& where the mine was thirty  
hard-rowing minutes  
out of sight  
around the point.



*Rangi Faith is a poet, anthologist, reviewer and teacher, a Writer in Schools, who publishes poetry for both children and adults. Visit his website [www.rangifaith.co.nz](http://www.rangifaith.co.nz).*

Andrew Coyle

## Papa in Rapaki

- Ahh, Rapaki!  
Just like a painting of it would be  
With round green New Zealand  
Style hills, dotted with white,  
And a little wooden church in the foreground  
With a spire and a blue sky over all.

She lays curled up on the wharf planks  
Her round curves and long hair flowing  
In unison with the hills,  
Her dirt-caked toes twitching,  
Her cheek rested on lumpy  
Dried shag droppings.

Her soft eyes half-closed watching  
The sea roll in soft round shapes  
Tossing the wind through her hair.  
Blurred white-painted wharf post,  
Still against the movement of the sea,  
Grey tips cracked like the  
Waves – Lop Lop Lop  
On the beams supporting the wharf.

In rolling round gusts of wind leaves spin,  
Bird calls punctuate the drifting air  
She sprinkles his ashes over the windy waves,  
His waiting spirit watches her tiny figure  
From the hilltop ridge above;  
She stands, stretches, looks from beginning to end,  
From birth to death.

His sick body is gone,  
His eyes and belly roll over the  
Waves – laughing,  
Tussling her hair;  
A nice place to be, with  
Papa in Rapaki.

*A South Island poet 'with an eye for detail and an ear for rhythm'.*



Owen Bullock

## HAVE YOU READ ANY POETRY?

I study the poetry of old men who die  
    lonely  
I study the poetry of women who live in fear  
    of their husbands  
    of children who explore the magical world  
of those who are misunderstood in their nakedness  
of those who are beyond sex  
of those who go to hell and back with words  
I study the poetry

*Owen Bullock's latest collection 'breakfast with epiphanies' is published on National Poetry Day 2012 by Oceanbooks.*



Jenny Argante

## WORD ON THE WING

It might have been  
a butterfly stealing nectar,  
by accident cross-fertilising.

It might have been  
a kestrel garnering insects  
in deep blue swoops  
that tamed the stormy heavens.

It might have been an arrow shooting flame  
until strong castles sundered;  
or a keen bullet cutting off argument.

(The static fractured by trajectory,  
and immobility ruffled pianissimo.)

It might have been all or any of these:  
but it was only  
a word on the wing.



*Jenny Argante is a Tauranga Writer. Her collection of poems, 'Working in the Cracks Between', is published by Oceanbooks.*

Sam Hunt

## A WHITE GENTIAN

Remember Ruapehu  
that mountain, six months ago?  
You sat in an alpine hut  
sketching scoria, red  
rusted outcrops in the snow.

I climbed some southern peak  
and made up the sort of song  
men climbing mountains sing:  
how, no longer your lover,  
I knew it was over.

I thought I'd try out my song  
when I returned that evening  
as though there were nothing wrong.  
Instead I brought a flower down  
smelling of the mountain.

*Sam Hunt is usually the first name your average Kiwi bloke offers as his favourite poet. A wanderer, a performer - and a man comfortable in his own culture and with others.*

Robin Hyde

## IN THE LANE

I'd like to forget now, just for the one clear minute,  
Or more, if my querulous heart would let me be,  
Life and everything in it  
Save this. Once on a day, under a crab-apple tree  
Stood an old white horse with a velvety Roman nose,  
And a child reached up to pat him – ah, warily! –  
Since lately she'd met with a rose  
Of damask petals, and fiercely indignant bee.  
But the old white horse liked apples. He stood as still,  
Munching them there, as the shadows brushed on the hill  
In glades of amber and purple. The faint wet tang  
Of macrocarpa leaves crept into her heart.  
There was the world, apart  
From all but an old white horse, a child, and a thrush that sang;  
It might have been something of Schumann's; the child didn't know –  
Far happier so.  
There was no harm in that – in stroking a velvety nose,  
Hearing the crunch of apples, looking at leaves in the lane.  
No clever, treacherous torture, to work in the brain –  
Everything simple and plain.  
A bright-edged beautiful peace, that loves you and goes –  
Lie quiet. Perhaps, if you're still, it may come again.

*A troubled soul who died by her own hand in 1939 and left behind an incredible number of fine poems that have established her as one of New Zealand's finest poets.*

Elizabeth Isichei

## STRANGERS

Cornish Heath, Spanish Heath,  
Sea Splurge, fragrant Wild Ginger,  
Saltmarsh Rush, African Boxthorn,  
Cape Honey flower,

Chilean Mayten, Nemesia,  
African Feather Grass, Cherry Laurel,  
Holly-leaved Senecio, White Edged Nightshade,  
Cape Ivy,

Chilean Flame Creeper,  
pink flowered Silk Tree,  
Darwin's Barberry  
Buddleia, butterfly haunted.

Climbing Spindleberry, Boneseed,  
Oriental Clematis, Tamarisk,  
Hornwart, Manchurian Wild Rice,  
Purple Loosestrife.

Beautiful, hardy, and adaptable,  
illegal immigrant,  
dangerous garden escapes,  
foreign.

*Strangers is a fine example of a list poem comparing introduced plants to immigrants, and how both learn to survive and contribute to our evolving landscape and culture.*



T.H. Jones

## POETIC RETROSPECT

I tried to keep the summer in my head,  
Words, wishes, double weather,  
But when I looked in the hiding place  
My heart had drowned the summer away  
And nothing remained but the echoing bone  
And a cold wind blowing.

I tried to put the summer in a poem,  
Words, wishes, double weather,  
But when I looked at the empty paper  
My heart had wept that season away  
And nothing remained but the echoing pen  
In a cold wind blowing.

The summer will not stay in mind or poem,  
Words, wishes, double weather,  
And what I seek in the hidden places  
Drowned in the charity of my heart  
And nothing remains but bits of paper  
In a cold wind blowing.



*A Welsh immigrant to Australia who drowned at age 44, leaving behind a substantial body of work and a growing reputation.*

## Julie Kennedy

### READ THE WORLD

Katherine Mansfield would  
have loved the Web—  
she could have sat  
as her health deteriorated  
& read the world at a glance;  
contributed to chat rooms,  
corrected spelling,  
added editorial comment,  
conversed more immediately  
with Middleton Murry—  
her horizons expanded  
beyond those rooms  
where she spent,  
in troubled pain,  
her invalid days.



*Julie Kennedy published Katherine Mansfield in Picton this year, and is delighted it will be going to Frankfurt International Bookfair in October 2012 when New Zealand is Nation of Honour.*



Lynne Kohen

## FIVE GREENS OF AOTEAROA

This one is the deeply green of forest  
waiting for us a thousand thousand years.  
A green so layered it does not remember  
its birth. In us as our mothers are in us.

This one is the green of ocean, giver  
and taker, dragging our shores in and out.  
We bob over its secrets, craving the waves  
as it craves the moon. A green we cannot own.

This one is the green seen from sky, paddocks  
of quilted velvet tucked under land's limbs,  
stitched with fences, puckered by rivers. Green  
scorned by cities forgetting their inception.

This one is the green of our jewel, pounamu.  
Made by earth, secreted in rock and water.  
Verdigris veins we sculpt into symbol,  
fragments of ancient world tied round our necks.

This one is the green of tall pines, industrious hills  
knitted in neat rows, sighing firs needled by wind,  
the scent of December. Impatient green, always  
pushing away from the ground that bore it.

No matter what uncertainty, what poverty,  
you and I have these greens.  
And each of us, luckier than we know,  
carrying a fleck of faultless emerald within.

*Lynne Kohen is a Nelson prize-winning poet  
who makes a practice of turning in-depth  
observation into effortless poetry.*



Margaret Beverland

## CONFESSIONAL

Knee bent in my office confessional  
accounting to the High Priest of Taxation  
my activities for a year.

Neatly reduced to figured columns  
labelled informatively -  
R & M  
Printing & Stationery  
Power.

Entertainment -  
half deductible, half not;  
pleasure 50% guaranteed.

Legal Expenses  
Computer Support  
General Expenses - covers a multitude of sins.

Bottom line reads  
'Income exceeds expenditure'.  
Truth told it's been a good year.

For that I am damned.

Penance -

pay one third to the coffers of the High Priest,  
and toil another year.



*Margaret Beverland is a Katikati poet and the editor of 'Kokako', a New Zealand poetry magazine dedicated to Japanese forms of poetry.*

Ted Kooser

## SELECTING A READER

First, I would have her be beautiful,  
and walking carefully up on my poetry  
at the loneliest moment of an afternoon,  
her hair still damp at the neck  
from washing it. She should be wearing  
a raincoat, an old one, dirty  
from not having money enough for the cleaners.  
She will take out her glasses and there  
in the bookstore, she will thumb  
over my poems, then put the book back  
up on its shelf. She will say to herself,  
“For that kind of money, I can get  
my raincoat cleaned.” And she will



*Ted Kooser, 13<sup>th</sup> Poet Laureate of the USA, and a poet's poet much revered by readers. Visit his website [www.tedkooser.net](http://www.tedkooser.net).*

## Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a colour slide  
or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,  
or walk inside a poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

*What Billy Collins is asking us to do is to allow the poem's meaning to sink in through reading and reflection. Don't like to meditate? Read a poem morning and night instead!*

Bruce Rankin

## KILLER

This poetry deal takes forever  
to come to terms with, if it ever does –  
the moment you openly state

enough is enough, and you're ready  
to take up an easier occupation  
with greater rewards and less reliance

on empty hours spent, pen-locked in dead fingers,  
as dusk runs dawn to ground  
and sleep-deficit opens its ugly jaws,

an insignificant scribble  
flies from the page into your mind's eye  
compelling a triumphant rise

hands clasped together at chest height  
like a priest who's just nailed  
a sermon to a flock of murderers.



*An Auckland writer with a great enthusiasm for the craft of writing  
and the mysteries of writing poems.*

Helen Lamont

## MAUAO

Majestically, Mauao stands  
at the entrance of our inner harbour

Cloud plumes are known  
to wisp around his royal head

He watches over  
those who enter and exit  
this safe haven, his shadow  
casting  
a protective net

We are drawn to him,  
circle his base  
like ants, or conquer  
his summit

He tolerates us, allows us  
to absorb  
his power and beauty.  
We are revitalised  
by his presence

Majestically, Mauao stands  
at the focus of  
our inner being.



*Local writer Helen Lamont puts into words  
what many of us in the Bay of Plenty feel about  
'our mount'.*

Mercedes Lawry

## STONES

The brightness of stars signifies  
nothing but distance  
as if old love could enter your body,  
filling it with light, the pain  
buried under useless rubble,  
your skin once more swollen  
with desire. Can we swallow  
emptiness? Can it displace  
sour memories? Darkness is reliable.  
I would never have given you up,  
drunk as I was. I might  
have grown wings. Instead  
I carry stones in my pockets,  
sleep with them clutched  
in my cold hands and scattered on the bed.



*Mercedes Lawry is an American poet born and raised in Pittsburgh, resident in Seattle for over thirty years - and widely-published throughout the English-speaking world.*

Owen Bullock

## HEART IN THE NIGHT

his heart is too loud in the night  
one one thousand two one thousand  
how many times has he loved her?  
the night close, he removes clothing

one one thousand two one thousand  
numbers are but words  
the night close, he removes clothing  
sometimes the sky isn't big enough

numbers are but words  
fluoro stars on the ceiling  
sometimes the sky isn't big enough  
a child must have lived here

fluoro stars on the ceiling  
the window is open wide  
a child must have lived here  
sometimes he feels like Superman

the window is open wide  
he could escape, sleep around  
sometimes he feels like Superman  
this is a simple story

he could escape, sleep around  
how many times has he loved her?  
this is a simple story  
his heart is too loud in the night

*Owen Bullock's latest collection 'breakfast with epiphanies' is published on National Poetry Day 2012 by Oceanbooks.*



## Helen Lowe

Singing  
from the edge

a siren's net  
spun out  
across the cliffs of dusk

fingers wormed  
into roots of seagrass – toes  
pressed against air

below  
the waves are dark – flecks  
along a barracuda's  
belly

they boom  
into the land, devour  
stone

hollow out  
the sky.



*A well-established writer of both fiction and poetry whose novel 'The Heir of Night' won the Gemmell Morningstar Award for Best Fantasy Newcomer. Find out more at <http://helenlowe.info/>*

## RUGBY

How cool to be an All Black!  
A stallion of national pride  
snorting sweaty and truck-shouldered  
bowling the enemy lines to a soundtrack  
of narrative praise  
and yahooing couches.

The All Black is friendly with  
mash of a ruck  
and purple of sprig-mark and bruising  
and sprains.  
Raised through winters  
of muddy club rugby  
he trained in the twilight  
in still chilly gloom where  
his only applause  
was the boot-gallop echo  
that padded the field.

Then one day my TV erupted with his presence.  
Like thunder he bulldozed  
and battled for country  
for love of the game  
and for thrill of the fight  
and I ran with him right down the wing wishing  
far in the small of my mind  
that I was the one full of thunder and lightning  
that I was immortal on slow action replay  
but I  
am made of other things  
and besides  
I prefer to play tennis.

*Marcel Currin has his own website [The Ministry of Ideas](#) and comes to writing from a background in music, song, radio and TV.*

Shona-Ellen Barnett

## JETSTREAM LOVERS

you phone from airports  
on your way to here  
via boarding passes and passenger  
terminals

transient deserts  
and metropolitan destinations  
stamped by footprints  
and fingers of jet-stream

flights of fancy paint bodies  
onto streams of shadows  
as resurgent multitudes flood corridors  
there is nothing private

in the heart of two people connecting  
from a place of solitary confinement  
on the bench seat  
of a terminal airport

on board the confusion  
of baggage, tickets and menus  
of deliverance; the whispered  
'I miss you' lingers in the rear aisle



*Shona-Ellen Barnett published her first book of poetry, 'letterboxes', is published by Oceanbooks for National Poetry Day 2012.*