



a fine line

TE RŌPŪ TOIKUPU O AOTEAROA New Zealand Poetry Society

WINTER
2023
Student
Edition

FEATURED STUDENT POET • Ruben Mita

FEATURED ARTICLE • Claudia Jardine

COVER ART • Madison O'Dwyer

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Quotation of the season

“I do not think [poetry] is more, or less, necessary than food, shelter, health, education, decent working conditions. It is as necessary.”

— Adrienne Rich

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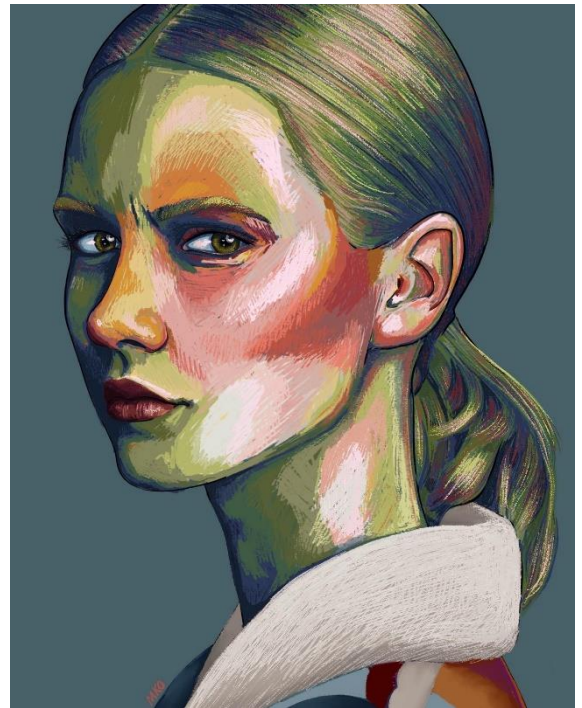


GAIL INGRAM

Our winter edition is the student feature, spotlighting a poet from secondary or tertiary level in Aotearoa. I'm always blown away by the standard of poetry from these young writers, and it keeps getting better! Our winner this year is **Ruben Mita** studying at Te Herenga Waka, whose voice immediately took me and shook me. His poem "Milk Street", for instance, is at once funny, wrenching *and* has something to say. Don't miss our mini feature of the student shortlisted poems either – from Southland to Auckland, from a 13 year old to a student doctor.

In our feature article, the one-and-only **Claudia Jardine** takes us on a road trip through Te Waipounamu as she launches her best-selling debut collection *BITER*. Take the opportunity to also read her "Mad Dog" poem on page 14.

Thank you to our cover artist **Madison O'Dwyer** for her gorgeous painting "Veiled" and the other poet-artists for the images within. I also would like to thank you, our members and contributors, who continue to submit sublime, slippery and musical poems from around the motu and beyond – from Australia to the prairies of Canada, many of you who I must regretfully turn away due to the limitations of space and budget. It is such a pleasure to hear from you and read your work, and I hope you enjoy reading the final selections as much as I do.



Remember, Remember - Madison O'Dwyer

In NZPS news, we had a well-attended, lively AGM. President Shane Hollands made his annual address and our 2023 anthology editor and guest reader **Janet Newman** spoke about her poetry journey and shared her outstanding poems on colonisation and land-use. We would like to thank **Marina Lathouraki**, our outgoing treasurer for the mahi she donated to the role. The wonderful **Julianne Exton** is filling in until we find another treasurer. Please consider giving back to our poetry community and contact info@poetrysociety.org.nz if you are interested in joining us. We are a dynamic, fun board and would love your help. Happily, we welcome new board member Ōtepoti poet **Sophia Wilson**, who I'm thrilled to announce will also be Assistant Editor from the next edition. The multi-talented **Erica Stretton** will also be staying on our editorial team as Reviews Editor.

In other *a fine line* news, this will be our last edition of the printed version of our online magazine, which has become increasingly outmoded and restrictive. Instead, please look forward to our new look and much more accessible page on our new website coming soon, which will allow us more space to produce your most excellent work.

Next issue, the spring edition, will be themed "Art/ Mahi Toi", which includes ekphrastic poetry, submissions of art and poetry from poet-artists or poems on the theme of art. Please send up to four poems (40 lines max), up to four haiku, and your artwork by 10 September 2023 to Gail Ingram, editor@poetrysociety.org.nz.

But now, ready yourselves for inspiration, hope and startlement from our fine students and writers under the veil!

RUBEN MITA

Victoria University Te Herenga Waka

Milk Street

The pavements of Milk Street
glow with the heat of an arrogant century.

The dead stone of Milk Street
is warming up.

A stranger stops to take a group photo.
For once, every piece is in place.

The professional stranger
moves on down the street, his face bare.

A florist tests her latest invention, glasses
that show everyone as cartoon characters.

The thought bubble above the sad-eyed customer's head reads,
"I'm a teabag lying in a cup, waiting for the boiling rain."

She buys smaller versions
of the magnolias on the tree outside.

The petals smell like burnt toast
on the sizzling sidewalk of Milk Street.

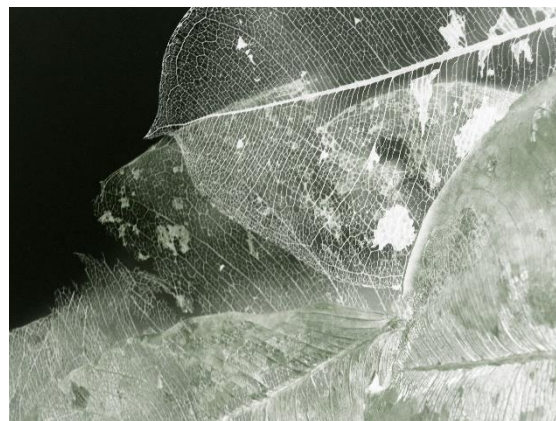
By the fountain, a plumber is crying because
his dream wouldn't look him in the eyes.

He sees a young man dancing through a window
and quickly looks away.

Milk Street is always
heating up.

"When will it stop?" asks the postman.
"When will it stop?" everyone agrees.

Bones and tupperware of lost civilisations
are revealed to pedestrians as the tarmac melts.



'Winter's Lace' - M Farrell

Milk Street is holding
everyone accountable.

In the last memory of shade,
a painter sits at her easel.

Milk Street is all over her
like the smell of a late dinner.

Her brush moves to a waltz
as she dusts off some final commissions.

She paints blank faces, white roads,
baskets of fruit on mountaintops, narcolepsy,

a slow horse walking
back into the sun.

Kōkōpu

Dogs and sheep and flies and ducks
all appear to us as cogs of the human world.

Even wild birds, transient mosquitos and ocean fish
are brought within our grasp as we see them,
extensions of ourselves, our extremities.

But not the ghostly fish, in the stream behind the house.
I had never seen anything further from day-to-day being,
more independent of my world.

Even my battery-powered torch ray,
interrogating the gentle stones and glassy flow
wouldn't let me know the grey shape,
circling,

wouldn't let me colour it human.

Kōkōpu, a poem you can't translate.
To know nothing more than you need to know,
to carry no wasted thought,
only water, passing, without heat or cold,

while I crouch and think, 'Thank god there is no god,
only the fish,
the accidental one,
the purposeful shape.'

And he saw that it was good.

First Flight

A perfumed hand
flips a coin for the thirty-second time
as a young man makes a note.

A weather balloon
pirouettes on a point of empty space
that it knew was coming days ago.

A scientific radio tracker
reveals a mouse three thousand metres in the air
above Canada.

Mark says,
“He is in the talons
of an eagle of uncertain species,
not an uncommon interaction
between predator and prey.”

Sophie says,
“He is in a little hot air balloon,
stolen in parts from a novelty costume shop,
powered by a bunsen burner”.

The truth is,
no one really knows
how this mouse came to be
so high over Canada.

The weather
running through his whiskers
flows right ear to left ear,
Pacific to Atlantic.

Watch the little red dot of himself
move with grace and trust
down the Americas.

Shortlisted Student Poems

RUBY RAE LUPE AH-WAI MACOMBER

Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland

We were not born for the back row

Ehara taku toa, he takitahi, he toa takitini

Violet Ah-Wai, nan,
gave her first lecture from the armchair
hands flexed in the opposite of a fist
outstretched for me to hold tight

taught me to honour the Moana in my moves
see the mana in our marks
to sing indigenous joy, each word
a blessing to speak

so when they said
the university is not for people like me
too emotional
to study Law
too slow
to study Law
too... too... too...

E tu

He kai kei aku ringa

I reply with the conviction of my first lecturer,
nan

because we were not born for the back row
sneaking in 10 past,
but born for the after-class asks, tasks
on time, breaking pālagi ceilings
with our Moana hearts

the best lesson I learnt –
the village front row
celebrating the shapeshifters
redressing the balance

as we count the minutes

APA citing, birthing worlds in our writing
Kate Edgar late nights, Munchy Mart pies
bright screens, sore eyes
we walk two worlds
at Waipapa Taumata Rau

so let us walk with nan
her conviction,
my first lecturer in her armchair
knew marks
were for ink on skin
not white paper or a Canvas notification
so my hands are outstretched too

we whisper Vilsoni's words, go back for seconds,
break white wishbones with our pinky fingers,
Tefui warm against my clavicle,
tenacious tongues,
save strength for later

I wish I could say my first lecturer
nan, will be sitting
in the front row at our graduation
too mighty to sit complacently
with the mana in our moves,
breaking
glass ceilings with our Moana hearts

I wish I could say, my nan will be sitting
iri in her right hand
her left outstretched

and squeezing

MAIA ARMISTEAD

Victoria University Te Herenga Waka

When the end comes

We have spent too much time being awful. Let's
try doing something good. When the choirs come

we will stop to listen. We won't notice the pitch.
We won't notice the discord. We won't disturb

the pigeons in the square, but let them fly off
unafraid. Becoming friends again, we won't

do anything to hurt each other. We will say
all the things we should have said ten years

ago. The words will slide out of us like glass.
When the end comes we will be so warm

we won't even shiver. When the end comes
we will be the ones conducting electricity.

We will bow out gracefully. When the end comes
we won't take anything with us, and the choir

will keep singing. We will inspire love and not care
about ever receiving it.

MIRANDA YUAN

Burnside High School, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Old Glory Red

You are not one to view
the world in black and white nor are you the type to wear rose-tinted lenses.

No, your vision is one colour –
one single shade of vivid red.
All you can see is the ‘valour’
of the one who blinded you with his light.

Beyond vermilion, banner
and victory, your truth hides, the truth that you will never know,
unless you take back your eyes.

You think you don’t need to see anything
but the colour of fresh blood. You think that is love.
You think you simply need to listen to the voices
in your head, and the voice in your ear. You let them be your guide.

My twin, open your eyes, unfurl your wings, take flight.
When was the last time you saw hills, oceans and fields of golden rye? Take off
that blindfold of yours, for once in your life.
He isn’t a saint – the man who stole your sight.

LOREDANA PODOLSKA-KINT

Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland/Whangārei Hospital

Dysphagia

for a patient with oesophageal cancer

The bolus
of nectarine
hes-
i-
tates-
she says
she likes
the taste,
kilos peel
from her
waist.
At supper,
she slices
another.
Life, she
states,
is worth
every
bite.

SARAH-KATE SIMONS

Whitireia WelTec, Tauranga

They Wanted to Write Love Poems

i

they wanted to write love poems
(where every word is innuendo)

they flirted with bad decisions in the night hours
(and cussed out the bitter grain they reaped)

they mused on the mysteries of their bodies
(please, teacher, a handbook on biology for the class)

and bemoaned a boy they should've kissed
(these one night flings are as intoxicating as popping pills)

ii

i wanted to write everything
(where every word is the universe unveiled)

to waste hours musing on how
(butterfly wings come in scales like music)
(dew trembles, anxious, on a spider web)
(the rain grows the flowers and washes out the blood)

and wade with pen and paper through a wretched city
(the shape of a boy's smile as his life lies in pieces)
(the hallelujah of a woman living under a bridge)

and speak out with words like eiderdown
(we do not read poetry to burst our eardrums)

iii

such unforeseen consequences of the things that leave the lips
(be it poetry or a misbegotten kiss)

they wanted to write love poems
(i wanted to write everything)

OSHADHA PERERA

Southland Boys High School, Invercargill

Winter Solstice

Every day at five thirty,
when frost hugged the windowpanes,
you would be sitting on our front stairs,
wearing a Mickey Mouse hoodie,
singing and strumming,
each note an echo of raindrops,
G to C sharp, D to B flat,
and I would stand in the doorway
letting the music carry me away,
learning that A-minor
is a semitone away from A-major,
that when music comes from your heart
it might thaw your frozen fingertips.

Today, I sit on the stairs
playing the guitar you once played,
breathing in its wooden smell,
F major, G minor,
barre chords with fingers stretched,
trying to grasp something you knew
under a cloudless sky,

I strum the guitar and sing a lullaby,
the one you taught me,
whisper to the empty August air,
waiting for the raindrops to come
and fill the cracked earth
in a winter solstice
where frost evaporates to steam,
and everything is ablaze.

An earlier version was previously published by Dunedin Public Libraries (Oct 2022).

CLAUDIA JARDINE

Tour diary

Claudia takes her debut poetry collection BITER on tour

We live in a big beautiful place, and as one of the few poets who can drive, I need little encouragement to get out there and onto State Highway 1. For a long time I expected to find a guide on how to do a book tour in Aotearoa. For those still searching, I do not think one exists. Just go for it.

‘For a long time I expected to find a guide on how do a book tour in Aotearoa... I do not think one exists.’

Here is a wee checklist: friends, transport, accommodation (hint: ask your friends), venues (no venue hire fee preferable), merchandise (i.e. books), some sound gear (microphone and stand, speaker or PA system, cables to connect microphone to your choice of output device and its power supply), and a few hours of your time. Use this time to: make marketing collateral on Canva, make event listings on social media or event databases, invite friends and family to the events via social media or email, research local writers groups or literary organisations (and invite them too), contact local community radio stations and newspapers to ask if they can promote the events, and practice reading your work out loud so you are prepared to impress the audience.

I picked my tour locations because my friends live there, and I knew they wanted to celebrate



my pukapuka. Ōtautahi is where I grew up and where I live now, along with many of my nearest and dearest. I lived in Te Whanganui a Tara for seven years for my studies, so I have heaps of friends and former colleagues there too. I was born in Te Tihi o Maru and my family still has connections from when we lived there in the nineties, plus Renee of Timaru Booksellers took care of selling books during a 2022 tour visit and told me to come back. I have friends in Ōtepoti and a massive crush on its arts scene, and I knew there was a strong community of writers who would likely turn up if I did a show there. Wānaka, I admit, was friend and poet, Liz Breslin's idea. She called me two weeks before the tour started to tell me she had heard there was a place with no venue charge. She used to live there, and I suspected she alone could draw a crowd. So, I knew where I wanted

to go, and then it was a matter of how and with who.

‘When you publish a book, it is not just yours anymore...’

The *BITER* launch in Ōtautahi was easy to organise. AUP and Scorpio Books, the venue, took care of hospitality, books and sound gear. An MC is a hugely important piece of machinery for any live event. You want the right mix of bold, informative and humble, plus the ability to help the audience feel at home, so I was tickled to have Ray Shipley on the mic. I also thought variety would be nice for the audience. I asked a few friends (Josiah Morgan, Isla Huia and Jack van Beynen) to read one of the poems from *BITER* followed by a poem of theirs. I made this decision for a reason. When you publish a book, it is not just yours anymore, and I thought having friends read from my book in front of an audience would help me to loosen my grip on the content. Vana Manasiadis was my launcher of choice, and she delivered a kind and scintillating speech to pique the audience’s fascination with the collection. I then read my speech of thanks to all of the people who helped create the book, cried in front of everyone (could not be helped), and read a selection of poems from *BITER*. We toasted, we nibbled delicious bread and cheeses, I signed books and went home via the pub with my besties feeling ethereal and expended.

For the second event of the tour, I teamed up with the authors of *AUP New Poets 9*. This latest group of poets are the only ones since 2019 to actually get their book-launch celebration, so I was quite determined to make sure they had a nice time. The morning after my Ōtautahi launch, I masked up and flew to Te Whanganui a Tara. Again, AUP and the venue, Unity Books Wellington, took care of hospitality, books and sound gear. The team at AUP organised a runsheet, Melissa from Unity introduced the event, and then Rebecca Hawkes mastered the ceremony. Sarah Lawrence, Harold Coutts and Arielle Walker read from their chapbooks. Rhys

Feeney and Rebecca read poems from *AUP New Poets 6, 7 and 8*. Rebecca filled in as the launcher of both collections on behalf of Anna Jackson, who was unable to attend due to illness, and then I read my little speech, cried again, and closed the event with some pithy pieces. The audience had heard many poems and a lot of earnest literary talk by the time I got to the mic, so I aimed to sprinkle some little wordy treats around like a lolly scramble. Afterwards, it was back to a friend’s place via the pub again to celebrate.

The next day, and for a few days after, I felt pretty tired and needed lots of naps. Future book launchers, take heed. The mental load of public speaking, event management, performing, and connecting with everybody you talk to on a meaningful level so you can convey your appreciation for their support can take a toll. Be gentle with yourself, and do not expect to feel normal. Plot your social media schedule, and then put your phone on silent. A lot of that online stuff can wait.

‘The mental load of public speaking, event management, performing... can take a toll.’

I gave myself a few days back at home to rest before heading south. On a Friday morning, my friend Lily and I drove down to Ōtepoti via Temuka for the next event at the University Book Shop. I provided the sound gear (borrowed from a local theatre), AUP and UBS organised catering and books, I asked Liz to MC, and invited three local writers to read before me. Eliana Gray, Emma Neale and Rushi Vyas all got onboard, and the resulting event felt like a lovely celebration of local literature with a broad range of styles, plus me on the end as a happy bonus level. Emma even read some of her sexier short stories, inspired by the themes in *BITER*. Yes, we went to the pub afterwards, and then Lily and I crashed on the couch at Liz’s with her cat Simon.

The next day, Liz, Eliana, Lily and I headed back north to Te Tihi o Maru, with a swim in the sea on the way. Though Timaru Booksellers is a wee shop on the main drag, the ceiling is high, the lighting is good and the vibes are great. Liz and Eliana read their work, and then handed it over to me. Then Liz moderated a little Q&A with the highly curious Timmaz crowd (it was very intellectual). Afterwards we went swimming at Caroline Bay and stayed the night with our old neighbours, the McKenzies.

‘The poetry scene is what we make it, folks.’

By the time we were headed to Wānaka, I was elated. A poetry tour of Te Waipounamu with some great pals and beautiful sights had already definitely been a great life choice for me. Every event was going off without a hitch and had great audiences. All the hours online doing mahi seemed to have paid off – and we had made the nationwide bestsellers chart for not one week, but two! We stopped for a cheeky skinny dip in

Lake Pukaki and then travelled on to Luggate to check in with our host, Laura Williamson, an old mate of Liz’s. Our venue in Wānaka was Rhyme X Reason Brewery, and the crowd was 20% dogs, so I read all of the poems in my book that feature dogs because it felt right. We ran this event the same as the Timaru Booksellers one, and gave the audience a little break before my reading to refill their glasses. Breakfast at The Big Fig the next morning felt amazing. A fried egg gozleme went down my gullet faster than you could say “gannet!” Five events, five cities (no disputing that fact please), and the pleasure of visiting so many of my friends along the way.

My summary: The poetry scene is what we make it, folks. My DMs are open if any readers out there want advice for planning their own tours. You can do it!

Mad Dog

Palatine Anthology V.266 — Paulus Silentarius

they say a man attacked by a mad dog
sees a phantom of the beast
in every body of water

did rabid Love fix its keen teeth in me
and maraud my soul with mania?

for you – [ggrRRR] you – [rrrrRUF] you – [rrrRA]
you – [ggRArArA] your – [ghhHAhHAhHAh]

your delightful image appears in my whirlpools and rivers
my open sea
my glass of wine



FRANCISKA SOARES

All From Water

In the soft drizzle of a pliant mist
that curled and smoked from velvet carpets
hushed green and smothered as through some gauzy gaze
our footsteps unleashed perfumes sweet— fresh to the silvery moist.

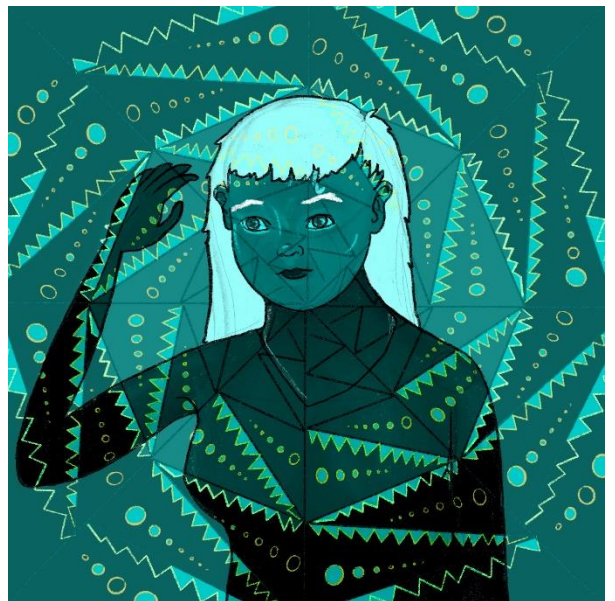
The tilted hills we crested
were petrified waves in the moving gloom of
a moonlight that'd outlived the night
and there were yet— stars in sight!

Bizarre nerveless, an infectious rash
randomly sown thrown slo-mo entombed
then the acoustics of silence on silence
magically rent— a mating bird in flight

and the wet dear Susan was suddenly in my eyes.

It's all sex and violence

What, say that again—
the transcendental
accidental
soundtrack that serenades my short-shadow strolls
at dusk and dawn
the trilling the chirring the opera
the liquid drama
that regales silver lake and
tall sorrel knolls
where days begin and end
are raw rival rap-wars
for mates and tree-space
so crass
so, so base . . .
they're not ethereal
not special?



Atlana – Rata Ingram

TIM WILSON

Katrina

Steering one-handed at 70 mph, bugs swat my windscreen,
refugees flee an imploding sky. 'You're driving
into the hurricane?' asks a voicemail, 'That's crazy.'
Maybe. US 190 crouches: darkened,
Texan, empty. Headlights spangle the opposite lane,
a necklace jeweled with fright, unspooling back
to Slidell, Louisiana. Later, I sleep
in my car, then on a marble floor,
then in an abandoned, storm-surged Best Western
dubbed 'The Tiltin' Hilton'. Later,
I blink in a rectangle of light guarded by
a man holding a pump action shotgun.
Gators swim up Bourbon Street, offering sound bites.
Families stand on roofs, waving at choppers.
I watch New Orleans burn, while also drowning.
Standing in the middle of
what used to be a square, hours after
a tidal wave lifted casino-barges larger
than apartment buildings, and smashed them
through hotels, laughing like a toddler, I note
the smoke alarms, ululating in concert,
declining as the batteries expire, recall Tui.
I'll never forget Biloxi. No
cell coverage, except for a spot beyond
the live spot operated by the BBC.
A woman watching me. Keeps asking
to borrow my mobile. *Sorry. I have
to have my say, I'm too busy.*
Eventually I relinquish the phone.
She dials, staring at the keys.
'Mom? Mom,' she gasps, '... yeah. It's all gone.'

ALEXANDRA FRASER

My French mother

My mother wrote in French always
in the margins of my physics texts
messages I thought
indecipherable hidden but desperate
communications
sometimes her pen had stabbed
through the page words would leak
J'aimerais that occurred often
and *tu tu tu*
that was 'you' I knew that much

$F=ma$ and $E = 1/2mv^2$ were my language
I pencilled them next to her ink
again again
but we were foreign to each other

She died when I
was in night class
learning tourist French
my name is ...
I have the tickets for ...
I have lost my passport
I do not understand ...

CHRISTOPHER PALMER

In the Industry

I'm the one who works on 'viewer questions'.
Bob from Ballarat wants to know why snow monkeys
wash their food before eating it
and the answer's delivered through blonde hair
and milk-white teeth.
When the phone rings
the receptionist says Deb's off site
but she's just getting a shellacking from Sydney:
'the studio costs a thousand dollars an hour!'
On the day they interview for a new presenter
thirty metres of breasts line up outside
wanting their big break, their shot at fame.
The research assistant just shakes his head;
in the industry for over three years
and still waiting for a walk-on part.
I meet the executive producer for the first time
at the after-party. Drink up, he says. And we do.
Later, he urgently needs to talk to the props girl
as she leaves on cue through a side door.

BRENT CANTWELL

when the sound of Arctic ice cracking is finally loud enough

after Lucivico Einaudi's "Elegy for the Arctic"

when the time comes –
when Ludivico Einaudi helicopters-in a baby grand
and a camera crew –
edited out in the final clip,
like the cancelled-out sound of a carbon foot print,
like the piano's forgotten forte –
when the pianist steps out softly,
softly onto a piece of floating debris –
when he floats off on the atonality of an ice floe –

and again!

when the time comes –
when a cold arpeggio is a queue of cold fingers
getting in first,
panic buying their way out of a chord's last collision –
when all of our fingers hang in the air –
when our only forte is to back out slowly,
slowly as a *soft* sound receding –
when enough inconvenience
creaks on a shelf of ancient ice

the sound of the collapse will be loud at last –

MICHAEL GOULD

Before the Holocaust

What is the point of it all as civilizations rise
and fall, when people don't know
or never knew the full history of the Jews?

A deep history exists pre-Holocaust, but
known only to the few, to those who own it
a history not taught in our schools, though
ancient Popes and their dopey minions excelled
at spreading lies, blood libels and heinous opinions.
Damage done, but not much fun
for the six million who burned, and when nothing
is taught, what can be learned?

A nearly four-thousand-year history
is a mystery to most of the world. True
some goyim stood up in times of crisis
and declared without fear
we are all Jews here.

BARBARA STRANG

Valentine's Day

You do not believe
what poets swear

in hearts like
sticky cut-outs

you know this ruby light
is no more than a sunset

your heart is not
a two-dimensional biscuit

but a large bloody organ
on the left side
of your chest cavity

nevertheless...
in this half-lit glow
you feel there might be

a heart-shaped window
to climb through...

and in spite of the fact
that on Valentine's Day
you begin marriage guidance

a wilting bunch
of flowers
captures you

ALASTAIR CLARKE

Green Sea

So we're done the berms nicely mown
edges edged what's to quibble –

each house an island on green sea –
yet the questions remain: where's vibrant

in these silent ironed spaces?
There are dog-walkers solitaries

murmuring Dog – these regular routines,
while days pass like dominoes falling.

In these silent streets houses are masked,
though windows glint when it suns.

The colourful tiled roofs shield,
completing defences (moats are

antique). There are no No Entry
signs – these plainly are unneeded...

ANISA MACLEAN

Mother's Day

Maybe next Mother's Day, I will be
a mother with untoasted crumpets
on a breakfast tray (it's the thought that counts).
Backyard dandelions, hot coffee,
an Eric Carle *I Love Mum* book
a generational family event.

Maybe next Mother's Day I will be just
the same. An honorary member
of the non-mum group.
Strictly banned from sharing my opinions
on motherhood, on children.
Bowed down and yearning, outside
the insurmountably high fences
that surround the angels, the saints,
the goddesses we call mothers.

BEE TRUDGEON

Never Hear a Thing

An earthquake rocked
my house midnight
knocked my Toby jug
clean off the wall;

Now, like dead friends
who refuse to stay buried,
constantly disappointed
my ears are glued and rebroken;

Do you know how many chambers
these dainty shells boast?
How many different ways
the furniture can be rearranged;

Times that by two
and tell me how
so many permutations cluster
on a related pair;

I'm left with odd shoes that don't fit
no receipt for damaged goods
Hearing talk, talk, talk,
and never hear a thing.

DAVID SAMPSON

Memory

Oldies' hard drives are packed solid
the RAM whirls at dendritic speed
to reach the depths
where memory resides.

Recall can take a while
might be now
might be tomorrow, might be
next week

When it pops into the consciousness
the eyes light up
a huge victory has occurred
but the audience has long gone.

NOLA BORRELL

Interim

Intercity bus, Desert Road

We could be anchored with the mountains passing by. And pylons marching on the spot in low-lying mist. Splashes of snow line the road and squat army buildings are out of sync with the hills. Hawks circle and relax on thermals. There will be an arrival, we know, an end to our drifting, our dreaming of this or that.

... And, yes, a wash of green, watered by rivers. We are moving after all, road and minutes unfurling. Conifers pattern the grass, cattle have shadows. The southern fringe.

moored yachts
a hundred songs
in the riggings



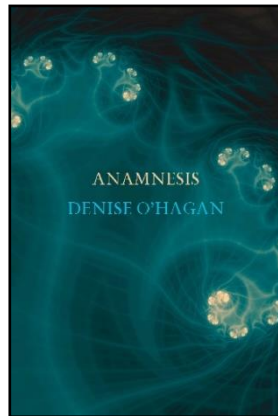
Tarquin – Rata Ingram

LINCOLN JAQUES

Anamnesis - Denise O'Hagan

(Canberra: Recent Work Press, 2022)
ISBN 9780645180886. RRP \$19.95. 70pp.

Anamnesis is Denise O'Hagan's second full-length collection. Like its predecessor, *The Beating Heart* (Ginninderra Press, 2020), the poems splash across similar themes of memory, mortality, the past often conjuring uncomfortable experiences that interfere with and antagonise the current moment.



Anamnesis, as the Ancient Greek title suggests, refers to memory, but extends to memory that is captured within our souls, rather than in the physical world. Events from our past lives are, therefore, gradually revealed in mere glimpses throughout our current life. *Anamnesis* is a scrapbook of those disjointed memories that jolts us out of our forgetful slumber.

O'Hagan is a bilingual poet. Born in Italy, where she spent her formative years, she later lived in New Zealand and Australia, the birthplaces of her parents. As she notes herself, she has drifted between three worlds and two languages, as a migrant who doesn't quite 'fit' in to either language, to any place.

The opening poem, "Subtext", shatters that everyday illusion of permanence we tend to build for ourselves, then to cling onto so dearly. Tiny details kaleidoscope into the dazzling broad landscape of fractured memory:

I am talking of the dent in the hallway door,
The cracked halo of paint around the handle of
The third cupboard in the kitchen, the tracery
Of sentence scraps and childish doodles held
In the wax polish of an old oak dining table:

These are the growing impedimenta of our lives, scraps left in the crevices of 'us': who we were and who we become. The poem ends with the words: 'Grief folded into the curl of hair in an envelope'. We have moved quickly from the vague recollections of those small parts of childhood, to the connective and intimate child's hair kept all these years in a yellowed envelope.

Stand-out poems are many: "Hide-and-peek", a snapshot of St Peter's in Rome bathed in early morning light, with its secrets obscured by lurking shadows; "The Almost Child", a confessional from mother to child about a sister lost 'Two years before you were born'; the startlingly sensual details of how '...snails respond to having their shells caressed?' in "Treading Carefully"; the confronting realities of migration in "Afterglow", where the experience of growing up in a different land renders 'The fissures chiselled deep into / The woodwork of our childhoods cracked wide open in / Adolescence'; or the deeply moving plea in "If I Could", a piece concerning the poet's son whose heart condition resulted in requiring surgery far from home and his subsequent depression. She tries, from a distance, to 'Sweep away the paraphernalia of broken adolescence'.

'A web of connections between individual poems is always present, however thin that web may be cast...'

A web of connections between individual poems is always present, however thin that web may be cast. Across generations, across continents, across cultures and through time. The undertow of migration and migratory journeys is steadfast, as in the brilliantly structured poem "The Longest Journey" which is a ship's log of cold observation offset by intense human experience. It's based on a real journey of the migrant boat *Viola* (1864) which was '...carrying / immigrants from Ireland in the

wake of the Famine.’ It highlights one of the many reasons – Famine with a capital ‘F’ – for leaving your homeland to journey to the end of the world, often never to return, for a chance at a new life. These passengers leave a place of filth, both metaphorical and real, only to enter another place where the stench was ‘near tangible / and privacy just a word.’ The poet conjures the details in alarming clarity, where ‘...tedium vied with fear’ and the constant sound of ‘waves slapping and slopping the deck / and froth dribbling like unmopped spittle.’ On the way a woman realises, when the death of her baby at the hands of a drunk ship’s surgeon is exemplified by harsh words from her husband, that things will not be any better than where they came from. At that moment of brutal realisation ‘she turned away from him then / and didn’t turn back.’

*‘Pandemics, plagues, dis-ease will
always come in waves, regardless of
ourselves thinking that we’re
immune...’*

Other poems look to the subject of our recent pandemic. In the apocalyptic “A World in Waiting”, we’re reminded that the world of yesterday is no different from that of today. Pandemics, plagues, dis-ease will always come in waves, regardless of ourselves thinking that we’re immune. The poem also concerns itself with the breaking free from a reclusive existence during lockdowns. As the ‘you’ of the poem walks (or jogs) through their neighbourhood, there’s been a shift with the familiar. Moonlight is ‘washing over pale houses, like mismatched teeth / Recessed into the darkening gums of the pavement.’ Light fights with dark, shadows with illumination, the safety of the seemingly quiet, calm night is disrupted by impending death.

“Goldfish in a Pandemic” observes the ‘bleached’ human condition from the point of view of a pet goldfish from within the relative safety of its bowl. The curved glass of the bowl acts as magnifier of our (human) absurdity during a crisis. We humans

‘Check for updates, make another coffee / (they’ve given up giving sugar up).’ The goldfish in question places itself in an esoterically better place than we, looking as it does from the inside out to the outside in. The daughter of the family who owns the goldfish ‘stares intently’ at it all day through the glass, while the mother paints images of the goldfish onto t-shirts. In the end the goldfish becomes a subject of fear and anxiety, until finally both the goldfish and its owners realise that ‘...they see *themselves* in me!’

“Twenty-two years” brings home the passing of time more than any other in the collection. It remembers our ageing parents (normally too late), which confronts us with our own mortality and the brevity of moments we’ve wasted, along with those few we have left. The poet thinks back to welcoming her father off the plane at the ripe age of 76, then at “...quite an age to emigrate”. The wearing down of all the years is densely compacted – a walking stick worn ‘shiny’ from all the years of grasping (onto life?), the ‘scraping’ of time left for her father to get to know his grandson, all spilled into the wonderful line ‘...that great grey slab of time keeps stretching, / getting no more distant for being more thinly stretched...’

*‘...which confronts us with our own
mortality and the brevity of
moments we’ve wasted...’*

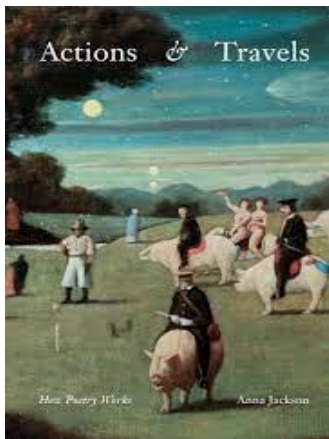
As I read O’Hagan’s collection, I can’t shake the feeling that we’re all sitting quietly in the silent libraries of our own memory, as the world rushes chaotically by outside – glimpsed in flashes and whirls through high windows. Reading this collection will reawaken you to the brevity of life, and your enjoyment of those precious moments.

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

MARY CRESSWELL

Actions & Travels – Anna Jackson

(Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2022)
ISBN 9781869409180. RRP \$35.00. 312pp.



The subtitle “how poetry works” nails it: this is a user manual for poetry, not a how-to-write or history-of. It’s the place to go when you are overwhelmed with the depth (resonance?

poetry?) of it all and still want to hear more about the sidelines and byways that make a particular poem what it is in a particular moment.

The book includes a hundred poems ranging in time from Sappho to a goodly handful of living poets. Of the 300 pages, 200 are essays and discussion of the poems; 100 are other critical apparatus – poet biographies, end notes and references, an excellent index and even some writing suggestions for those who want them. Many of the hundred poems are classics which have had pages and pages already written about them, in case you want to pursue matters even further.

On the first page, Jackson asks, ‘Can resonance be discussed as a quality of poetry, or is it something that instead belongs to the reader of the poem?’ And through the whole book, we are constantly reminded that we can’t just pick up and handle a passive object called a poem and then hand on some knowledge. Rather, there is

the poem, there is the poet, and there is the reader, everyone involved in different degrees at different levels and times. (Forget about fitting Tab A into Slot A; that just won’t happen.)

The first chapter looks at “Simplicity and Resonance”, like the echoes that can vibrate off an ostensibly straightforward poem when you play around digging into the meaning. Jackson hangs a lot of the commentary on Yeats’ “Wandering Aengus” and a couple of Robert Frost poems. The second chapter looks at the “Ornate and Sumptuous” poems, where rich and replete language and complex imagery expand the poem, often (as Jackson points out) poems with a loss at their heart. Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” is an example she chooses. And she reminds us that our textbook echoes of Kubla Khan are further expanded by the versions of it which exist on YouTube.

‘... through the whole book, we are constantly reminded that we can’t just pick up and handle a passive object called a poem...’

“Concision, composition & the image” looks at the modernists’ preferred simplicity and their ‘...concision, formal unity and the visual image.’ (p41) Among the poets whose work is discussed are New Zealanders Jenny Bornholdt, Ursula Bethell, Hone Tuwhare, and essa may ranapiri. (Most chapters have at least one Kiwi poet, but this is an unusually large clutch.) And the chapter includes comment on that inspired work of concision, Alice Oswald’s *Memorial*. Chapter 4, “Sprawl”, goes in the other direction, spreading all over the place with Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg.

“Form” can be both a giving-up of control as well as standing up for (or against) a particular tradition. Marianne Moore’s syllabics are mentioned here, as well as Terrance Hayes’ new take on the sonnet and Nick Ascroft’s (successful!) grief limericks. At the end of this chapter, Jackson points out: ‘Poetry now circulates on the internet as much as, if not more, than it circulates in print. Does this change the relationship between the poet and the reader?’ (p100) And she goes on: ‘Poetry itself, whatever platform it is shared on, can be seen as a space, both more interior and more otherworldly, *beyond* the marketplace of franchises and ‘likes’.’ (p100) Her concluding chapters look at the admission of ‘outside forces into poetry.’ (p101)

‘Poetry now circulates on the internet as much as, if not more, than it circulates in print. Does this change the relationship between the poet and the reader?’

Jackson also brings the idea of time aboard. What happens to a poem over time? And where does a poem actually exist in time? Poems like Donne’s “Flea” and Marvell’s “Coy Mistress” may seem written for a reader until they actually force the reader in as part of the action, an action in which the poem is in conversation with itself. entire little country” is mocked “as a 1950s / throwback with honest, rural folk.”

As well, poems can be in conversation with other poems. The chapter “Conversations with the Past” watches a poem by Sappho (four four-line stanzas plus fragment) become a poem by Janet Charman (nine words). And yes, the quoted poem would recognise itself in the mirror.

“Poetry in a House on Fire” looks further into poetry and the internet, and what this could mean in terms of poetry’s traditional conversation with

the past. Changing approaches give a new angle to silence as a commentary and to re-configuring poems. ‘The work of perceiving gaps, and listening to silences: this too is political work that poets are taking on.’ (p163) There is a fascinating re-think of odes and letters as they fit in today’s poetry – if they do, and how they might do it.

‘...the author implies that every individual poem has its own point of view and is capable of speaking for itself...’

At first, I thought the last chapter was concentrating on the poet’s point of view, as opposed to an angle which was predominantly the reader’s (as most of the essays). But it isn’t – actually the author implies that every individual poem has its own point of view and is capable of speaking for itself in some way or another. When you hear the words ‘I am writing a poem’ who is using them? The poet? The speaker? The poem itself, whose sentiments (separate from everything/everybody else’s) scoot back and forth among different levels of time and of agency? Or does it live in some perfective aspect of time and eternity, along with you, me, the cat and anyone else who happens to get sucked in?

This is a hugely readable book, dealing with an impressive level of critical complexities as well as more usual ways of looking at a poem. It is most definitely a user manual to have on hand, one to read and re-read with pleasure.

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

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Windrift Haiku Group. Their generous donation to the NZPS will support ongoing haiku projects, such as this haiku feature in *a fine line*.

HEATHER LURIE

full moon
cold and bright
he loves me

missing
my shadow
midday

DESNA WALLACE

autumn breeze
my father's ashes
float on the wind

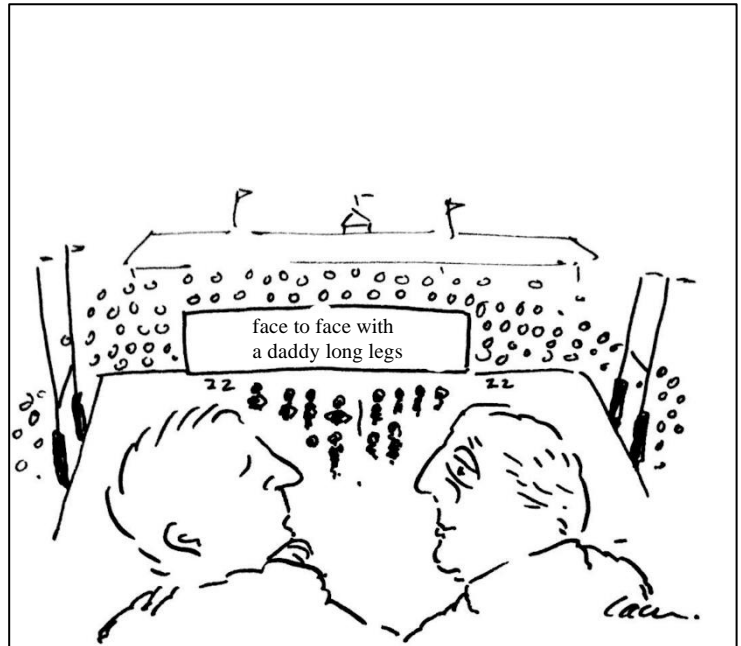
JULIE ADAMSON

a sleepless night
dreamcatcher
malfunctioning

in the shower
face to face with
a daddy long legs

SUE COURTNEY

poetry reading:
The Tui in the Tree . . .
a tui in a tree



**Apparently it's a tradition to
do a haiku before a match**

Jay Cassells

DEBBIE STRANGE

frozen trough
I cup the warm breath
of my horse

1st Place, 2018 Sharpening the Green Pencil Haiku Contest

prairie blizzard
squirrels take the shape
of their tails

Zatsuei Haiku of Merit, World Haiku Review 2021-2022

VALENTINA TECLICI

wedding veil –
snowflakes shimmer
over the trees' tops

BARBARA STRANG

arriving home
on census night
so many stars

overnight frost
your whiskers gleaming
in the morning sun

a pan of old tailings
one golden speck
amongst dross

ANNE CURRAN

burning incense –
her dreams unfurl
into wisps of smoke

JOHN C. ROSS

early winter
monarch caterpillar
safe from wasps

NOLA BORRELL

booklover
a magnifying glass
for each word

nurses' strike –
through winter trees
the fractured hospital

DENISE HART

tiny cast removed –
spring lamb
frolics

blackberry flowers
lilac petals
granny's kitchen apron

JENNY FRASER

sailing
close to the ocean's edge
a Norfolk pine

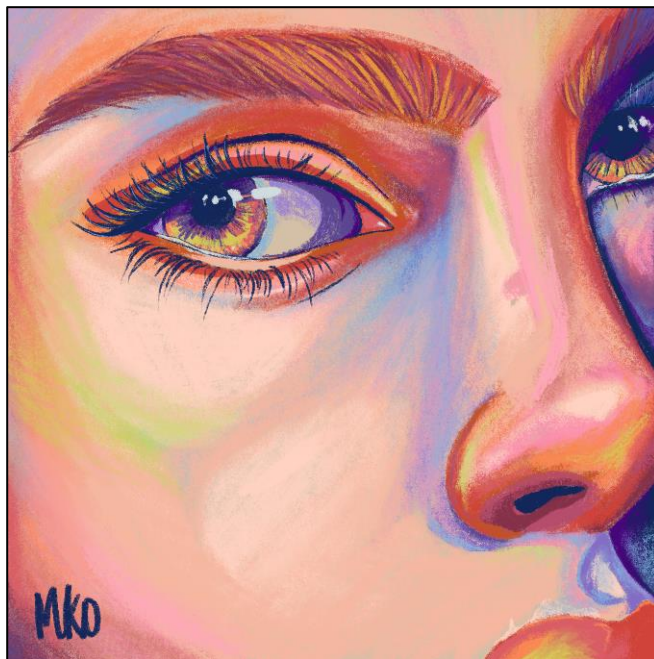
smudge of grey
winter softens
the Kaimai range

Julie Adamson lives in Wellington by the sea, always changing and inspiring her. She has been published in *Kokako*, *Island Writer* (Canada), NZPS Anthology 2020 and *a fine line*.

Maia Armistead is a poet and student originally from Hamilton. She has been published in such places as *Starling*, *Mayhem*, and *The Spinoff*, and is one of the editors of *Symposia Magazine*.

Nola Borrell writes haiku, tanka, and haibun in particular. Her work is widely published here and overseas.

Brent Cantwell has recently been published in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Poetry NZ*, *Landfall*, and *takahē* and is looking forward to his first poetry collection *tether* being published in 2023.



Lies and Smiles – Madison O'Dwyer

Jay Cassells was once a lawyer. Mindful, perhaps, of Flaubert, ("Every lawyer carries within himself the débris of a poet"), he has always drawn and written, including some poetry. He now works on commissions and other long term projects eg. conservation, trout and putting. jakehassells.com.

Alastair Clarke is a New Zealand writer. Most recently work has appeared in *Antipodes* (US), *Landfall*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Fresh Ink*, *Orbis* (UK) and in *Ezine*.

Sue Courtney lives beside the estuary in Orewa and writes haiku for mindfulness and meditation. NZPS published her first haiku in an anthology in 2013 but since 2021 her haiku have also appeared in international journals such as *The Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond*, *Prune Juice* and *Autumn Moon*.

Mary Cresswell is from Los Angeles and lives on the Kapiti Coast. She's a retired science editor, started with astronauts and ended up with kakapo. Her poems have been in NZ, Australian, US, UK and Canadian journals. See also [Mary Cresswell - Writer's Files • Read NZ Te Pou Muramura \(read-nz.org\)](#)

Anne Curran feels inspired to write haiku by the landscape, seasons, people, and events of Hamilton. She remains grateful to writing friends, mentors, and family members who nurture this hobby.

Michelle Farrell is a new and unpublished poet, although she has written since a young age. She worked in the areas of neurodiversity, physical disability and mental health in various roles for around 20 years and has since worked as a multimedia artist for 25 years.

Born in the Waikato, **Jenny Fraser**, nature lover, musician, artist and poet, now lives in The Bay of Plenty. Her haiku, senryu, tanka, haiga and haibun are published in New Zealand and International Journals.

Alexandra Fraser is an Auckland poet who has been published for years both in magazines and anthologies in New Zealand and overseas.

Michael Gould was awarded a mentorship in 2021 by the New Zealand Society of Authors, completing it with poet laureate David Eggleton. Writing poetry since the mid-Seventies, he entered the arena only after retirement.

Denise Hart lives in heartland Hawkes Bay, nestled close to the Ruahine Ranges. She enjoys the expression of haiku inspired from her rural everyday activities.

Lincoln Jaques' poetry, fiction and travel essays have appeared in Aotearoa and internationally. He was the Runner-Up in the 2022 IWW Kathleen Grattan Prize for a Sequence of Poems.

Claudia Jardine is the author of *BITER* (AUP, 2023). She graduated from Victoria University of Wellington | Te Herenga Waka in 2020 with a Master of Arts in Classics and now works as a freelance arts administrator, educator and editor.

Heather Lurie grew up in America and has lived in New Zealand for 16 years. She has always loved haiku, and relatively recently discovered she loves writing haiku as well.

Anisa MacLean came to NZ from Iran when she was seven. After falling in love with English, she became a creative-writing major, a teacher, and an author of two self-published books.

Ruby Rae Lupe Ah-Wai Macomber is a daughter of Te Moana-Nui-a Kiwa. Alongside her studies, she facilitates Te Kāhui, an Indigenous creative writing kaupapa, and features in *Metro*, *Landfall*, and *Pantograph Punch*.

Ruben Mita is a poet, musician and ecology student in Pōneke. He has been published in *Starling*, *Landfall*, *takahē*, *Tarot* and *Sweet Mammalian* and won the 2022 Story Inc. IIML Poetry Prize.

Christopher Palmer is a poet and visual artist based in Canberra. He's been published worldwide, and his first collection *Afterlives* was published by Ginninderra Press in 2016.

Oshadha Perera is a student from Southland Boys' High School. He enjoys reading and writing poems.

Loredana Podolska-Kint is a final-year medical student in Whangārei Hospital, which inspired these poems. She has self-published two poetry books and spoken at TEDxUoA 2022. Her Instagram handle is [@loredana_poetry](https://www.instagram.com/loredana_poetry)

John C. Ross is a long-retired English Literature academic (ex-Massey), living in Palmerston North, but originally from Wellington, and a member of the Windrift haiku group.

David Sampson, retired solo General Practitioner from New Plymouth, now enjoys wood-working and playing with words through poetry.

Sarah-Kate Simons is a poet originally from rural Canterbury, but now based in Tauranga. Her work has been widely published. In her free time she wanders the countryside hunting for inspiration.

Franciska Soares is a hearing-impaired teacher living the good life in Queenstown. The unsurpassable beauty of this part of the planet has inspired her to go back to writing, her first love.

Barbara Strang lives in Christchurch. Her haiku and poems have appeared in New Zealand anthologies 1998 onwards. She leads Small White Teapot Haiku Group and has two published poetry collections.

Debbie Strange is a chronically ill short-form poet, haiga artist and photographer whose creative passions connect her more closely to the world and to herself. Please visit her archive: debbiemstrange.blogspot.com

Valentina Teclici lives in Napier. She has published several books in both Romanian and English. Her work has also been translated into French, Te Reo and Spanish.

Bee Trudgeon (She/Her) is the Porirua Children's Librarian Kaitiaki Pukapuka Tamariki. She lives in Cannons Creek, Porirua, and on the Patreon page of her alter ego Grace Beaster.

Desna Wallace has had poems published in journals for both children and adults. She is a writer, blogger, reviewer, tutor, and librarian, who loves pottering in the garden.

Tim Wilson drives a 2004 Suzuki Swift. He is older, and younger, than his car.

Miranda Yuan has been writing poetry and prose ever since the age of seven. Now at thirteen years old, with the help of some amazing mentors, she has been published in the likes of *Toitoti*, and continues pursuing her dreams of becoming a professional writer.