

WINTER READINGS

Poetrywall



EDITED BY MARK PIRIE

POETRYWALL 2007

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EDITED BY MARK PIRIE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GIRDLESTONE

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MARK PIRIE

JENNY POWELL

MARTYN SANDERSON

L E SCOTT

NELSON WATTIE

F W N WRIGHT

POETRYWALL

“(What’s the story) morning glory?”

- Oasis



*And all the roads we have to walk are winding
And all the lights that lead us there are blinding
There are many things that I would
Like say to you ...*

- Oasis, 'Wonderwall'

POETRYWALL

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Edited/Compiled by Mark Pirie



**Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop
Paekakariki
2007**

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- Mark Pirie, editor/compiler

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Mark Pirie's poems were first published in *The Search* (ESAW, 2007).

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Ring of Darkness

When you, my April, bring me flowers,
Then from the rite of giving turn away so,
Your eyes small rains, your heart this gift

I harbour forever, I think of Lehmbruck's Nude,
A work in bronze, in living bronze,
Whose grace no Joy may rival, whose rare

And simple eloquence flows gently as a tree
Out of the heart of silence. And I believe
The dreaming brow and downcast eyes are Love's,

And the body brooding on its loveliness
A thought, an impulse from a mind
Grown grave and golden in the spirit's

Perpetual stillness. She stands before me
Like a breeze, intangible as the round-mouthed
Silences, whose intense wonder at our world

Draws them each moment nearer to us,
Like that profound ring of darkness
Out of which leans this perfect flower.

Alistair Te Ariki Campbell

For Buddy

1995-2006

He didn't ask for much –
just a little patting
now and then, and whenever
possible to be near me.
That's why he'd lie behind
my chair where I passed
the day reading, and working
on my poems. That's why he
cried when I went out,
and why he took up his
position beside my door
when I went to bed.
He looked like a stray
in an ill-fitting overcoat,
but his grey hair was fine
and silken to the touch.
Big and awkward, Buddy was
the gentlest of dogs.
He wasn't what you'd call
handsome – he was beautiful.

Alistair Te Ariki Campbell

Let me describe for you her lips

She kissed me first.

She will deny it
but she did.

I was there at the time

at least
in the beginning.

I was a fresh kahawai
straight out of
the salt

shaken once or twice

then split
head to tail
into fine pieces
of white flesh

and placed

on her tongue
to melt like ice.

I was a frail child
wrapped securely
in blankets.

I was Satan
turned black in the
pyres of hell.

I was wine
swallowed straight
from the bottle

.....
.....

I do not know
what happened
after that ...

Glenn Colquhoun

Let me describe for you her eyes

Her eyes were two guns
in the hands of a killer.
They drilled me before I
had a chance to drill them.

I did not even pick a fight
but lay there in the street before I knew it.

And the sun set blood-red.

And no one looked because they knew
they would get the same treatment.

And mothers called inside their obedient children.

Sheriffs crossed the road,
poking me with their sharp sticks,
complaining that they'd seen it all before
and of all the darn fool things...

Cars drove over me as if I wasn't there.

Cats licked me with their sandpiper tongues.

Doctors waited for the ambulance
and the ambulance waited for the police
and the police waited for the phone call

and the phone call never came.

Then she appeared at my side,

taking my head into her lap
and rocking at what she'd done,

timid as a small boy cleaning his gun,

wondering why the hell she went for hers,
wondering why the hell I went for mine.

Glenn Colquhoun

Necklace of Stones

Each line will be hard.
Each component part
will be hard.

Nothing but water and light
binds these islands
together.

See, when I look
you in the eye both our eyes
are stony.

Black and ownerless.

*

Landlocked. Charmed.
Askew. That was me
in Europe.

Here: I could be
a fragment of paua shell,
jagged and dazzling

on black cord
at your throat.
Not what I am

a small grey stone.

*

A blank world of windows.

*

The light was so soft
I could have chiselled this line
into the stone wall

of the village church
but no amendment or by-law
would allow it.

So I turned from stone
to a page of brittle,
half-burnt paper.

Try writing on that!

*

And you. Still you want
to be a native bird, a territory.
You have another thing

coming. Each phrase a pebble,
each pebble a beach.
So hard

is the light that rain keeps coming
down to subdue it.
Can you chorus,

or sky-dive in this light?

Dinah Hawken

Peaks

The mountains reconvene.
An avalanche of voices
thrums the heavy ground.

Precise, confidential,
the wind reports the news
it lifts from pavement tables:

the All Blacks' private pain,
the public intellectual's
ceaseless quest for vengeance.

The mountains shake their heads.
The culture of celebrity
has banished them from the gossip columns.

Eroding, reminiscing, the mountains shake their
heads. Snow falls, forgotten dandruff,
through the ever-warming air.

Tim Jones

Inheritance

Thread the needle.
Through you,
pinnacle, pedestal,
surge those who went before.

Reassort
the dust of generations.
Carve initials
into the ever tree.

Darn the threadbare
patterning. Tie off,
cast off. A signature,
a lifetime in four letters.

Tim Jones

Come, Calm Mother

In a corner street
a woman tightly clutches a child,
scratching a brick wall that holds her prisoner.

Lest she be armed
the bloodthirsty hounds' fingers, itchy with fear,
let loose the trigger.

Her falling sound echoes all the wailing mothers,
a warm, warning signal.

As the child slips through her arms,
survivors' screams shriek in unison.
Reddened eyes drip strained streams of blood,
confused feet grip the trembling Earth.

An itchy itch held stubbornly.
Throbbing hearts probing.

Yes Mother,
we have felt your painful sound,
colonisers planting their ragged flag
into your womb,
through their fathers,
their sons,
and their unholy ghosts.

Lost pirates looting, raping,
tricky treaties signed,
civil servants conspiring,
convicts confiscating.

In the name of their 'civilisation' they named you.

Numbers

I remember a freezing '77
when me first landed in a London town.
Me was wearing red jeans
all the way down side-buckled,
topped by two colours
which had nothin' to do with White House,
Kremlin, or No.10 Drowning Street.
My countryman come pick me up
from hairy Heathrow.
Him drop me somewhere
between Greenford and Southall.
Trying to know the area
me take a walk
while thinking about me son, me mother
me just left back home.
During me walk
me bump into dis man
and him ask me,
"Where you going gal?"
Me wonder
what kind of greetings?
Me tell him,
"Somewhere and nowhere,"
and me step on.
De next week
me take to window shopping.
Me walk into de same man
and de man ask
"Where you staying gal?"
Me tell him, No.25.
Him say
"You mean No.25 you can't remember street?"
"No, me can't remember.
Ah, you go so, so, Gardens,
you turn so, so Terrace
up so, so Crest,
twist so, so Close,
down so, so Drive,

round so, so Roundabout,
 straight so, so Street
 to No.25.”
 De man turn funny in he face.
 “You mean you can’t remember what name of street
 to take you through to No. house you live in?”
 “No brother, me can’t be bothered.”
 Him try to laugh, me check me time.
 “Is it dem tower blocks near the Queen’s Arms
 or dem wider bungalows by the Kings Head?”
 Me calmly/confidently tell him
 “Not near none of dem.”
 “Alright,” him say,
 “what ‘bout the telephone No. then?”
 Me say, “Not connected.”
 Him put him hands upon him hips in wonder.
 “Bwoy, how you going survive in a England
 without a telephone No.?”
 Total s-i-l-e-n-c-e.
 Him change de tone of subject to de same topic,
 “What’s the area code so me can locate you?”
 Me say, “Could be 999 dot 1977...”
 De man take a fierce look at me red jeans and yell,
 “Me haks you, you is man or woman?”
 Me brush pas’ and walk on.
 De voice behind me continues,
 “Me hasking you,
 you is man or woman?”
 Me no turn back
 Him walk pas’, turn right,
 kick hard an empty Coca Cola can an’ shout,
 “You is a rass-clot-bald-head woman.”
 Me let out a loud laughter
 dat turn de evening commuters pink.
 And me walk forward.

Wanjiku Kiarie

On the Blue Wharf

AJ Langston 1928-2007

Our father is a ship
 sailing in rough seas
the hospital floor is a swaying deck
 he lists with pills.

He remembers rounding
 the Cape of Good Hope
On a troop ship when there was War,
 a gangly kid
in a fire-proof bunk.

The death spikes of the floating mines.

He wishes now
 for a ship's skin of iron
and slaps at flies
 he imagines on his arms.

That's the heat of Egypt
 in a dream from which
he is roused in his hospital bed
 60 years later.

Our father
 in mountainous seas
down the other side and then home
 for good.

For a girl ashore –
 tiller, compass, heart.

Our father is a ship
 in rough seas
and all hands
 all hands on land
must let him slip away.

Our father is a lone boat
 sailing a white sail
a lone sailor
 far from any shore.

Richard Langston

The Trouble Lamp

My father fingered and thumbed manuals
about combustion, spark, and timing.
His grease-smear'd prints marked the page.
His mind ticked with the problem.

Light was cast by a trouble lamp,
a single bulb in a wire cage dangling from the rafters.
The engine hoisted out with a block and tackle,
he waved us back, told us to stand clear.

His words were chrome-coated –
camrod, piston, bearing, crankshaft –
the engine's forged and silver organs
laid out in lines, a still life in a sheen of oil.

The crowning moment was when
he wrapped his large fingers,
around the thin carburettor screw,
and tuned the engine to an even hum.

That was his music.

I thumb manuals myself,
but keep my hands clean.
The nuts and bolts of words,
the snug fit and spark.

Reaching into the dark engine of things,
rummaging with the heart,
puzzling for the way forward,
reaching for the trouble lamp.

Richard Langston

Another Round

Stepping into the ring
For one more round
'My shout!' he calls out
And begins to sing

A final song of joy and despair

Off with the gloves
Make a fist of it
Your raw knuckles
At the ready to clasp

The punch-drunk reality of it

But there is no point
When enough has been
Reached. The opponent's
Reach is always longer

No matter how many punches land

Hang up your gloves
Follow your love's
Crazy vision. It won't
Make a difference

You will always return in the end

To the genuine genie
Whose magic work
Comes to enchant
Everyone who rubs

The un-ignited fire of the bottle

Water of life, or
Liquid of death
Step into the ring
Take one last swig

You'll be back again next time

That which was once OK
Has been reversed to KO

Irony and Impressionism in the Twenty-first Century (For Harvey and Carmen)

The full facial moko, designed to provoke
Fear and loathing in ordinary folk
Really covered up the sorrow and hurt
That you carried inside from your birth

The big, muscled body, tats and patch
Told a tale to the world, don't scratch
Beneath the surface of this Mongrel
Lies an impression that all is not well

When a person's wairua is lonely, sad
They often join a Mob that is bad
Not the Monet Mob of soft images
But the one that outwardly outrages

After all these years to see you on a dialysis machine
Your moko now shows aroha, your eyes are serene

Michael O'Leary

The Unknown Warrior

Wait till the war is over

And we're both a little older – Jim Morrison

‘It’s all over for the unknown soldier,’
sang Morrison, almost 40 years ago.

Back then they were fighting a different war,
but to me it was the same old song.

80 years on, when they brought home from
France our very own ‘unknown warrior’, and paraded

him through the streets, I was reminded
of that song and the way it was performed – as theatre.

After the bullet, Jim would play dead. He was trying to awaken
people to the realities and open their doors of perception,

the way those doors are never opened, simply
by parade in gun carriage and funeral oration – the

honourable act of ‘national pride’. During a war, it’s
those at home who are hit the hardest; it’s never over, for some.

Wellington 11 November 2004, Armistice Day

Mark Pirie

Coming Back

Coming down from the hills
through bracken and dense gorse,
the wild flowers bathing under sun
and the sea in the distance,
I found the township.

And as I walked towards it
people began walking towards me;
some stopped as if they'd expected
a sign – yet one they couldn't follow.
I kept walking, found my car, and drove

from there. Soon the motorway
and its signs took me
from hills, back to the city.
It was soon night, and on the edge
of the streets, people were

walking and drinking and talking.
There was something else about
their eyes, no dark beads,
no hard-fought lives, they were
consumers, the kings of their kingdom,

had tasted the 'fruits of the tree', and
from their lips came a song
that reminded me (not just
of the thick-set joy of life),
but of how (some day) we would die.

Mark Pirie

Honda Om

The odds are against it
83 million to 1,
but here we are
hurtling along in a language
I don't understand,

gasping the grey air
of a motorcycle mass where
every Westerner prays to arrive.

Taxi driver and passenger
how good you are
at taking me for a ride
down a dodgy road where

every deviation
hits the raw nerve
of a Honda Embrace.

Jenny Powell

Tinh Ca
(Love Song)

His voice
fragrant with Sua flowers

Fragile perfume
of love in the Spring

Inside
the song he is far

From home
and his heart cries

His voice
the colour of lotus petals

Trembling
in a sighing arch

Falling
through the air

Returning
to love's light in the Spring

Jenny Powell

Home Counties Poacher

A man traps and kills
a hare
to feed his family.

The hare is on The Man's land.
The Man catches the man.

The man is torn from his family.
His family starve.

The man is caged in a ship
shipped to a strange land
landed in chains.

He hews stone to build gaols.
He serves his time in a stone gaol.

He is a free man.
He traps and kills
the men of the land.
He tears men from their families.
Their families starve.

He feeds them poisoned flour.

The Man rewards the man with land:
the land of the People of the Land.

The man is a land-holding man.

He sends for his family.
He feeds them.

His people people the sunburnt land.

He calls the land
the Lucky Country,
the Land of the Free.

Martyn Sanderson

It's Not About Ego

No, really, it isn't.
Would I lie to you?
Me?
Of course not.
Honestly, it really isn't.
Not the slightest bit.
Not the teeniest weeniest
teasingest sleaziest
wheeziest craziest
breeziest minusculest
palimpsest of an ego.
I think.
But who am I to say?

Martyn Sanderson

Yesterday Opened Her Legs to Time

(Sometimes a human life is marked by neither rock nor stone)

Moments of encounter

that bring us to this moment

it is after a rainfall

things are green and wet

it is a promise

something unknown

something new

a sound

a voice

a remembrance

something of birth

Moments of encounter

that bring us to this moment

there are voices

speaking of time

a difference of knowing

we dance

with so much

that holds us from the past

we watch midnight undressing into naked faces

yesterday, today and tomorrow

we sometimes sleep

seeking mercy

in things

undone or done

Moments of encounter

that bring us to this moment

there is sand in our time

mirrors in our hands

we know earth as one

melting into something

beyond what we've done

we drown so often

in childhood waters

we hope so often

of being washed

with those waters again

a tree smiles at us

only in childhood

a butterfly falls

Karori Park

It's funny how they
wear their whites on greens,
clock bat on ball
and think they're English.

It's March. The sun is bright.
We walk into forest shade.
The trees are tall, and fine and foreign
with bark that cracks to show its age.

The floor is brown with dry
and ancient needles,
and in branches above
the sun has disappeared.

When we emerge, the game
is over and white legs
have turned to blue and gone,
while light is fading from their green.

Nelson Wattie

Kumutoto

In Woodward Street I sip
Or browse in pottery.

Here were the whare,
Thatch-roofed and plain,

And cosy too, but not
Strong to hold back crush.

The gentlemen had been none,
But knew of life,

To wear high hats
And carry useful knives.

Their houses pressed on in
From every side and crushed.

Where could a whare go?
What patch could kumara turn to?

The street is steep where once
The stream rushed to the sea.

A-glow with caffeine and edified
With glazes, I trip down,

Almost toppling over
Into the sealess quay.

Nelson Wattie

Last Viewing

I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch
In a local café; a man pushing his eighties,
Your company: a Sibyl without branch.
I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch;
Enjoying life for sure: the latest tranche
How soon to pay of mortal debt to Hades.
I saw you last, Bill Oliver at brunch
In a local café; a man pushing his eighties.

A Big Ask

One year was all; you had, Wilfred Owen:
To lift your game from minor author
To status; past masters would be glad: to own.
One year was all; you had, Wilfred Owen;
When at the Muse's table bid: to hoe in,
In preference to some manner other.
One year was all; you had, Wilfred Owen:
To lift your game from minor author.
Failed Sassoon; however there were left him
The many years of a long lifetime.

F W N Wright