

50 poems by 50 poets

Recent New Zealand poetry

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Edited by Mark Pirie



**Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop
Paekakariki**

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Preface

Since the late 1940s and 1950s when Louis Johnson and Allen Curnow were publishing their poems in *Poetry* (Chicago), there's been a growing interest and acceptance of New Zealand poetry overseas. Past issues of the UK magazines *Stand* and *Dreamcatcher* have published selections of it. Many of our top poets (Bill Manhire, Peter Bland, Fleur Adcock, Allen Curnow, James K Baxter, and Vincent O'Sullivan), are or have been published in England and the States. In 1982 Alistair Paterson was successful enough to have his 'open form' anthology *15 Contemporary New Zealand Poets* accepted for US release by Grove Press in New York. A follow-up mini-anthology, which he edited, was later published in *New Directions* magazine.

So, with this new selection of New Zealand poetry for *papertiger*, I have looked to continue the good work already done by my predecessors who have actively promoted this dynamic literature from such a small and isolated country.

50 Poems by 50 Poets brings together something of the New Zealand/Aotearoa flavour. Subjects here range from rugby and being a roadie for The Clash to the Treaty of Waitangi as well as the more personal and traditional such as death and love. Meant as a light introduction, it shows a representative sampling of some of the poetry styles and forms (including hip-hop and pop) currently being made here. Some of the writers: Tui Gordon, Cliff Fell, Scott Kendrick and Doug Poole will be virtually unknown to an overseas audience but they are producing some of the most lively poetry at present. Others like Riemke Ensing, Murray Edmond, Albert Wendt, Michele Leggot, Peter Bland and the recently deceased Alan Brunton are already established and occupy a prominent place in the local literary landscape. All the poets collected here are worth reading and well worth exploring further.

Mark Pirie, Wellington.
April 2004

Alan Brunton / **white sky, black night**

The light hits the dust
it goes everywhere,
there's nothing I can do,
black night comes down
to empty arms
that should be holding you
Soul Sister Number One;
I traverse
a strange universe
searching for intelligent life
when I would rather be
holding you
even just
approximately
Soul Sister Number One;
I see you you can't see me
I speak into the silence
... disappointed
... disappointed
...disappointed by love

When you're hurt you
you feel the pain alone
there's nothing you can do;
you're alone because you suffer
what you suffer
is yourself
Soul Sister Number One;

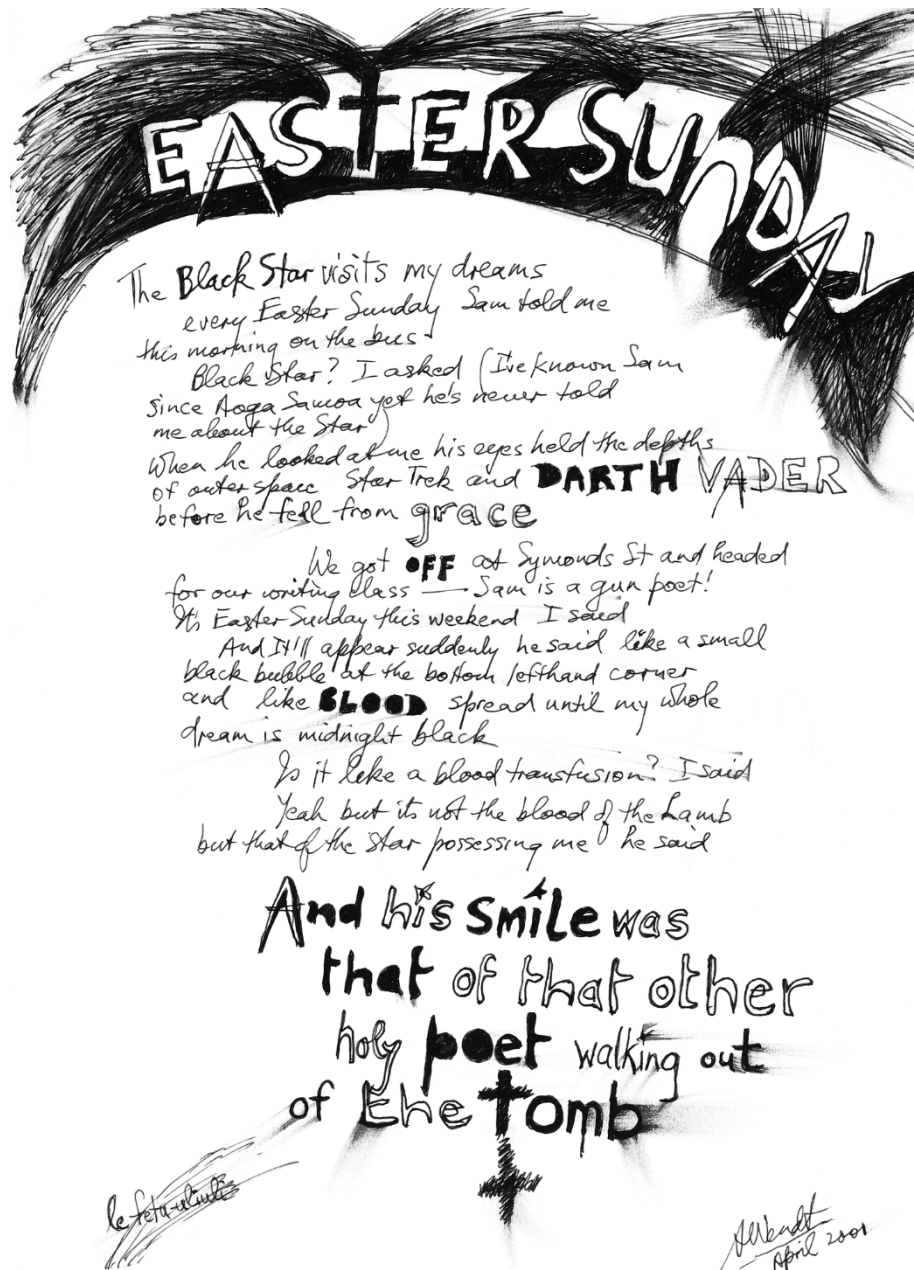
last night I was
a big tycoon
driving in a Silver Cloud
no one knows me now
I'm a face in the crowd
at the end of
history
Soul Sister Number One;
I see you you can't see me
I speak into the silence
... disappointed
... disappointed
...disappointed by love

think about you
Saturday night
nothing else to do,
lights go out

sky stays white
like it does in Timbuctoo
Soul Sister Number One;
anti-matter is
the only matter
the world gets incredibly still
it's not the original
there's noone here
who looks like you
even just
approximately
Soul Sister Number One;
I see you you can't see me
I speak into the silence
... disappointed
... disappointed
...disappointed by love

Alan Brunton (1946 -2002), poet, performer and independent publisher. His eleven books of poetry include the book-length poems *Moonshine* (Bumper, 1998) and *Fq* (Bumper, 2002), *Ecstasy* (Bumper, 2001) and CDs *33 perfumes of pleasure* (Free Word Band, 1997) and *Nietzsche / Zarathustra* (Red Mole / The Space, 2002). Co-editor with Murray Edmond and Michele Leggott of *Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1965-1975* (Auckland UP, 2000). Co-founder with Sally Rodwell of the experimental theatre troupe Red Mole (1974-) based in Wellington since 1988 and previously in New York, New Mexico, London and Amsterdam.

Albert Wendt / Easter Sunday



Alex Staines / **Queen of Newlands**

Queen of Newlands
runs a small private museum
& pays weedy Walt whose stomach is stapled
to dust the antique codpieces
& polish the valves
on her 1864 Wurlitzer liposuction machine
& Walt loves to play Prince hits
on the wheezing pipe organ
& roll under the linden trees
with his inflatable goat named Pew

Queen fertile as the Ganges delta
has serial lovers in the blue stucco villa
& gives birth standing up in a huge copper tub
& can count her 27 offspring
by the number of dents in said tub
also barmaid at the Bad Café
where the satanic vegans meet
owned by poor uncle Stan who thinks he's van Gogh
down in the toetoe he cut off his ear
with the lid of a rusty tin

now the seed of a hideous vine
is sprouting in her marrow.
the heavens weep for her
fragrant oils of beauty and sadness.
she distracts herself from the terrible season
of the ripening evil
by watching starlings bitching in the flax,
like in the schoolyard of her girlhood,
pigtails and prurience,
apprenticed already to a criminal gnome
in a candy house
with Dr Seuss cabbage trees
and explosions of agapanthus
in the swampy paddock

she imagines a release
a flight

pack the garage with drums of gasoline
start up the boyfriend's white Dodge Challenger
he left behind when he went up to Crawford -

she'd pout in the mirror then
trample the gas pedal
hurtle along the twin tracks
of white shell & the skulls of birds

& following the impact's incendiary jolt
she'd be sucked out of herself
corpse consumed by fire ants.

and behind the evanescent curtain
her silvery essence
subsides into the hinterland
of the interminable immediate

eternal forests
vistas
peace

quivering with the gentle imprint of the Animus
she volplanes through luminous horizons
to a castle cut from a single diamond

& there's Eckhart
strange & erudite
surrounded by peacocks intoxicated
by the words of his sermons
& Hildegard
vivacious
intense
daubing a mural on the castle wall
in dark red paint, *death swallowed up in Victory*
& choirs of children crucified in domestic wars
sing cantatas
& though there's no breeze the lily-petals tremble
& Teresa
cool & effulgent
lets down her hair by the open window
& mother Julian on a golden couch
dreams of her lover the builder of castles
& the author of Cloud floats above
in the basket of an improbable zeppelin
gobbling down oysters
and turkish delight
& morsels of shellfish
& confectionery fall to the moat

& devoured by eldritch toads big as cushions
& the boatman rows alone his slender skiff
& whistles ghostly like a happy flute

and there is our Queen of Newlands
(they can't help but admire her)
under the whirlygig pegged with pennants of corsetry
sleeping in a constellation of daisies.

Alex Staines is a Wellington poet and film-maker. He was a member of Poetrycorp in the '80s and is an energetic performer of his work. His first collection was *Warning*, a joint publication with Mike Eager, and a new book, *the slow road to Gore*, was recently published by Third Eye Novelty Editions. His film 'The Voice of Foxton' (2002) was screened at local film festivals and in Canada.

Alistair Paterson / **Centrefold**

I edit a poetry magazine
feature writers in it
give them space—
their pictures on the front cover.

I ought to feature myself.

Alan featured himself
Dylan featured himself
Louis & that other Alan
featured themselves.

Jim (Baxter) never featured

anyone except himself.
In semiotic terms it's
a matter of centring,
getting into the middle of things—

& staying there.

Bernstein features himself
Murray who's convinced
he's as good as Bernstein
features himself

& all those other people

who have gotten into the action
feature themselves, make sure
what they write gets read
& nobody forgets it.

I ought to feature myself.

Alistair Paterson, a noted poet, fiction writer, editor and critic, is a former tertiary educator and naval Lieutenant Commander. In 1993 he won the Katherine Mansfield Short Story Award and earlier Auckland University's John Cowie Reid Memorial Award for longer poems. He has three times visited America (initially as a Fulbright Fellow) where he has read and talked about New Zealand poetry. Currently he lives in Auckland where he edits *Poetry NZ* full-time. His latest book *Summer on the Côte d'Azur* is published by HeadworX.

Amelia Nurse / Windstorm

Under me,
The grass pushes up
Blind clouds rush along above
Somewhere important,
Apologetic when they
Block the sun.

Gaggles of skinny trees,
Hair all uncombed
Bow like crazed religious zealots
To some furious god.

Closer,
Branches leap off trees,
Careen about wildly, and
Land, unconvinced.

Just there, the
Rain moves
In frenzied pillars,
Never lands, but the
Odd chilling splatter.

Above, two
Silly white birds
Fly tail first,
Must just be doing it for fun,
They must –

Across the field
People drive in drive out:
Too windy.

In on the grass, I
Wave merrily,
Secretly Omnipotent,
Scared only for the
Bird's silly bird-heart.

Now one lands, just
To my left, gives up,
Beautiful, settles,
Eyes all empty suspicion.

Later, another bird,
Dark, frames itself on my
Furtherest left,
Skies high,

Gust catching
And disappears beyond speed –

Out the other side,
Triumphant,
Unwary, or
Giggling.

Amelia Nurse, a Canadian-born New Zealander, writes poetry, short fiction, composes and works for Radio New Zealand. She was the guest poetry editor for *JAAM 20*. Her poetry has been published in *JAAM*, *Takahe*, *Valley Micropress* and in *Trinity Review* (Canada). Some of her music has been published by Grace Under Press, Toronto.

Anna Jackson / **sonnet: last night was rally at 6 at carfax**

last night was rally at 6 at carfax bit depressing because not going to make
the slightest bit of difference think we have slid into moral hell
anyhow the samba band were terrific and me and amanda
stayed till about 8 blocking the traffic then sloped off to get well pissed
we drank: a manhattan, a cosmopolitan, a long island iced tea
rolled home on bus with other drunk people were in middle
of scrap between drunk boys then half the boys took off
out the back door and the opposing force very drunk man indeed
was pushed off the bus by his equally drunk girlfriend
big as a house in pink jacket bus driver who looked about 12
very freaked out but passengers just enjoying the show really
great spirit of camaraderie then home to watch news really i think
there is too much information flooding about does anyone want to know
what kind of guns they are using? didnt go to gym this morning

Anna Jackson lectures in English at Victoria University. Her latest collection is *Catullus for Children*, published by Auckland University Press, November 2003.

Basim Furat / **My Rank: Defeated**

translated from the Arabic by Abdul Monem Nasser, D.Phil.,
edited by Mark Pirie

A refugee,
Yes, *I am a refugee.*
Got sick of wars
And found comfort in the shade of exile.
From my father,
I inherited ruin.
From the barracks,
the taste of degradation.
Years of hunger
Whinny in my lips.

In airports, I have fallen:
I have fingerprints,
And on my passport
Slaps from security men.
At the borders
I have a memory swelling with pus,
And from the past
I have the spittle of warplanes
(That immerse us in a tasty bowl
Ready for destruction).

My shirt is wet with the dew of Minarets,
The yearning of the people
And the pleas of friends.
For my mother: the chore of waiting,
Until waiting itself became skilled in waiting,
While all the time eyes classified me:
A refugee, a refugee ...
At the noon of July the twenty-second, 1996,
Karbala embraced Hiroshima
And I became a number in the U.N. archives.
I am a refugee;
My visage: shores of agony.

Mighty men
Who carved valour on their shoulders
Sank between my shores,
And the prophets
Sought shade beneath my transgressions.
I am a refugee.

The recklessness of an officer
And the stupidity of a Sergeant
Smuggled the nation,

Awash in an oil-truck of grief.
So, I came home from the war,
With my rank: *Defeated*.

Basim Furat, was born in Karbalaa, Iraq, and started writing poetry when he was in primary school. His first poem was published when he was still in high school. In early 1993 he crossed the border and became a refugee in Jordan. Four years later he arrived in New Zealand. The death of his father when he was two years old; the fact his mother was left a young widow and his compulsory military service for the Iraqi army in the second Gulf War have had a large influence on his poetry. His poetry has been published all over the world, and has been translated into French, Spanish and English. His first poetry book was published in Madrid in 1999 and the second one was published in Amman, Jordan, in 2002. He is a member of Union of Arab Writers and is the New Zealand co-ordinator for *Joussour*, an Australasian Arabic/English magazine. HeadworX will publish a book of his poems translated into English in 2004.

Bernard Gadd / **the ghost of a flea**

your house quite
fits me
i spangle in corners

the ceilings
cup
my bleeding bowl
my stink of thorn

your panes – *peines!* – approach
the broaching stars
the pitted comets
the tick in the moon's bloom

ah I can dream
of the swift whimper
the pustular putsch
the frailties broiling
a peaceable vein

Bernard Gadd is an Auckland poet and editor. Recent publications include *Debating Stones* (Sudden Valley Press, 2002) and *Our Bay of Ensigns & Other Race Relations* (HeadworX, 2001). He is also co-editor of the on-line anthology, *Manukau in Poetry* (<http://www.manukau-libraries.govt.nz/whatwehave/poetry/poems>).

Bill Direen / *from Jules*

Jules measures the distance to the door. Does visibility exist apart from the objects perceived? No information. Impossible to verify, even when true at time of visibility. In retrospect, regarding birth, intensity, and tendency, all is unclaimable. We can only accomplish an inaccurate reconstitution.

The coffee arrives. We are raised against gravity, and all the world on the air side of the birdless dark is ours. Pasture, paradise-sure. He just has to get through that door. He has fused the subjective and the objective at the level of the cardinal sign. He has raised the cup and emptied its contents. He has tasted something resembling coffee, something resembling sugar. A fatigued barman wants payment. The wave breaks on the new chiliad, ever breaking, on ever a new age. We have passed by the seven combinations of the order of importance of Art, Philosophy and Religion and arrived at the eighth, \$, Euro. Small change. Have none. He glances at the bar. A huge convex mirror is positioned above the wash-room staircase. Is it any wonder many artists drew disks and such lenses, glasses and concave mirrors, giving a distorted picture of the world about, world in which there was no painter, no parent. They knew the anonymity of the bomb, of the bang. The birth of the work. Like spring. We see circles, those rings around candles, rainbow hazes, parasalene moons. Do they startle other life forms, birds, plants? Are we alone in being able to contemplate existence?

Now, he could draw now, to divert the waiter's attention. He asks a neighbour for a pencil and gets a biro. The sun elides between clouds, bursting out and dimming by turns. He has the feeling of having found what he was looking for, but a tension entering, re-entering his tendons pushes this sense of discovery into the memory. His stomach squizzles. He has drawn the cafe interior on an envelope, the windows and, above all, that door frame. The waiter goes into the kitchen and Jules walks through the door he has just drawn. No cries follow him.

William (Bill) Direen graduated in 1982 from Canterbury University and embarked on the risky business of running an alternative theatre in Christchurch. He has been invited to perform his songs and read his stories or poems in USA and Europe on a regular basis since 1989. His latest novel, called *Jules*, is set in Paris, where he has lived for some years.

Cliff Fell / The Adulterer Becomes a Roadie for The Clash and Thinks of Sleeping with Their Girlfriends

A Marshall amp on the back seat.
The cymbals like collecting plates in church.
Faces lit by smoketip glow.
The gig, and now it's over –
the limo glides through London's grubby snow.

He knows that Topper won't mind.
Nor Simenon, nor Jones.
Joe might be a problem, though.

But here comes Julie, walking down the hall.
Her hair hangs over her shoulders,
and as each step displaces it
the light ripples behind her
like rivers of chiffon flowing from her scars.

Cliff Fell's collection of poems, *The Adulterer's Bible*, was published by Victoria University Press in 2003.

Damian Ruth / **Waitangi**

I bought one.
There was a bucketfull
at \$2.25 each.

Sounds about right
for a colonial treaty.

Damian Ruth was born in South Africa of English immigrants. He has left South Africa several times. In between working as a journalist, teacher, management consultant and lecturer he has spent years studying and travelling in Europe and Africa, writing and editing, working in factories, restaurants and farms and torturing passers-by with a recorder. He taught at a rural university in South Africa for six years prior to holding a Fellowship in Development Studies in Ireland, and a year ago began lecturing in management at Massey University in Wellington.

David Eggleton / **Forever Barbie**

Barbie bumps and grinds
barbie wolf-whistles ken

barbie works out

barbie's black roots
barbie's linguistic imperialism

barbie does her nails
barbie just does
barbie knows best
barbie powders her nose

barbie's buns of steel
barbie goes on a diet

barbie bops to a lite blend of tropical muzak
barbie has delta brainwaves

barbie marches to the beat of a different drum
barbie swims with the recycled plastic dolphins
barbie takes up with strange life-forms

barbie flashes peace signs
barbie brains herself on the glass ceiling

barbie begins to deconstruct power
barbie becomes a barbed-tongue extremist,
flogging the flaccid phalocrats of the patriarchy,
until they cry auntie!

barbie e-mails the dotcom people:
yo, dotcom, feed da world

barbie realises she is pre-determined, culturally,
and goes to do aid work in the third world

yo, barbie
because barbie just does.

David Eggleton, a freelance journalist and reviewer, began reciting his poetry in the New Zealand rock music scene of the early eighties, and he has since toured on the cabaret circuit in Australia, the United States, Europe and Britain, where he won the London Time Out Street Entertainer of the Year Award for Poetry. These days he regularly performs his poetry in schools, universities, pubs, clubs and cafes all over New Zealand. His first poetry collection, *South Pacific Sunrise*, was co-winner of the PEN Best First Book of Poetry Award in 1987. His recordings include the CDs, *Poetry Demon* (1993), and *Versifier* (which includes 'Forever Barbie')— out now on Yellow Eye Records (www.yelloweye.co.nz). Steele Roberts published his most recent book, *Rhyming Planet*, in 2001.

David Howard / **Kind Of A Lasso To The World That Isn't True,
Yet**

the spider inside your eiderdown *pater familias*
it nimbled in while you were thinking of a girl *how your rubbish filled her glory box*
with long legs *polished like summer's promises through autumn*
when she stretches *neck-high in harvest light*
over your bed she stretches *like a model from Millet or a line by Minna Sora*
over the air you nearly inhabit *she is lost in something other than thought*

a halter-neck sunset *for the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm XIX)*
slipping away from the wasp-waisted day *along with the spring tide*
she said (say it) yes *sucking on the rind of the Lord's silence*
beneath the relief of the Virgin *a submission insidious as the dust that drifts into your nostrils*
blood *you lean over like a pensioner feeling for your heart*
lines *with the simplicity of the ellipse dynamized by its eccentric motion*

David Howard was born in 1959 in Christchurch. The winner of the Gordon & Gotch Poetry Award in 1984, the New Zealand Poetry Society Award in 1987, and a finalist in Ireland's Davoren Hanna Poetry Competition in 2001, David co-founded the Canterbury Poets Collective, the literary journal *Takahe*, and edited *Complete with Instructions* (Firebrand, 2001). He lives in Purakanui, Otago. A collaborative project with photographer Fiona Pardington, *How To Occupy Our Selves* (HeadworX), has recently been published.

David Karena-Holmes / **The Gatepost**

Who, among the orders of the angels,
if I cried out to them (and if, indeed,
any of them cared to tell) would be able
to inform me exactly why and how
this simple object - an old, weathered
and splintered gatepost, leaning,
half-obsured by lank, yellowing stalks
of coxfoot on a still, sad day of autumn -
is so imbued with such mysterious
powers of evocation that when it merely
impinges on my sense of vision
I experience such a surge of emotion
that a tear rises and mists my eye?

Is it because of the natural, intrinsic
sadness of an old piece of timber, with
fragments of rusted wire still attached,
as a forlorn relic, mute evidence, memorial
more poignant than a gravestone,
of the existence and labours of someone
who, years before, lived and farmed
in this place? Is it because this gatepost
is somehow invested with some element
of the spirit of whoever hewed it from
its original trunk and stood it (then firmly)
upright here - and, if so, is my emotional
turbulence caused by this spirit actually
communicating to me (by a medium
of which I have no conscious knowledge)
something of the sadness of the transience
of human life?

Or is it simply for the loss
of the past - a past seemingly more
innocent than this present - that I grieve?
Or is it (as gathering storm-clouds darken
the sky to the south) for the uncertainty
and doubt cast over what may, after all,
be only an equally innocent future?

Probably it is something of all of these;
but now, as I wonder from what tree
this post might have come (is it matai,
for instance, or totara?) the fresh surge
of grief that fills my eyes comes from
a personal and not uncertain cause:
that he to whom I once could have turned
with such an enquiry (my father) is no longer
here for me to ask, or to give me answer.

David Karena-Holmes was born in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, and currently lives in Dunedin. His poems have appeared sporadically in journals where he has lived since the 1960s, including London, Melbourne, Auckland and Dunedin. A hand-printed booklet of eight of his poems was published by The Flowering Hand Press, London, in 1969. In 2002 he published the first part of his long poem *From the Antipodes* through Maungatua Press.

Dean Hapeta aka Te Kupu / **Hardcore**

Harder than Jake da Mus / I kicked his sorry ass / Cause I'm a warrior with knowledge of the past / Words of consciousness flowin' from my tongue / I'll string da fucken Ku Klux Klan up one by one / Be like Hone Heke / Don't be no weak heart fool / Nonviolence is a choice it ain't no fucken rule / Baldheads need to heed respect / Or get a bullet in the neck / Fuck the sellouts that grovel in our face / Remember Paul Chase / Like brother Moana Jackson justice done for self / Burn down that wicked courthouse / Like Dun I'll dis the Queen cause she's a hypocrite / And LKJ told me Englands just a fucken bitch / Yeah I'm a field nigger a warrior night and day / Fuck it I'm here to stay / Hardcore

Chorus - Hardcore HipHop this a hardcore rhyme / Hardcore B Boys inna hardcore times / Hardcore HipHop this a hardcore rhyme / U H Posse inna hardcore style

Check the Independence Declaration / To state beyond question that Maori are a nation / Like Crazy Horse we know the Whitemans ways / How the Muthafucka's neva hear our say / Like Kamehameha in Hawaii fighting for the land / Like the Mohawk nation take the righteous stand / Do you remember Maioro and Takaparawha / Disdainful Babylon dem disrespect my mother / Check Malcolm X the heart the influence / Like Brother Syd, Te Ahi Kaa / We don't sit on the fence / Hear Farrakhan I love the voice of Truth / Marcus Garvey well deep in roots / Like Steve Biko when the odds are down / I'll neva bow my head to the bumpnut clowns / Fuck fitting in cause this Babylon system's just corrupt / I'm hardcore till the battles up

The spirit of resistance come supreme / The wicked dem nah know what I mean / Like Pilger expose their wickedness / Until the bullshit's overcome there'll be no Fucken rest / Like Puerto Rico, Panama, and Tahiti / You picked a fight with me at the battle Wounded Knee / Like Parihaka your vileness is clear / A brother like me will neva grow despair / Fuck CNN the CIA and the F B Fucken I / I'll big up the righteous until the day I die / Like Kanaky fight French Intervention / Fuck Uncle Sam and his imperial intentions / Stand up Indigenous rights / Like the Hauhau remember our plight / Cause nah uhh I'll neva loose sight / Cause Bob Marley told me don't give up the fight

Ain't swearing for the sake of it / It's just a quicker way of sayin' shit / If you can't dig it then ya slip / I goes way back by fact of my Whakapapa / Always comin' hard from the people Ngati Raukawa / Tainui the waka I'm from / E Tu ya know I'm standin' strong / I belong in this land Aotearoa / Discovered long ago by my mighty Tupuna / So I'm on a high dedicated many many years / Fight

against the racist he missed I resist / Blissed out with the
knowledge of victory I'll neva stop / Drop solid props like I said
to the struggle / Fed well from the words ya hear I'm sayin it /
No shit / Hardcore!

Dean Hapeta (aka D Word aka Te Kupu) has been bringing out South Pacific indigenous hip hop and reggae (with Upper Hutt Posse) for 15 years. Born in Upper Hutt, a suburb of Wellington he is of both Maori and Pakeha (European) genealogy, his whakapapa (Maori genealogy) is with Ngati Huia, Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa and Te Ati Awa, but these groupings extend to embrace the whole Maori nation. From '96 to '98 Te Kupu studied Maori Law and Philosophy at Te Wananga O Raukawa, and returning from Auckland where he'd been living for the last six years to Wellington he stepped up work on his solo album, *Ko Te Matakahi Kupu* (the words which penetrate), in both English and Maori language versions. In 2000/01 there were visits to Canada, England, France, Colombia, Jamaica and the USA, then in 2002 — Hawai'i, Cuba, Australia and returning to Jamaica and Colombia along with filming in Aotearoa saw completion of parts one and two of *Ngatahi — Know The Links*, a 'rapumentary'. A seminal figure in the local Hip Hop scene Te Kupu was a keynote speaker at the 2001 NZ Hip Hop Summit.

Doug Poole / Yo Polynesia

Sister Edwina, said of me:

- Douglas has Palagi features, beneath that, is a very Samoan Heart!

My Uncles and Aunties looked gently at me and smiled.

So I wear this inward Polynesia, this Samoan Heart.

Before this enlightenment, I guess I struggled.

Like a cruel Billy T joke

Half of me wanting to get drunk,

The other denying me a house to rent

Because we dig cooking-holes in the floors.

I remember a Palagi mate of mine

Commenting - fucking coconuts!

Shipley saying we climb in windows at night

Dawn raids treated us all as overstayers

You told us to stick Talofa Lava up our arse – go home!

Your statistics on :

Life expectancy

Obesity

Prison populations and

Scholastic under-achievement,

To strip our dignity.

Our grandparents came here

To work in factories

And clean at nights.

We grew up down south and out west

Wondering what we were to you,

We were the flavour of the month

Coconut drivers!

Look at what they eat!

Look at their poor kids!

Your mocking didn't stop with:

Bloody Maoris and Coconuts.

Now you mock - Fucking Asians!

Your Palagi mocking won't stick

You are scared of something,

So, lay it on thick

Call us all what you like

We have come to expect this of you.

Count every negative; it will not stop our successes.

Doug Poole has been an avid Beatle fan since age 8 . Sgt Peppers at age twelve.

Born and bred in Laingholm, Waitakere City, Auckland, he is the editor of the poetry e-zine *Black*

Mail Press. Loves David Eggleton, David Barnes, James K Baxter, Hone Tuwhare, Larry Jaffe. Loves

Christina Conrad, Jayne Fenton keane, Carole Nelson Philips, Michele Leggot. Reads Witi Ihimaera,

Janet Frame, Maurice Shadbolt, *Woman's Day*, *Listener*. Listens to Bfm religiously. Frequents Poetry

Live. Raises three magnificent children. Shares his life with beautiful Ashen Babe. Hopes for an end to

war.

Emily Dobson / **Waiting for Kristin**

1

A brown puddle
with black pebbles
like the dark beans
in a dahl makhani.

(\$6 from any Indian place
at lunchtime, with free
rice and naan)

A brown puddle
wobbled by the wind
between two elegant trees.

2

A tabby cat hiding
in the sharp brown grasses
of a raised school garden

3

I begin to see
Cilla McQueen's arcs
in the twinkling shaking trees
and crystal blown clouds

4

A painted yellow outline of a whale.
A white netball centre circle
somewhere near the tail.

A white painted alphabet snake.
A condensation of yellow painted shapes.
Birds, school benches,
a cloud

an enormous interislander
ploughing sturdily across the sky.

Emily Dobson lives in Wellington. She has been regularly published in most New Zealand literary journals.

F W N Wright / **Ovid As Sexagenarian**

I

i

This is the first law of romance
Among the Greeks and the Romans.

ii

There is always in any population
An opportunity for copulation.
In men of seventy like me or Goethe
Young women sense a lover or begetter.

Such circumstances may appear : bizarre.
But who can put a limit on desire ?
What prudence can control the shaft of lust ?
Who stops the wind ? from blowing : where it list.

So there has come across my tracks a buxom
Lass ; young rather than old, and wholly fuxsome.
Open enthusiasm she displays
For little services if not for lays.

I do agree : it were the height of folly
For this old stud : to mount so fine a filly.
Where ardour, opportunity embrace ;
Who counts the cost ? who shuns : to pay the price ?

II

How overmuch our looks we both admire :
Old age like mine, beauty like yours.
We have only today, not a day more ;
However much our looks we both admire :
To entertain in each a paramour ;
One of us so far gone in years.
How overmuch our looks we both admire :
Old age like mine, beauty like yours.

III

In the real world things change :
To separate our would be lovers.
Only in dreams are we in chains.

In the real world things change ;
As circumstance unchains ;
Fated from fate delivers.

In the real world things change :
To separate our would be lovers.

F W N Wright is a Wellington poet, publisher (Original Books) and critic. He has published over 500 books of poetry and criticism. His major project is the epic poem, *The Alexandrians*. In 2003 he contributed the Foreword to Michael O'Leary's *Toku Tinihanga*.

Harry Ricketts / **The necessity of failure**

Why this obsession with success,
which gives so brief a glow?
Fading already: won; done it;

past. Afterwards, what then? What next?
With failure, there's so much
more to savour, so much more to feel.

Like a loose tooth, you can jiggle
it any time you like;
the true friend you can never brush off.

Failing is like having children:
you find out stuff about yourself
you'd never known nor dared to guess.

And think of the variety.
There are so many ways
to fail. Not just the smart disasters

like going bust or off your head,
betraying those you love
or knowingly blowing your talent –

only a few of us can be
that chic. Don't be choosey.
Any flop will reward you with guilt,

remorse, embarrassment and shame,
whose every nuance
you can endlessly replay, retaste.

Even quite a tiny failure
can last you a lifetime:
that thing you said, that moment you missed,

will twist in time until you see
how it led to all that
and all of this. Some revelation.

So don't begrudge your blunders,
screw-ups, A minor blues.
Nothing's wasted; failure makes sense.

Harry Ricketts was born in London in 1950. He is a co-editor of *New Zealand Books*, and currently teaches at Victoria University of Wellington. His books include the highly acclaimed biography of Rudyard Kipling, *The Unforgiving Minute*. His selected writings, *Nothing to Declare*, was published by HeadworX in 1998. His most recent poetry collection is *Plunge* (Pemmican Press).

Harvey McQueen / **Humble's *Fraser Of North Cape***

Marines sailed past our North
Cape, Guadacanal to come.

In the other hemisphere, timed
perfect for the cartoonists to

present Churchill in his Christmas
stocking the last straight naval battle.

The *Schanhorst*, cornered, carnaged
silenced, slid into the heart-chilling

ocean, thirty-six survivors from eighteen
hundred and five. The convoy got through.

Fraser went on to Tokyo, accepting on
the Empire's behalf the surrender.

Retired, the admiral told his
biographer, "Richard, in the end

it isn't words that matter — it
is deeds." Tell that to the marines.

One recovering from malaria relapse
said as he gave me my first cigarette

a Camel, "Put hairs on your chest son.
What was it like? I don't want to talk

about it except it was bloody hot
& despite the words we don't get the glory."

Harvey McQueen was born and grew up in Little River, Banks Peninsula. He has worked as a secondary school teacher and as a school inspector. He currently lives in Northland, Wellington, and works as an education consultant. With Ian Wedde, he co-edited the *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*. HeadworX published his new and selected poems *Pingandy* in 1998. A new collection, *Recessional*, was published by HeadworX in 2004.

Hayden Barr / **Last night**

Last night
in the bar
I ran into the stripper
who'd given me a lap dance

We pretended like we didn't know one another

It was easier that way.
Her mum's got a kid
Who's in primary school

I remember that

And so's mine.

On the Big Screen TV
played a documentary
about the state of poverty
in New Zealand

We laughed
as the pokies went off.

When I got home
I closed my eyes
and thought of the girl I betrayed

While thinking of my nana
and the time we
went to the Zoo
out at
Western Springs.

Hayden Barr lives in Auckland where he writes poetry, novels and short fiction. His work has previously appeared in the literary journals *JAAM* and *Takahe*.

Helen Rickerby / **Orpheus and Theodora descend**

We turned down the right road
off the highway to
Hamilton and found ourselves
approaching the Land
of the Dead

‘Shouldn’t we be going through it?’ I say
The corpses of trees pattern the
hillside beside my
window, but to the other side are
greener pastures

‘Nah’, he says, ‘it’s the new way, modern
life and all. They’ve built a
bypass around the Land of the Dead, we
can skirt the edges’

The Hidden Valley
contains many mysteries
but you have to cross the lake
to find them

Charon has traded up
his dinghy for a motor boat
He doesn’t make idle chit chat but
says he will return for us
if we call

We advance up the hillside
steaming water streams down
beside us blocking
all ways but one
boiling water bubbles
up from underground
molten earth stews in
muddy caldrons

‘That was the source’
he says ‘but this
is the heart’
and he leads me
down, down, down
into the silent belly
of the earth

Helen Rickerby’s poetry was included in the 1998 anthology of young writers, *New Zealand Writing: The NeXt Wave*. In her first collection of poetry, *Abstract Internal Furniture* (HeadworX 2001), she playfully combined the mythic with the everyday to examine themes of identity, self

discovery, the construction of femininity, and relationships between friends and lovers. She is a founding editor of JAAM magazine.

Iain Sharp / **Chet Baker's Teeth**

Six, seven, eight, nine – every time he told
his tale, he added another assailant.

They de-fanged him because he stole their drugs.
Or their women. Or territory. Or riffs.
Or just because they were big, hate-filled

hooligans who liked to uglify pin-
ups. Maybe it was all baloney. Maybe
Chet's choppers simply turned brown and tumbled
from his jaw like anyone else's – victims

of everyday sugar: Coca-Cola and cakes,
not cocaine. Christ, though, in his youth
he was handsome as a harrier hawk. Think

of him alone at night, growing old, his looks
gone, learning to sing with a foreign mouth.

Iain Sharp was born in Glasgow, but has lived close to the Harp of Erin in Auckland most of his life. Sharp was a regular at the Globe Hotel readings (where the legendary "harpo" photo of him was shot) in the 1980s and his performance pieces, many from that time, have been published by ESAW under the title *The Singing Harp*. Iain Sharp is among other things the books editor for the *Sunday Star-Times*.

Jack Perkins / **Motorway Day**

Each morning the motorway's
prostate enlarges
as Wellington's vehicular
bladder discharges
straining, slowly, painfully draining
onto Lambton Quay and the CBD.
Sumped in smelly septic tanks
of multi-storeyed concrete banks.

Late afternoon brings tired exodus
exhausting re-run in reverse
and the rain is getting worse.

Windscreen smeary
vision bleary
drivers fidget
tempers fugit.

For over thirty years **Jack Perkins** has been a producer for the weekly National Radio documentary 'Spectrum' and has co-authored two books based on the series. He is a classical pianist and also plays with the jazz-swing quartet 'Four To The Bar' and is banner-bearer and cymbal-clasher in a union solidarity brass band 'The Brass Razous'.

Jack Ross / A Question of Faith

(for Mary Paul)

Things don't always
stay with you
because they're *good*
that moment
for example
when the needle
slipped
car stalled
in heavy traffic
walking
with a phone
in one hand
talking to the air
boy wearing *BOOM*
girl scales
the concrete parapet
clap hands
push pram
the evening draws in
roiled clouds
under the Protection
let the children pass

Jack Ross lives in the East Coast Bays, where he teaches writing at Massey University's Albany campus. His latest poetry collection, *Chantal's Book*, was published by HeadworX in November 2002. His other books include the novel *Nights with Giordano Bruno* (Bumper Books, 2000), and the collections *A Town Like Parataxis* (Perdrix Press, 2000) and *City of Strange Brunettes* (Pohutukawa Press, 1998). He edits the Arts journal *brief*.

James Brown / **Loneliness**

I was just sitting there, wandering lonely as a cloud, when
– honest to heaven – looking out of the window
I saw Elvis. I know I know, but honest to heaven
it was him – or my name's not James Brown.
There he was, just walking across the quad in no particular hurry,

briefcase under one arm, an airy spring to his gait,
his five-inch DA glistening in the breeze.
But right off you could tell he was going places;
he didn't look left or right, just ahead where he was walking.
Mid-period Elvis. His leather jacket passed within five feet of me.

And I wasn't alone, plenty of students saw him too. An older one
– probably a third year – went up and shook him by the hand.
Young women clustered in groups, glancing and whispering.
A couple of likely lads snapped their fingers. There was a palpable
happiness, for once you've seen Elvis you are never alone.

He was whistling softly. Not a curl, more an expression
of frankness was pursed on his lips as he passed (I noticed
the first signs of comfort eating just starting to grace his jowls).
I couldn't quite make out the tune, but now I hear it as
the fadeout to '(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay' by Otis Redding.

It was autumn, the odd lost leaf left dallying in his wake
as he turned the corner by the silver birch trees.

James Brown lives in Wellington, New Zealand, with his partner and two children. His books of poetry are all published by Victoria University Press. They are *Go Round Power Please* (winner of the Best First Book of Poetry Award at the 1996 Montana New Zealand Book Awards), *Lemon* and *Favourite Monsters*, from which 'Loneliness' is taken. He is the 2004 Writer in Residence at Victoria University.

Janet Charman / **my favourite cocktail**

Easter on Curran Street

descend
the avenue
a martini
of sea
offered up to
me
by the branches of trees

bitters
and spirit
the concert of leaf
a *Mary Magdalene*

drink-
in
the garden

raise
the ocean

'not dead'
she invented-
'but risen'

brothers?
why
didn't we
see it

and
before
you can say
weaker
vessel

they had

Janet Charman's fifth collection of poetry *snowing down south* was published by Auckland University Press in 2002. The poem published here is from a collection in progress: *televisioner*. Charman is an Auckland teacher.

Jeanne Bernhardt / **East Caesar Chavez**

Poinsettia-red streets noche Buena's glitter electricity houses
tremble like lit candles, shacks and boxcars, graffiti scorched
amid drooping green branches, massive trunks and white dream
flowers melting in fire, pressing their fragrance into cream, oil,
jesus in his manger, la semena santa, holy week
heat settling like ash, the crimson spark of cardinals
are like blood in the smog, damp steaming clouds drip onto concrete
parking lots, the drugged ones facing front, margaritas and lime
in brown snaking coils the Colorado water oozing through
swamp pipes, Chicano fisherboys, gasoline & tortilla -
Your bald head, pink and naked, spluttering against my chest
arms outstretched as crumpled sheets, driving these roads
naming and burning, fixing your gaze in the direction most forgiving
your drunk and setting life.

Jeanne Bernhardt is the author of *vorare lacuna*, *baby is this wonderland?* and *the snow poems / your self of lost ground* and is currently working on another book of short fiction and living in Hawaii.

Jenny Powell-Chalmers / **Linda**

Ever since the windscreen letter
(shrewdly pretending
to be a parking ticket)
I've been thinking of changing
my name. Dear Linda it said,
Dear Linda.

Well that's probably me
but no one has let me know
it would've been one of those
family secrets whispered to aunts
and uncles but never
to the person themselves,
never to me.

'Dear Linda, saw your car
here and remembered lunch.
What about Thursday usual
place at 12. V.'

Well, how unfair is that. I've
no idea where the usual place
could be so how can I possibly
turn up on time and I'm known
for being on time, people tell
me that.

And V. Who is V? Vicki, Veronica,
well it wouldn't be Violet. Definitely
not Violet.

But at least I'm Linda.

Jenny Powell-Chalmers, an energetic performer of her poetry, lives in Dunedin. She has read at Subverse: Queensland Poetry Festival in 2001, and edited a special NZ issue of the Sydney Poets Union newsletter *Five Bells* in 2002. Her poetry books are *Sweet Banana Wax Peppers* and *Hats* (both published by HeadworX).

John O'Connor / **The Only Show in Town**

April 2002

in Ramallah
the tourist trade's
in the doldrums, scarcely
a breath of foreign
currency.

the concierges
wait behind their desks
hoping for the bright
clatter of WASPS,
the irrelevant mateship
of Ockers, the superior
vowels of the English.

in kitchens
chefs are frustrated
in stairwells
housemaids get frantic
in banks
tellers go mad for want of silver ...

& in the streets
people look around them in wonder

at the flowering turrets of tanks
at the way arteries spout —
even from a child

John O'Connor is a Christchurch poet, critic and editor for Sudden Valley Press. His books include *Working Voices* (with Eric Mould), *A Particular Context* and *Home River*.

L E Scott / **Raining In The House**

Family

we gather out of some sense of the womb
older now – some dead
dirt doesn't have the same smell
kin dissent has grown into a kinder drumbeat
the remembrance of when it was raining in the house
no longer feels so wet

Father's headstone

it seems so un-sunday
in a southern black baptist kind of way
coming to the graveyard on friday between other things
some would say dressed in glad rags
but that sounds too hard for what we are here for
a man has been dead 35 years without his name
his children lay a stone with simple words
some would say carved no deeper than the meaning
bones at rest?
a dead man's timepiece
raining in the house

Mother's womb

quilt maker
we loved you more than father's touch
laid your headstone at death
symbol of love in life
a late headstone for father
rain maker
even with sixth sense he seemed never to know the season
a scarecrow laughing at a full moon
kissing the seasons upside-down
sometimes human love
 human life
can be so full of dust
dancing on a dead man's bones
Lord, the sins of the father
raining in the house

After the broken waters

so many tracks
Robert Frost
even on a bad day there are more than two
Langston Hughes
there is a man festering in the sun
red eyes
blueblack skin
heart turned upside-down
like an afrikan turtle on dry land
what did you say about a dream deferred?

sometimes poor people put so many ugly pretty things
in their houses
sometimes life has a funeral smell
sometimes roads go no further than closed eyes
broken faces
 broken dreams
 stale remembrances
save me a good seat at church
coloured folks are so at home with jesus
and they know the devil is always available for dinner
some folks just don't know who they're breaking bread with
and others don't care
life and dirt
we shall be known by our fruits
and maggots will digest the rest
raining in the house

As a jazz poet **L.E. Scott** has worked with people such as Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka, Haki Madhubuti, Steve McCall, Val Murphy and Beaver. His work has been published in magazines such as *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Obsidian II*, *Black World*, *The Black Scholar*, *Catalyst*, *The N.Y. Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *JAAM*, *Poetry NZ*, *The Age* . . . and so on. Scott defines his work as Jazz Blues ... a repetition of sound that he trusts much more than the creation of defined words. The sound is a human tongue drum licking the flesh, sticking deeply in your ears to suck the taste of your mind and leaving in your consciousness the agony of a stolen race from Africa. HeadworX published his selected poems, *Earth Colours*, in 2000.

Leonard Lambert / **Toyota Corolla**

For Wendy & Anthony

He went away with summer and the sun,
my warrior, my chevalier.
We drove west, you and I, west as far as you can,
and found him there, your man, your first,
winter-lost in his surfer's pad.
He shyly smiled, you cuddled, kissed,
and all was well.
I gotta getta life, he said,
and a car, Leonard, like yours. A Toyota Corolla.
Well he did, he did it all,
but the tides of my daughter's heart
he could not read.
He came round home one day in tears.
There was nothing I could say.
But I cried inside for my warrior, my chevalier,
the day he drove away.

Leonard Lambert lives in Tauranga. He is the author of two collections of poetry and has been widely anthologised in New Zealand. HeadworX published a third collection, *Natural Anthem*, in 2004.

Michael O'Leary / **Saturday Night**
(for Patrick)

I have been drunk! On each of Baudelaire's
Fancy wings have I flown.
On wine, poetry, and the tail-wing of virtue
Have I in drunken chariots gone.

Drink! Drink! Drink! With the nebulous goal,
To find the limitless mind and soul.
On! On! On! Through light, time, and sound –
Too late! I fall to the ground.

Which I hit with a terrible smash
And as a Phoenix, turn to ash.
You ask, "Like the bird
Will you rise again soon?"
I answer, "Yes – Sunday, Monday,
Or maybe Tuesday afternoon!"

Michael O'Leary's work includes numerous volumes of poems, several novels and a published thesis on small press publishing in New Zealand. His most recent novel is *Unlevel Crossings* (Huia Publishers, 2002), a highly original work in the Irish-Maori tradition. HeadworX published his selected poems, *Toku Tinihanga (Self Deception)*, in 2003. He is also the publisher for Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop (E.S.A.W.).

Michele Leggott / **poetics of exile**

for Chris Abani and Yang Lian

sweet as

chai latte in a bucket
going down your throat
which opens the performance
of dreams songs a heart too big
to break a love supreme
these hands this water that beach
and now you're bound
to another coast and a translation
that says don't step off the bridge
the child's face is here too
stone moon water earth
the words you can touch
the sea inside you
blue is always higher still
we start from the ruin
swing up so high
the person being translated
stands here laughing
stands here crying
teach me the stars in your sky
and the spaces that matter
between

did you

fly around the world in a silver plane
to hold those two levels
light as reflections in a Highgate street
leaves sunlight ghost in a window
who takes my hand fa-la fa-la fa-la
puts eyes on that horizon
and won't let me die in the moving body
that is a dialogue with the world
my tongue will shut up
he says when I touch the edge of my time
my apartment is under the water
where the evil emperors can't go
I am walker talker book-long poem
questioner in the two-floor house where a pin drops
into place and the sun goes down
on another day in paradise
no foam holds you surer than this
nobody is more human

so that we

paddle in the two rivers
and may come in time to a place
without time and beyond limit
finding there the figures
of our outward selves and the song
in the air between us

this one

is a ghost
every time he tries to speak
the camera turns away
or the tape runs out
he wears a paper mask
for those who can no longer speak
he is a mime and his hands
curl one inside the other
a hand holding a hand
in a world of bloodshed
his dark eyes giving up
on light

and this one

on whose arm I stroll
along the boulevard of the sun
into the theatre of endless night

Michele Leggott (b. 1956) coordinates the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (**nzepc**) at the University of Auckland, where she teaches in the English Department. Her most recent publication is *Young Knowledge: The Poems of Robin Hyde* (Auckland UP, 2003).

Mike Eager / **Arum Lilies**

There is a golden phallus
pushing up through the rose petals
that have fallen into the bowl
of the bloom of the death-lily as it opens
and its tail of a tongue curls under
tasting the days.

Of his battalion he was the last
yet there were so many poppies
and carnations around his casket
he could have been in the garden
as he sometimes would be on summer afternoons
lying right down in the dirt.
She'd brush it off his back afterwards.

Slaters uncurl their armour as the fork moves on
and worms glide in their tubes of skin
through the few inches of loosened earth.
She takes care of every flower in the garden
except the arum.

These have come uninvited
and each season creep a little closer
down the slope of the back section
toward the window where she sits in the evening
till the clouds pinken
and only shapes
give away the battalion
standing massed
for the soft
assault.

Mike Eager is an accomplished performer of his work valuing that aspect of poetry as highly as publishing. He toured schools and universities as part of Poetrycorp in the late '80s. In 1991 he toured Britain and Ireland with his first book, *Warning*. On his return he did a solo Arts Council sponsored tour of Northland and published his second book of poems, *Living First Class in a Third World Country*. He often links poems as narrative sequences, including chant and song for variation of rhythm and emotion.

Moshé Liba / **Living Stones**

At Angkor
Powerful Emperors
Built temples to their divinities
Famous Kings
Built palaces for themselves
And then abandoned them
To the jungle

The bush grew up
Invaded the temples
Enveloped the walls
The roots, penetrated through cavities
Grabbed the stones,
Crushed in their embrace
The columns, the stairs
Took possession of the ruins
While the trees grew up
Straight, on the rooftops

Centuries later
Powerful conquerors
Discovered the site, started
Restoring palaces, rebuilding temples
Using the stones, taken
From other ruins

When the new builders tried
To remove the stones
From the blocks formed with the roots
The trees held tight, like claiming:
This is mine!
Impossible to take away
The stones, entangled with the roots
Of the giant trees -
So they were left alone

At Angkor
On the grounds
Where temples and palaces
To the glory of deities
To the fame of Kings
Once stood,
High trees and embraced stones
Bound in one body
Stand, entangled
As tall monuments
To a fabulous past:
Solitary islands
Of living stones

Angkor
8.11.2002

Moshé Liba, Israeli, now living in Wellington, is a lecturer, writer, poet and painter. Has published 49 books, textbooks, children's books, brochures, and albums, including 24 books of poetry. In January this year he won First Prize in a poetry contest in the Hague, Netherlands, for 'Over the Waters' published in *JAAM* 16. His book of poems, *Over the Waters* (a collection his writings in the South Pacific, Asia and Australasia) was published by HeadworX in 2004.

Murray Edmond / **catch**

Two sitting at a table
Two at a table sitting
Two and two
A table in the grass
In the grass a table
And two two at table
And on the table
Empty almost with a little
A little empty almost but
With a little water
There sits a jar for love
On the table a jar for love
Not a fresh jar every day
Fresh every day
Nothing in the jar that lasts
Always fresh they are sitting
Sitting at the table
Looking they are looking
At the jar at the table
At each other they are
Sitting looking sitting
At the table at the jar
Looking looking sitting
Now is nearly the day
The day is nearly now now
Go to sleep go to love
Go to jar go to look
Look looking look
Sit sitting catch that catch
Two sitting at a table
Two at table sitting
Two and two and two
A table in the grass

Murray Edmond. B. 1949. Editor of 3 anthologies and author of 9 books of poetry. New book, *Fool Moon*, from Auckland University Press in 2004. Teaches theatre, drama and poetry at the University of Auckland. The audio version of this poem was recorded for and is used with the permission of the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (nzepec).

Nick Ascroft / **Old Wives' Lives**

i. False Teeth

It was common practise in the early part of the last century to have your daughter's teeth knocked out prior to marriage, thus lessening the financial burden on a prospective husband. At least, particularly among rural families. The logic being that they'd all rot out soon enough, & filling work was a fortune in gold—now less necessary, as daughter A had netted herself a husband & the work of her pearly teeth was done. The denture manufacturers encouraged it of course; World War Two had seen them waltzing to the bank, the Armed Forces having a similar rationale, & most soldiers forcedly going to war in their gums. Now they needed to keep their profit-wheels a-rotoring. Brochures were sent around the farming communities of the fifties. It became an easy sign, cheaper than the flash of an engagement ring: a mouthful of nothing. Others, forced into the series of extractions, let alone into the wedding itself, would remember weeping themselves to sleep, pausing only to exchange a piece of bloodied gauze in a mouth of scabs.

She holds her breath to
Kiss. The veil smells. Consumed,
The wedding sours.

ii. Vicarring

Homosexuality among the clergy was generally more excepted in fifties New Zealand than we would perhaps think. Covertly, to a degree, of course. But then as now, many of those who felt the call to ministry felt a calling to quite the other brotherhood. A number of parishes delighted in the camp jokes & double entendres that laced their sermons, the older members of the women's choirs tittering into their handkerchiefs. The prevalence of openly gay Anglican priests especially led to the slang term for queer of the period—"vicar". It was also the term for married husbands who strayed for nights of drunken homosexual adultery—"vicarring". She caught him red-handed vicarring Thursday last. The gay vicar was often the centre of parish gossip & intrigue. Not only did it enhance one's reputation inordinately to be a favourite wife on his visiting list, one was feared for the knowledge inherent in the arrangement. Seeing a young curate sauntering in a leather-jacket & dog-collar at the dockside, cigarette between thumb & index like a Frenchman, one would throw him a knowing smile, feeling devilish & modern.

The minister twists
Out of his alb, sugary
Skin, like shrove Tuesday.

iii. Experimental Agricultural

Genetic Engineering is, as we know, nothing new. Every domesticated plant & animal has been carefully bred, its genes skilfully interwoven over many generations, to make such atrocities as the brussels sprout & the chihuahua. Dogs in their multitude of generally distasteful forms are the best example of the wide-ranging palette available to human gene-engineers. In the 1950s there was another article of gene-manufacturing New Zealand farmers could not get enough of: the breed of sheep

known as Romney. From the plumpness of its hind quarters over its particularly curly back to that fat-headed expression of permanent surprise, it was beloved, a burgeoning cash-cow the cow wasn't. One wily agriculturist of the MacKenzie country, a Mr James Godby, noted that a ewe was twice as profitable if she lambed twins. He put himself to work trying to breed a Romney that could be relied upon to always do so. At first he had limited success, twins bred with twins seemed just as likely to produce a single offspring as any other coupling. One mutated form, however, produced a reliable twin-machine. Godby made easy money selling the extra lambs, but, in interbreeding the mutant with own its lineage, managed to produce many more twin-makers which he hawked off at stock auctions for very tidy sums. The new sub-breed became known in the unpolished back-sheds of the trade as a two-twt-Romney. At the end of the boom, the breed drifted out of circulation.

A field of her
Own, subjects crowd her fence, queen
Of uteruses.

iv. Schism

The Protestant girl peered around the corner into the vestibule of St Patrick's Greymouth. Seeing no one, she steadied herself on her crutches, & swung inside. The sensation was one of bravery—symptomatically identical, as that is, to fear: knee-sweat, quasi-palpitative heart, asthma—& also the elation of revenge. Perhaps there was a lesser, less conscious thrill, simply in the awfulness, the illicit mischief of it, but revenge was what they called it, her & her friends waiting around the corner in the bushes; this was the late fifties, & Catholic-Protestant relations seethed in the small-towns & neighbourhoods of the country, an underbelly of civil war. In the Yugoslavia of Greymouth the week preceding, some kids from St Patrick's school had ambushed them with stones. The Protestant girl still had an azalea of a bruise on the left of her semifunctional legs. She had managed to clip one of the dools around the back of the head with a crutch, before they'd scuttled off cackling, but it was clearly a Catholic victory. The sound of hymnsingers dirged from within the double doors leading to the nave of the church: it was still safe—tone-deaf basses & screechy sopranos lisped their heresies into the empty air of the basilica. The jar she clutched awkwardly under one wing had made the crutch-work up the steps difficult. One of her friends should have made the trip, but something in her condition outranked them in terms of bravery, audacity, commitment. She plucked it from under her arm & unscrewed the lid. On the previous night, from her lavatory, the Protestant girl had fished out part of a turd, & they had mixed it with warm-water in a jar. The contents trickled into the bird-bath, as her father called it, that held the holy water by the exit.

The Catholics file
Out, crosses of shit, twinkle-
Stink on their foreheads.
No Tooth

Nick Ascroft is a Dunedin poet and co-editor, with Richard Reeve, of the literary magazine *Glottis*. His latest collection of poems, *Nonsense*, was published by Victoria University Press in 2003. He co-shared the Robert Burns Fellowship at the University of Otago in 2003.

Peter Bland / **Shopping With Brigitte Bardot**

Naturally one remembers you as you were. At
your best, I'd guess, in *Viva Maria*,
singing rebel songs and letting off bombs
in a Mexican bar with some footlights on
and lots of revolutionaries cheering. Footlights
suited you - Louis Malle knew that -
and frills and corsets and torn Edwardian knickers.
What we wouldn't have given, back in the '60s,
to share your bed if only for a minute!
Now you're into dogs and stray goats
because 'they're always there' and 'they never cheat me,'
not like those playboys in the bad old days
who whisked you away, knowing time was short
and that what they craved
could always be borrowed. Today
you've put on weight, got some wrinkles
round the eyes and throat, but it's still a pleasure
to carry your dog food back to the car,
admiring your stride, feeling
nostalgically voyeuristic. There's
the scent of Chanel and warm milk on your skin
and when you get home the dogs start barking,
eager - like the playboys - to get you to themselves,
to lick you to death and cover you in kisses.

Peter Bland's latest collections, *Let's Meet* and *Ports of Call*, were published by Steele Roberts, Wellington, in 2003.

Peter Olds / **Waking up in Phillip Street**

This two-layered cake full of puking TV sets
knife-cuts & blood on furniture & desk I've
inherited from former tenants, the door
(with my private number on) burgled, raped:
evidence of past busts, horrible deeds, murder
& wax on the carpet from candles of other solitary
confinements.

I wish the kid bashing the shit out of
a drum-kit in the house over the back fence
would give it away & take up surfing or girls –
or Buddhism! (What's wrong with getting off
your face occasionally, anyway?)

The drug-bag arsehole in the room below next to the
toilet smells out the house with a foul concoction
of plants from the southern cemetery boiling on
the stove -- up all night jerking with some rented
holocaust abortion.

Anorectic ghosts at night on the stairs (lit by street lamps)
plead for the noise to stop, stand in fading lace
staring at the Edwardian Grecian wallpaper & little
snow-flake boats sailing in formation on a bright
Mediterranean ocean -- when confronted claim they
are looking for Sandy, Jack, the kitten -- a cigarette.

The thick glass doors cannot separate the nerves
of the house from the spluttering oversized joint
in the communal kitchen, or the cat-strangling lies
of fantastic binges in past glory boarding houses:
a network of cooks, dental experts, psychiatrists,
loan sharks, sexologists, chemists, bludgers, sneaks
competing for bench space --

'You *cunt!*' yells a fellow tenant handing out mail
at the top of the stairs to any person who cares
to risk coming out of their room -- 'where did *that*
card come from!' -- like the house's some sort of
country you can keep track of, & nobody in it has
any right to intimacy -- either side of sleeping hours.

Peter Olds lives in Dunedin. Since the 1970s he has been a prolific and important poet on the local literary scene. His most recent publication is *'Oh Baxter is Everywhere!': some Dunedin poems* (Square One Press, 2003).

Riemke Ensing / **George's Bush**

(title acknowledgement to Mark Pirie)

In protest

The American President appears
on the cover of *TIME*.
First thing you notice
is his crotch. Battle straps
pulled tight round his balls
hoisting everything up
like a hard-on.

Next you see his smirk.
His tongue sucks his lip
in pleasure and satisfaction.
He's screwing the world
and he likes it.

You imagine - off frame -
his hand fondling
a Heckler and Koch.
Sex and violence.
Old, old stories.

All he needs now
is to open his fly
and expose his weapon
of mass destruction.

Riemke Ensing was born in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1939 and arrived in New Zealand with her family in 1951. Educated initially in Dargaville, where she learned English, Ensing trained as a teacher at Ardmore College, returning to join the staff for a year in 1960. Further study at Auckland University gained her a position there with the English Department and led to her long career as Senior Tutor, specializing in New Zealand literature. In 1977 she edited the pioneering anthology of New Zealand women's poetry, *Private Gardens*. Her poetry, art writings, and essays have been widely published in New Zealand and overseas. She is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at Auckland University. HeadworX published her selected poems, *Talking Pictures*, in 2000.

Ron Riddell / **At San Vicente**

For Saray

In the bottom of the empty coffee cup
She looks for signs and sees her face

Framed by a silver sky
And emerald droplets dancing by;

Also tall ferns and palm trees;
Robins, swallows, parakeets.

In the gushing of the waters,
In the fireflies' impish tricks,

She hears, she sees, something else
Which lives in her and yet beyond,

Something which shows her
The way to let go, the way to move on.

In the bottom of the empty cup
She asks for signs and sees herself.

Ron Riddell is a poet, musician and painter. Of late, he has been travelling and living in Latin America. Riddell has performed in Chile and Colombia, where his latest book, *El Milagro de Medellin y otros poemas* was published in a bi-lingual edition (English and Spanish). He has also been involved in a number of peace and cultural initiatives in Colombia, Chile and New Zealand. In Auckland Riddell established a haven for poets with the Live Poets' Café which adjoined the Dead Poets Bookshop in Karangahape Road. He has published 13 books of verse. At present, he lives in Wellington, where he is a member of N.Z.S.A.(PEN, NZ), Writers International, Director of The Wellington International Poetry Festival and Vice-President of The N.Z. Poetry Society.

Scott Kendrick / **Crazy Eyes**

He's got wild eyes and it's freaking me out.
There, up ahead in the crowd, see
Them all pushed in, wary as fuck.
I've seen those eyes. Crazy eyes.
I will do you in a fucking second eyes.
I can see you, the way you're wanting
Someone to cross you,
To dare to respond to you.
Glad I'm not the poor bastard stuck beside you
Caught between the fear of sudden violence
And sticking up for his girlfriend.
Even your mates are trying to get you to chill.
You're worrying them, and fair enough -
You're absolutely terrifying me
At 6am in the train station,
Crushed in with my fellow munters,
All of us getting a bit more than we paid for.
The barrier bottleneck.
So close I could touch him,
Clip him round the ear, say
"Hey you fucking dick, why don't -"
An utterance which might be my last;
Ambulance ride at least, conscious at best -
Or maybe not.
Thank Christ I'm behind him.
I'd rather have to see him than him seen to have me.
So you just go on there, Crazy Eyes.
Be cool.
Do what you gotta do -
Just don't do it to me.

Scott Kendrick, born in 1969, is a Wellington performance poet. His first book, *Rhyme before Reason*, was published by HeadworX in 2001, and he is also the editor of *The Babylon Express*, a new satirical and political newspaper based in Wellington. He is currently studying Political Science at Victoria University of Wellington.

Simon Williamson / **the H**

oligarchal crucifix
one at each end
head buried deep and push
rip maul for all you are worth
to get the ball the ball
and lie battled sacrificed beneath the giant H

the H understands life is struggle
knows to get from end to end you must have mates
who do not hesitate in support

once you have dotted down
arise to the crowd sound do not smile
look as if it was something you were born to do

and the H will know
you have served glory unto H
as the ball that sails clean and smooth transforms
5 to 7

and the H will smile
upon you all your days
for the winters you have paid
and played for Him

Simon Williamson (1968-1999) was born in Ngaruawahia, New Zealand. Frequently published in literary magazines like *JAAM* and *Takahe*, he sang in the folk bands, The Flat Earthers and Between Earth and Sky. His posthumous book, *Storyteller*, (HeadworX, 2002), was widely acclaimed.

Terry Locke / **The achievement of a hand ax**

Picture this man:
his uncalloused hand hefting
lovingly the yellow worked flint
of a remote age
pausing in the clasp &
unclasping of the stone
the tendering of fingers on edges
pausing in the apperception of
ghostly emanations from
a long-vanished mind
that left an eloquent legacy
defying barriers of time and tongue –
a stunningly impracticable relic
from an incalculably brutish and dangerous world
beyond utilitarianism
embellished with a virtuoso's elegance:
What is transmitted
is the model of a mind
wistful, inarticulate yet gripped
by a shadowy aesthetic
lingering
like the man who pauses
over his adept handiwork.

Terry Locke is a Waikato poet, critic and editor. Has published three collections of poetry, most recently the sequence *Maketu* through HeadworX. He edited the recent secondary school anthologies *Doors* and *Jewels in the Water* for Leaders Press, University of Waikato.

Tim Jones / **Norah Jones or System of a Down**

I'm visiting Lemmy from Motorhead
"Lemmy," I say, "how did you get that
bass sound in 'The Watcher'?"
He shows me the fingering on his Zimmer frame
He's forgotten most of Motorhead
but he's frighteningly lucid on Hawkwind.

Unasked questions throng my head
Lemmy, who was your favourite band?
Lemmy, what drugs do they still let you take?
Lemmy, when did you start growing old?
"Lemmy," I say, "are you cold?"
He is. I wrap him in my coat.

Visiting hours are over
I shake the maestro's hand
The warts on Lemmy's ravaged face
stand out like sentinels
defeated by the beat of time.

There's music piped into the rooms
It's Norah Jones or System of a Down
I take my leave
I brace myself against the cold
I embody the presence of silence.

Tim Jones lives in Wellington where he divides his time between writing poetry and fiction, updating web sites, and being a husband and father. His poetry is collected in *Boat People* (HeadworX, 2002). His first collection of fiction, *Extreme Weather Events*, is also available from HeadworX and was described by Tim Wilson in *Metro* as 'the best New Zealand short fiction debut in years'.

Tony Beyer / A Child's Poem

the black lake is glass
painted on its underside
and shines like a pool of poison

creatures that drink there
do not die but absorb
strange fire into their blood

their breath shines
even in daylight and the moon
is never reflected in their eyes

bringing sprigs or dust
the wind at full blast
can never make them weep

Tony Beyer was born in Auckland in 1948. In 2003, he began editing the Australian based biannual, *Poetry Aotearoa: new poetry from New Zealand*, an opportunity to expose good examples of our national writing to Australian readers. He is widely anthologized in New Zealand anthologies and the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently *Electric Yachts* (Puriri Press, 2003).

Trevor Reeves / **Bedrocks (3)**

1

All war is immoral if
you let that bother you, you
are not a good soldier. Better real
fleshy enemies than dead
targets. All rides
on the proportionality
of win or loss. The need to incinerate
is co-jaxual to our
requirement for equipment
efficiency. And being mindful
of the difference between the
despatched and the
departed.

2

Droplets of rain, coming down to
their allocation of lawn, deliberately
divided
like a racial war. The wettening doubt.
On which side of
the fence will the
moisture glisten, feeding the grey
overcast harvest, approaching the
greening dawn, a blessing to the living.

3

Oh to be so dead yet feel so alive. The
deadened limbo. It is all over again. The
high voices of the
vanquished dreams. The new
colour for your
hair comes
from your soul. That's
where the special essence
lies.

4

That's right, lick your foot. A cat is an indication
of frumuory. How would you like
to be shot in the back
while hanging out the
washing? Life is a professional beast. You have
dismay for the movement
that represents your
irk. The balding heads, the
flinched morning red
horizon. The judge comes

into the room
swinging his
gown. The experts have
been boiled down
for weapons.

5
I saw the head come up, then the
neck, then the
back. The multiple sighting through
the fly's eye. The inkblots from
the psychic's pen give
you quite
a buzz. We are sick until we take the
test. Reside in the image. The
odds for a blotout
are long.

6
The media, two measures of
truth for one of
trivia. Beautifully brainless, then the
lights go out. How sweetly she bears her
nice clean legs. Blow time
for the second half. All our art
is on the cusp. A shot in the mouth,
coming heavily from the
drooping
finger. The truth of impulse. The final
record, almost
cinematic.

7
Memories float away on
your eyelids. The flick of sun
on a morbid day. Snake of the
writhing
family. Dirge of
belonging. Holding on and holding
off. When we need a serenade we'll
ask for one. When one wants
to do the deal, sneak in the
death card.

8
Good old Pat and her
overcoats. Dropped in to brace
with the
weather. Now Mars is next to the
moon we are
confident of no

collision. The blame game involves rain. The
weather is always
free. Always mix play
with structured
activity.

Trevor Reeves was born in Dunedin in 1940. He has had four books of poems published including the latest, *A Poetry Book to Cuddle up in Bed With* after a gap of 28 years. His book of short stories (2001) is called *Breaker Breaker*. His work has been published in magazines and anthologies around the world since 1968. He is publisher at Square One Press and co-editor of the on-line magazine, *Southern Ocean Review*. He has also written three books of non-fiction.

Tui Gordon / **is all writing political?**

why, yes it is.

tin snips cutting pips thin lips dripping custom slipping ginger drenching silver
peaching beaching featuring me on the bass guitar you on the life beat baby cakes
snakes make pudding pie dripping dry deep fry eyeballs bawling lie stalling falling
calling bovine mauling cradling jamie punching amy kissing the dog goodbye.

crunching lunch eating bob doing rocks in his smock pleated frock shock blue poo
green goo doing time eating slime bleating frogs walking sneaking feeting jobs
kindled rods burning spurning colonised learning darning farming sheep diddle lee
oat sweep meat fiddle lee boat in your throat up your bum green gods moo.

fuck you in the stew eating spew dancing prancing life enhancing shudder me
timbers pirate limbers jimbo's bimbos cull the babies kiss the rabies gradient
leeching reaching forward jumping thumping laser lumping humping trees birds and
bees sweeping them under the mat splat cadillac jesus shoves you satan loves you
dead hair ribs spare boning only loneliness.

Tui Gordon spent most of 2002 squatting in London but has now returned to Auckland where she works as a postie following the great literary tradition of James K. Baxter. A graduate of Albert Wendt's creative writing course, she has previously been published in *JAAM*.

Vivienne Plumb / **The Cinematic Experience**

In the movies men and women on bicycles in the spring always mean sex. If he takes his hat off, he is either being polite, or he means to stay. If she takes her shoes off, it's either sex or a comedy. A cat will indicate a tedious story-line. Something is about to happen. Like a fish-bone caught in its throat. The appearance of a kitten is the same. But worse. The removal of clothes will indicate either sex or a hospital scene. Or possibly sex in a hospital. Hospitals are a big clue that someone will die, unless it is a comedy. A walk in the park is never that straightforward. Children are used in the script to hear voices, see ghosts, become lost, scream, or to tapdance. Babies ditto, but double all of the above.

Australian-born **Vivienne Plumb** is a Wellington-based poet, fiction writer and playwright. Her work is widely anthologised in New Zealand and she has won several awards and held several writing fellowships. Her most recent publication is the novel, *Secret City* (Cole Catley, 2003). She is currently completing a collection of prose poems.