



prudently deciding to return to New Zealand.

He had taken to Sydney an introduction from Frank Morton to A. G. Stephens, who published several of Harris's poems in his *Bookfellow*. Back in New Zealand in 1910 his verse collection *Monodies* was published, subsidised by his friend, lawyer Richard Singer. Singer also found him a position writing humorous paragraphs for the *New Zealand Herald*, which earned him £3 a week for two days' work. But, Singer says, he had too great a fondness for Speight's ale... He had another stint in Sydney in architectural work and journalism, then spent several months as a fencer in the backblocks of Hawke's Bay, "a most pleasant and beneficial experience," he said, "which I would be glad to repeat". He also worked on the *Hawke's Bay Herald* in Napier, then moved to Australia to join the *Sydney Mail*, and later returned to New Zealand as a sub-editor on the *Auckland Observer*.

In Wellington in 1914 he married Olive Avice Fifield Reeve, and they settled in Christchurch when he was made assistant editor of the Christchurch *Sun*. They had no children and Olive died of tuberculosis in June 1916, aged 27. He served in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade from September 1916, and was wounded in France in December 1917. On the voyage out in mid-1917 he contributed to the troopship magazine *Waitemata Wobbler*, and on the 'Rimutaka' on the way home in 1919 he edited the ship's magazine *Napoo*. His military file tells us he was 5 ft 6 1/2 in., 161 lb., hair black, eyes blue, complexion sallow, C of E, scar below left knee, and healthy apart from mild tachycardia, "probably due to tea and tobacco". Richard Singer in his article describes him as "tall and gangly; his head of hair was thick and heavy, his forehead high and wide; his eyelids were large and often closed, and his eyes when open seemed almost too big for the lids. His nose was massive and curved; the ever-present absence of one large upper tooth seemed to add gusto to his magnificent laugh".

On his return to New Zealand he was appointed associate editor of *Quick March*; the magazine of the Returned

Services Association; the nominal editor was the general secretary Douglas Seymour but Harris did the work. He later worked as a copywriter for Gordon & Gotch, and early in 1926 was reported to be working on a new collection of poems. His last job was in Palmerston North on the *Manawatu Standard*: a colleague, Geoffrey Webster, writing to Pat Lawlor in 1943, when Lawlor was planning a book on Harris, offered to contribute "a discreditable chapter on Dick's almost last days in Palmerston North... intimate and boozy... I can see his large dark eyes now. He was near his end in those days... but still a lovable fellow".

He died suddenly in Wellington Hospital on December 14th 1926 following an appendicitis operation. His death certificate gives the cause of death as "appendix abscess / intestinal obstruction"; he is buried in the Soldiers section of Karori Cemetery. We hear little over the years of Harris's character or personality, though Pat Lawlor called him "a strange man, loved by his friends, although he did not readily make friends – personal friends". Some reviewers of his first book of poems found him lugubrious and morbid, but most discounted this as a young man's posing, and there is no evidence to confirm the remark of a modern critic that his death was suicide.

**Tentative (and far from complete) Bibliography (in date order)**

'Chant-Royal of the Quaint Regulation'; poem in *The Bulletin*, 14 January 1909, p.39. Opens: "A grinding infamy the life we lead;"

'At Dusk'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 21 January 1909, p.27.

'In Exile'; poem in *The Bulletin*, 18 March 1909, p.3. Opens: "A ship went out of port last night,"

'The Crazy Pilgrim'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 25 March 1909, p.27.

'Twilit Days'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 6 May 1909 p.27.

'Chanson Triste de Pierrot'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 20 May 1909, p.27.

'Song'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 29 July 1909, p.21.

'Lavender'; poem in *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 16 December 1909, p.21. Included in an article 'Australian Poems Selected by their Authors', which includes interesting autobiographical details by Harris, which are drawn on above.

'Singing Youth'; poem in *The Bulletin*, 7 April 1910, p.3. Opens: "When eighteen years had found me".

*Monodies: A Book of Verse*. Printed by Whitcombe and Tombs; privately published by the author in Napier, 1910. (This was subsidised by Wellington lawyer and poet Richard Singer.) 70 copies in brown paper, priced at 5s.; 125 copies bound in imitation vellum priced as 7s 6d. The book is online at <http://bit.ly/1BMmgTx>

Contents (asterisk indicates also in *Poems*, 1927): 'Retrospect'; 'Crepuscule'\*; 'Lavender'\*; 'Late Afternoon'\*; 'At Dusk'\*; 'Ships at Sea'\*; 'Song' ("Lady for you I promise"); 'After Grief'; 'Ships that Pass'; 'The Crazy Pilgrim'; 'Rondel' ('El Dorado')\*; 'At Night' ("Was it the whisper of the rain...")\*; 'On All Souls Eve'\*; 'Exile'; 'Dawn'\*; 'The Cry of Pan'\*; 'Singing Youth'\*; 'Evening'; 'Lament'\*; 'Cradle Song'\*.

Reviews:  
*Dominion*, 3 December 1910, p.9 ("The author of this little book is new to us... evidence of enough originality and sincerity...").

*The Evening Post*, 17 December 1910, p.17 ("a volume worth while... if only for the author's promise of future fulfillment")

*New Zealand Herald*, 24 December 1910, p.4 ("...vivid suggestion of still latent power").

*The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 29 December 1910, p.21 ("In his best poems Dick Harris feels the emotions he expresses and makes the reader feel

them. He will do better work than in this book if journalism leaves him time..." *The Bookfellow* – unseen: reprinted *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 17 December 1910, p.13 and elsewhere ("...the eternal sorrows of brooding youth that has not yet found its place in the cosmos. Mr Harris has a voice small and weak, yet his plaintive piping is not without charm...": A. G. Stephens). *Manawatu Standard*, 14 January 1911, p.3 ("the pleasantest and most original verse of its kind that has appeared in New Zealand for a long time past...": Frank Morton). *Otago Daily Times*, 1 March 1911, p.2 ("world-weary pessimism, yet...surely... a pose... Mr Harris sings very sweetly with true poetic rhythm").

Poem (title unknown) in *The Forerunner*, No.18 (1913?). Pat Lawlor mentions he has seen a poem by Harris in this issue of the periodical, published in Havelock North by 'The Havelock Work' crafts and cultural group.

*Waitemata Wobbler*. Troopship magazine of the 21st Reinforcements, N.Z.E.F., on board the *Waitemata*. Printed in Capetown, 1917. Edited by Lieut. F. A. De La Mare, assisted by Sgt Albert Rowland and Lance Cpl E. W. Harris. The magazine is online at: <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/waitemata-wobbler#>

According to a note in the *Observer*, 9 June 1917, p.4, Harris wrote the poem 'Chanson Triste de la Mer', which is signed "L.P.H. [and] E.W.H."

*Napoo*, Published as a record of the homecoming of 700 demobilised diggers by the S.S. Rimutaka, which left Plymouth, April 5th, 1919, and arrived at Wellington, May 27th, 1919. Printed in Wellington by Lankshears Limited, printers, 1919. This is online at Auckland Museum: <http://bit.ly/1i3VNj> Edited by Harris, who, according to a note in the *Observer*, 9 August 1919, p.4, wrote the poem 'Ballade of Times Past' under the name "Corporal Dinkum".

*Quick March*. Journal of the New Zealand Returned Servicemen's

Association. Harris was appointed associate editor in 1919. This is online in part at Auckland City Library: <http://ourboys.recollect.co.nz>

'Rondeau (To a lady on meeting after many years)'; poem in *Aussie*, 14 July 1923, NZ Section p.vii.

'Art v. Nationalism', by Dircke Jansen, article in *Aussie*, 15 March 1924, NZ Section p.ix. Does New Zealand have a "national consciousness... this is still a land of butter fat and Rugby football...".

'Euphemistic Journalism', by Dircke Jansen, article in *Aussie*, 15 March 1924, NZ Section p.ix. Discusses some words misused by journalists.

'The Uncritical Attitude', by Dircke Jansen, article in *Aussie*, 15 July 1924, NZ Section p.ix. Discusses the criticism of poetry, largely re Henry Lawson and Hugh McCrae.

'Jazzled', by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie*, 15 August 1924, NZ Section p.iv. Opens: "A most inoffensive and ordinary dub".

'The Wharves'; poem in *The Bookfellow* (Sydney), 29 November 1924, p.36. Opens: "I grope, confounded by the Blare".

'Up and Down George Street!'; poem in *The Bookfellow* (Sydney), 31 December 1924, p.65. Opens: "O, City of the myriad Eyes!".

'Introduction', pp.[5]-9, to *Maori Tales, A Collection of Over One Hundred Stories, written and collected by Pat Lawlor*. Sydney: New Century Press, 1926.

'Chant Royal of the Men Who Dreamed'; poem in *The Bulletin*, 14 January 1926, p.47. Opens: "Brothers, to no high note our chant is keyed,".

'Since Youth Must Know'; poem in *The Bulletin*, 28 January 1926, p.17. Opens: "Long since, dear lass, I've had my fling".

'A Cruel Distinction'; humorous anecdote by Pat Lawlor in *Aussie*, 12 February 1926, NZ Section p.ix: "To my friend Dircke Jansen I confided I contemplated bringing out, in book form, some of the best of my humorous stories. Dircke didn't look a bit impressed. 'Why man,' I cried indignantly, 'a book of my funny stories would sell like fish and chips.' 'With fish and chips, you mean, old man,' replied Dircke sadly".

'Attitudes'; poem in *The Triad*, 1 March 1926, p.42. Opens: "'Man is,' I said, 'a sport of freakish chance,'".

'Triolet'; poem in *The Triad*, 1 May 1926, p.10. Opens: "Save goblin-gold we grasp in vain,".

'Crack O' Doom'; poem in *The Triad*, 1 May 1926, p.16. Opens: "Curt, and as sudden as a trumpet blast,".

'Proverbial Dubieties', by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie*, 15 May 1926, NZ Section p.ii. Opens: "On a stone that has gathered its moss where it stayed,".

'Captain Cook's Beer', by Dircke Jansen; article in *Aussie*, 15 May 1926, NZ Section p.ii.

'What is a Journalist' – Dircke Jansen's answer quoted by Lawlor in *Aussie*, 15 May 1926, NZ Section p.ix: "one who knows everything about nothing".

'Hic Jacet'; poem in *The Bulletin* (Sydney), 1 July 1926, p.7. Opens: "There where love vanished grief shall also go."

'Sonnet'; poem in *The Triad*, 1 August 1926, p.57. Opens: "How little meaning, since the cold eclipse".

'This Also is Vanity'; criticism in *The Bulletin*, 12 August 1926, p.2 (Red Page).

'Adam, Pan and the Lady' by Dircke Jansen; short story in *Aussie*, 14 August 1926, NZ Section p.iii.

‘When the Sneaky Errors Creep’ by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie*, 14 August 1926, NZ Section p.ix.

‘Wise Man or Fool’, by Dircke Jansen; humorous military anecdote in *Aussie*, 14 August 1926, NZ Section p.iii.

‘A Long Time Ago’; poem in *The Bulletin*, 26 August 1926, p.47. Opens: “Oh, life was but a lilt once, set for lightsome feet.”

‘When the Sneaky Errors Creep’ by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie*, 15 September 1926, NZ Section p.ix.

‘The High-Explosive Myth’, by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie*, 15 October 1926, NZ Section p.iii.

‘The Christmas Gift to Mary’, by Dircke Jansen; short story in *Aussie*, 15 November 1926, NZ Section p.42.

‘If I Had a Son’; poem in *The Bulletin* (Christmas edition), 11 December 1926, p.48. Opens: “Oh the dawn’s a-greying up on the starboard quarter.”

‘The Origin of Titles’, by Dircke Jansen; article in *Aussie* 15 December 1926, NZ Section p.v.

‘A Moral Tale’, by Dircke Jansen; poem in *Aussie* 15 December 1926, NZ Section p.xi.

*New Zealand Artists’ Annual*, 1 (December 1926) – Harris was associated with Pat Lawlor and Ken Alexander in producing this and had several contributions in the first issue: ‘Chimes’, poem, p.1; ‘Two Triolets’, poems, p.12; ‘A Policeman’s Life’, short story, pp.14-15; ‘Rondel’, poem, p.18; ‘The Voice of the Cities’, poem, p.25; ‘A Maoriland Alphabet’, humour, by Lawlor and “Dircke Jansen”, pp.26-7 (“...K is for Kiwi, a bird which, absurdly, / Is wingless, and otherwise very unbirdly”); ‘Spring’s Illusions’, poem, p.31, by “Dircke Jansen”.

*The Poetry of Dick Harris*. Sydney: New Century Press, 1927. Introduction by Mona Tracy and tribute by Pat Lawlor. Posthumous collection

edited by Pat Lawlor, who proudly reported that the book had made a profit and funds were paid to Dick’s mother. Contents (asterisk indicates also in *Monodies*): ‘Hic jacet mortalis’; ‘At Night’ (“Was it the whisper...”)\*; ‘Sappho’; ‘Nocturne’; ‘Unsought’; ‘Beauty’s Urn’; ‘To Atthis’; ‘Ballade of Youth’s Day’; ‘Chant Royale’; ‘Since Youth Must Know’; ‘Chimes’; ‘Mirage’; ‘Anzac Day’; ‘Vain Beauty’; ‘N.Z. to America’; ‘Retrospect’\*; ‘Attitudes’; ‘If I Had a Son’; ‘Pantoum’; ‘Twilight in Autumn’ (from Henri de Regnier); ‘In the Bush’; ‘Triolets’ (“Be kindly and reflect...”; “Who first in practice...”; “Where ashes are...”; “Each uplifts a dewy face...”; “Save goblin-gold we grasp in vain,”; “If I should ask no more than this...”); ‘Villanelle’; ‘Rondel’ (‘El Dorado’\*; ‘Still there’s sunshine’); ‘Rondeau’ [in fact by Austin Dobson; see below]; ‘Invictus’; ‘Lavender’\*; ‘Ships at Sea’\*; ‘Late Afternoon’\*; ‘All Night’ (“All alone I lie...”); ‘On All Souls’ Eve’\*; ‘Crepuscule’\*; ‘At Dusk’\*; ‘Ships that Pass’\*; ‘Singing Youth’\*; ‘Cradle Song’\*; ‘Lament’\*; ‘The Cry of Pan’\*; ‘Dawn’\*; ‘Exile’.

Reviews:  
*The Evening Post*, 5 November 1927, p.21 (pointing out that the Rondeau on p.47 differs in only two words from a poem by Austin Dobson; apologetic letters by Mona Tracy and Pat Lawlor appeared in the *Evening Post*, 12 November 1927, p.21, saying that they found a handwritten copy of the poem among Harris’s papers and assumed it was by him)  
*Auckland Star*, 12 November 1927, p.24 (“...Harris was a sweet singer with a genuine gift for verse. He was neither original nor deep, but he had a feeling and an unusual sense of beauty...”)  
*The Bulletin*, 4 April 1928, p.2, by Nettie Palmer.

‘Middle Age’; poem in *New Zealand Artists’ Annual*, 2 (December 1927) p.16.

‘The Crack O’ Doom’ (“An unpublished poem by the late Dick Harris”), *New Zealand Artists’ Annual*

Vol.1, No.4 (August 1929), p.18 [but earlier published in *Triad*, above].

‘Peradventure?’ (“A hitherto unpublished poem by the late Dick Harris”), *New Zealand Artists’ Annual*, Vol.2, No.1 (December 1930), p.25.

‘The Christmas Gift to Mary’; short story in *Droll Stories Magazine*, Vol.1, No.1 (December 1930), pp.26-28.

‘Adam, Pan, and the Lady’; short story reprinted in *New Zealand Short Stories*, ed. O.N. Gillespie. London: Dent, 1930; the story was first published in *Aussie*.

*Kowhai Gold: An Anthology of Contemporary New Zealand Verse*, edited by Quentin Pope. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1930. This included three poems by Harris: ‘At Night’, ‘Rondel’, and ‘Ships that Pass’.

Richard Singer’s article, ‘Forgotten Poet – or Two’, *Southerly* 21/2 (1961) pp.2-10, included three poems by Harris: – To V.L.S’ p.5 [the dedication poem in *Monodies*].  
– ‘What the Hell Do You Think of It Now?’ p.6.  
– ‘On All Souls’ Eve’; pp.8-9.

‘Pantoum: For Anzac Day’; poem in *When ANZAC Day Comes Around: The 100 Years From Gallipoli Poetry Project*, compiled by Graeme Lindsay. Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, Forty South Publishing, 2015.

### Items about Harris

*The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 25 March 1909, p.27: “Dick Harris, whose verse is favorably known to Worker readers, intends to publish a book of verse towards the end of the year. Harris is one of the most promising of the younger verse-writers of Australasia”.

*The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 20 May 1909, p.27: “Howard Carr, musical director of the Williamson Opera Company, has been telling a New Zealand interviewer of his intention to prepare a Maori cantata. ‘That brilliant boy Dick Harris has written the poem... Carr is now at work on a choric ode also

written by Harris, and has lately composed music for a cradle song and a morning song by the same writer...”

*The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 8 July 1909, p.21: “A writer in the New Zealand ‘Triad’ declares of Dick Harris’s newspaper published verse that ‘it is probably the best verse ever written in Australasia by so young a man.’ (Harris is twenty-two.) It is not easy to judge on this point, either for past or present, nor is it really necessary. Harris’s verse is consistently the kind to take and be thankful, regardless of his age or youth.”

‘Writers and Writing. Literary Notes and Verses. The “Hacked” Poet’, *Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser* (Victoria, Australia), 12 January 1914, p.1: Discussion of Harris’s life and work, “... In some respects Harris is a peculiar personality. His prose writings would never lead to the belief that he wrote verse, least of all such “poetry of twilight” as is contained in his modest little volume, “Monodies – a book of verse.” The average reader of this booklet would probably picture the author as a large-eyed dreamer, surrounded by a halo of “old grief” and the wistful expression of one ever searching for a land “bountiful with beauty adream on drowsy flowers.” And so “a lot of people have (he says), expressed surprise on meeting me, not expecting to find a lean, hard, wiry person with a lean, hard dial.” ... The volume won him some well-deserved tributes, but some of the eulogies were too much for the super-sensitive soul. He has a natural loathing of superlatives, and the knowledge of what had been predicted for him caused the poet to feel like an apologetic advertiser when offering verse after that...”

*Observer*, 13 May 1916, p.4: “Dick Harris is a New Zealander, and our premier poet. His book of verse, ‘Monodies,’ contained some of the finest verse ever turned out in this land. ‘The Cry of Pain’ [*sic*] contained therein was nothing short of a masterpiece...”

Margaret Lockyer, *From Another Angle* (London: Duckworth, 1921): “It seems that the war actually killed admirable young talent in many cases. It would be easy to mention Australian writers who have done nothing good since their return from active service. Mr. Dick Harris, positively the most original and promising of all Australasian writers of verse before the war, is quietly editing a soldiers’ paper in New Zealand, writing no verse at all, apparently attempting no sort of creative work.”

#### Obituaries:

*The Evening Post*, 15 December 1926, p.13; *The Press* 15 December 1926, p.21; *The Sun* (Christchurch), date unknown, by Mona Tracy (calling Harris “Singer of the Shadows”); *The Bulletin*, date unknown ‘Dircke Jansen, Farewell’; *Aussie*, 15 February 1927, NZ Section p.viii, by Lawlor (revealed the Jansen pen name for the first time: Harris would not write humorous material for *Aussie* under his real name; Frank Morton called him the finest lyricist New Zealand had ever produced; “I prefer to remember Dick, not as the Edgar Allan Poe of N.Z., but as our Mark Twain, masquerading under that wonderful pen name...”)

Memorial notice in *The Evening Post*, 14 December 1928, p.1: “HARRIS.—In affectionate memory of Edwin (Dick) Harris, who passed away on the 14th December, 1926. Inserted by his friends, K. and V. Alexander [Ken Alexander was a close friend and illustrated the cover of Harris’s second book]”; and a similar memorial notice the following year, *The Evening Post*, 14 December 1929, p.1.

May 1930: letter from Frank Harris praising H’s verse (untraced).

Pat Lawlor. *Confessions of a Journalist, with Observations on Some Australian & New Zealand Writers*. Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1935. Several references to Harris – “one of the finest friendships I have ever known... stories, poems and articles... under his ‘Aussie’ pen name of ‘Dircke Jansen’; poem by Harris on misprints, ‘When the Sneaky Errors Creep’

pp.151-2; appreciation of Harris pp.206-9 (“one of the greatest, if not the greatest poet New Zealand has produced...”); mentions R.A. Singer paying for the printing of *Monodies*.

Pat Lawlor, *New Zealand Railways Magazine* February 1937, p.52, states: “A well known New Zealand journalist is busy on a biography of Dick Harris, the New Zealand poet”. Who this was is unknown.

Geoffrey Webster. Letter to Pat Lawlor, 11 November 1943 (Turnbull Library MSS: 77-067-6/28).

Pat Lawlor. *Books and Bookmen, New Zealand and Overseas*. Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1954. Lawlor says surprisingly little of Harris here, and that mainly in connexion with Frank Morton.

Richard Singer, ‘Forgotten Poet – or Two’, *Southerly* 21/2 (1961), pp.2-10.

Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie eds. *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998: sympathetic article on Harris (“a poet of lyric melancholy and considerable technical accomplishment”) by Roger Robinson; Patrick Evans in his article on Pat Lawlor refers to “Harris’s suicide”.

Joanna Woods. *Facing the Music: Charles Baeyertz and the Triad*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2008: pp.133-4 on Harris becoming a contributor to the *Triad* – ““a pensive young Wellingtonian, whom Charles [Baeyertz] considered one of the best poets in Australasia. At twenty-one, Dick Harris, who was one of New Zealand’s few home-grown ‘decadents’, had a disturbing preoccupation with death. [Frank] Morton called him ‘the oldest young man I have ever met’. Unlike some others, however, Harris’s world-weary stance was not just a fashionable pose. For weeks on end, he would retreat to his tiny book-lined room in the Wellington suburb of Brooklyn to wrestle with depression...”

Poems by Dick Harris

TWILIT DAYS

Here comes no light, no splendor of the sun,  
Where I in sombre silence dream alone  
My life an arabesque in monotone.  
I see without regret the nothing done,  
The faded years that drooped sans joy or moan,  
The wraith-fulfilment of the half-begun.  
Wistful and slow, the days drift one by one  
As mist enfolding me, all listless grown.

Real are the dreams and life but shadow-land.  
Vague monodies enthrall me, quiet song  
Of far and faint emotion long since banned,  
The ceaseless noise and moaning of the throng.  
Through tyrannies of Time men pass along...  
Hushed in eternal Quietude I stand.

(from *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 6 May 1909, p.27)

CHANSON TRISTE DE PIERROT

Dear little lady, delicious Pierrette,  
List to me lonely who wearily fret  
Just for a touch of your merry, mad mouth,  
Just for a sight of your whimsical eyes...  
Thirsting for love, here I suffer a drouth –  
All the day’s bitterness made of my sighs.  
I lie and I sigh for you,  
Dying I cry for you,  
Exquisite lady, delicious Pierrette!

’Midst wonder of worship and splendor of gold,  
You swing to suave music, and here am I – cold –  
Lying a-sighing where shadows are grim.  
And ghostly and ghostly, a sick little moon  
Pales the faint candles that glimmer so dim –  
Wavering, dying, as I shall die soon.  
And you come no more to me,  
Come never more to me?  
Lady of worship ’mid splendor of gold!

I laughed yesterday! I was bitter of heart;  
I laughed at your laughter: you know not the smart  
Of passion forsaken, distressed, and bereft  
Of kind eyes and of comforting kisses and joy.  
You left me – joy left me – now what have I left.  
But a sorrow to die for, a grief to employ  
In singing this song for you,  
Crying night-long for you,  
Praying all day for you, lonely of heart!

From the lonely of heart flees sunlight away,  
No glamor is born them of sweet summer’s day.  
Living for laughter, we loved, you and I,  
Once on a time, when a braver sun shone.  
Alas! but you left me a heart-ache to sigh,  
Left nothing beside – and the sunlight is gone.  
Chill is the room for me,  
Sad is the gloom for me,  
Lonely of heart with the sunshine away.

Dear little lady, delicious Pierrette,  
Are you not weary of worshippers yet –  
Weary of turmoil and raiment and rings?  
Are you not sorry that days that were ours  
Are one with all other dead, glorious things?  
Are you not sad for the rhythmical hours  
When you would sue to me,  
When you were true to me?  
Have you forgotten, delicious Pierrette?

I lie all forsaken, I sigh all forlorn,  
All hopeless and wan in the pallor of dawn.  
You will not come to me, not though I cry  
Calling and pleading. You never will hear;  
You will not come to me, not though I die...  
And, lady of laughter, Death travels a-near.  
Pale candles low-burning  
Set gaunt shadows turning  
To mock me forsaken who sigh all forlorn.

From a dolorous day comes my dolorous plaint.  
My eyes growing dim and my pulse going faint,  
A-thirsting for love, and a-hungered for bread,  
I hark to the slow-dripping raindrops that fall,  
Thinking at times that I hear your light tread...  
You that could solace and care not at all.  
And end to all kissing now,  
No more caressing now,  
Loving nor laughing! ... ah, dolorous plaint!

Ah well, what matters it, precious Pierrette!  
I am a-dying, and I will forget.  
You have forgotten, and singing go by...  
I’ll sigh and go by ere to-morrow is born.  
(Could you but come to me, come ere I die,  
Die all forsaken, forgotten, forlorn!)  
Sighing I cry for you,  
Dying I sigh for you,  
Dear dainty lady, delicious Pierrette!

(from *The Worker* (Wagga, NSW), 20 May 1909, p.27)

CHANSON TRISTE DE LA MER

From tattoo to reveille, from dawning until dark,  
There’s nothing else to see except the sea –  
A windy waste of water monotonously stark –  
It seems a frightful waste of so much sea.

The “deep and dark blue ocean” that Byron saw, you’d think  
Must have been a sea he saw from shore.  
It can’t be made to lather, and it isn’t fit to drink,  
And it hasn’t any end – there’s always more.

You stand to aft or for’ard, you lounge about the deck,  
And pass the time by staring at the sea;  
Your soul is sick of seascape, untouched by spot or speck,  
But all that you can see is just the sea.



On Greenland's icy mountains, in any  
other scenes,  
Just so, it's somewhere else you'd rather  
be.  
The sea you see with loathing; you could  
pray for submarines,  
Just to save you from the boredom of  
the sea.

(from *Waitemata Wobbler* (1917))

### BALLADE OF TIMES PAST

Isabelle, Minchen, Louise, Ricquette,  
Reiby, Ethel, Manon, Margot,  
How shall I think of you sans regret,  
Now you are one with the long ago?  
It's hey! for to-morrow and all its gold –  
For love and laughter are still to find –  
But yesterday is a tale that is told;  
And it's oh! for the girls we have left  
behind!

Isabelle dreams in a Devon town,  
Where life runs smooth and time runs  
slow;  
Minchen, with merry, bright eyes of  
brown,  
Lives where the Rhine's wide waters  
flow.  
And one is shy and the other is bold,  
But both are darlings much to my  
mind –  
Ah, me! some say that the heart grows  
cold –  
But it's oh! for the girls we have left  
behind!

I sigh, of course, yet I count it gain  
To have known Marie of Merieux,  
And sweet-voiced Louise of far Fontaine;  
Manon of Famechon, too. Heigho!  
Riquette, Rouen! Till this flesh turns  
mold,  
These names shall be in my heart  
enshrined –  
Pretty and pert, and inclined to scold –  
But it's oh! for the girls we have left  
behind!

Placid Margot is in Doullens yet,  
Happy and grave as of old, I know;  
There in the cool of her kitchen set,  
And careless of how the world may go.  
Bath holds Reiby still in its fold  
(Visits and gossip and tea with her  
kind);  
Ethel's in Bournemouth yet, I'm told –

And it's oh! for the girls we have left  
behind!

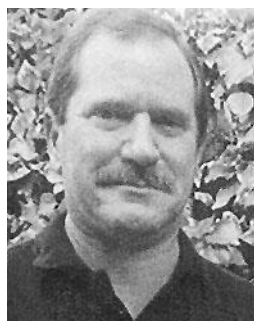
### Envoi.

Prince, wherever your path be set,  
That this is truth you will surely find –  
The happiest sigh and the best regret  
Is oh! for the girls we have left behind!

CORPORAL DINKUM.

(from *Napoo* (1919))

## Obituary: John O'Connor, 1949-2015



On May 12, the New Zealand poet and  
editor, **John O'Connor**, left us.

I've written a summary of his poetry  
activities 1973-2015.

It's not certain when O'Connor started  
writing poetry but his selection in an  
anthology of 1960s/1970s poetry  
provides some clues.

The anthology *Real Fire*, selected by  
Bernard Gadd, which appeared after *Big  
Smoke* in 2001, sought to recapture a  
number of fine New Zealand poets  
omitted from the bigger *Big Smoke*  
collection. John O'Connor's name (like  
Stephen Oliver, Trevor Reeves, Michael  
Harlow, Alistair Paterson, etc.) was  
prominent amongst them. In fact  
O'Connor had been working away  
steadily throughout the 1970s, and his  
initial starting point is around 1973.  
Two collections held by the National  
and Turnbull Libraries in Wellington  
are dated from the 1970s and are seen to  
be his earliest publications. *Preludes*  
(1976) and *Laying Autumn's Dust*  
(1978) are two chapbooks of his early  
poetry 1973-1978 from ages 24-28.

Most of these verses were unpublished  
in journals. While the booklets show a  
general lack of thematic clarity and  
subjects range from English moors to  
Asian T'ang Dynasty times, the poetry  
provides some evidence of his early  
ideas of poetry. O'Connor was not  
attracted to the music of his rock and  
roll era but was attracted to Asian forms  
and British Modernist forms from the  
outset, and perhaps Imagists like  
Aldington and Pound. Others on his  
reading list were Herman Hesse and  
Christopher Brennan, yet he wasn't at  
this time an avid reader of American  
postmodernism.

O'Connor was a rhymester and school  
teacher in much of his early satiric and  
nonsense children's poetry and in his  
next volumes of the 1980s, *Laying  
Autumn's Dust* (new expanded edition)  
and *Citizen of No Mean City*, he looked  
to make a general distinction between  
verse (rhymes) and poetry (freer  
Modernist and haiku forms).

Throughout the 1980s, O'Connor was  
an increasingly committed verse satirist  
and his two '80s volumes collect most  
of his satiric output as does the little  
known broadside *Don't Kick Me, I'll  
Kick You* (self published, 1986). The  
National Library copy is numbered 3 of  
6. In later years, O'Connor felt this  
tendency for satire held him back in  
New Zealand poetry circles and sought  
to move on from squibs. A number  
focused on local politicians, poets and  
writers, and he felt people reacted  
poorly to it rather than seeing it in the  
fun spirit intended.

Towards the end of the decade, he  
founded the journal *plainwraps* (1989-  
1991), which Michael Gifkins  
mentioned in the *New Zealand Listener*.  
He next became an editor of *Spin* and an  
occasional editor of *Takahē* and later  
the New Zealand Poetry Society  
anthology. He also helped co-organise a  
Canterbury Poets' Collective (CPC)  
anthology: *Voiceprints 2*. Karen  
McNabb and Jeffrey Harpeng co-  
founded CPC in 1990, and the first  
*Voiceprints* appeared that year. John  
helped co-organise the CPC and became  
a chair for five years, helping to bring  
outside poets to Christchurch for  
readings as well as encouraging local  
poets in regular open mics.

Of his time editing *plainwraps*, O'Connor was typically modest: "I did it for a variety of reasons, mostly private, and feel that its impact outside of that (if it had any) was that it encouraged a few poets in that their work was initially solicited. I'm pleased I did that (personal letter, 31 January 2015)." Poets like John Knight (Australia), Tony Beyer, John Summers, David Howard, and David Gregory, were some of the names he regularly published. Chris Moisa provided simple but effective artwork for the covers.

In the 1990s, O'Connor's major publication *As It Is* came from his newly founded Sudden Valley Press (after talks with Hazard Press failed to eventuate in publication). O'Connor now sought to found a press, which benefited mostly (but not exclusively) local Canterbury poets and to publish his work (see *JAAM* 7 for an interview on the press). *As It Is* eliminated his satire and nonsense verse and selected chiefly his imagist and lyrical Modernist poems (owing a debt to Imagists, European Modernists and Asian forms like haiku). It showed greater thematic clarity. At the same time, the 1996 General Election produced some telling satire from his pen in collaboration with the left of centre Bernard Gadd in Auckland. *Too Right Mate: The Well-Versed Voter's Satirical Guide* found O'Connor in well focused satirical form attacking the New Right's ideologies and social and health reforms. His last collection of the 1990s, *A Particular Context*, was widely considered by many to be a turning point in his poetry and the New Zealand Poetry Society members voted it as one of the five best books of the period. The chief change in this collection was the start of a series of working class monologues ranging over his biographical story growing up in Christchurch. This important development led to his work becoming widely anthologised for instance in *Essential New Zealand Poems* (2001).

O'Connor continued this development throughout the Noughties in *Working Voices*, with Eric Mould, and in *Cornelius & Co.: Collected Working Class Verse* (on the suggestion of friend and poet David Howard). Yet, this remained only one of the chief strains in

O'Connor's poetry. More of O'Connor's light verse appears in the Bernard Gadd anthology of light verse, *The Unbelievable Lightness of Eggs*. The Asian forms also took on more meaningful clarity, with *Parts of the Moon* (haiku and renga imitations) published by John Knight, of Post Pressed, Brisbane, and later the collection *Bright the Harvest Moon*, considered by O'Connor to be his defining collection in this area. The book includes a worthy appendix of Asian poets, showing a close and scholarly study made by O'Connor of Asian forms. Earlier, in 1997, he had received an honorary diploma from the Croatian Haiku Association and in 2001 a Museum of Haiku Literature Award (Tokyo) for "best of issue" in *Frogpond International*, a special issue of *Frogpond* (USA) featuring haiku from 52 countries and language communities. He now held an international reputation in this area.

Another quirky new development was the more postmodern technology verse where he sought to use computer graphics/symbols in place of words in his poems. This was to be among his more inventive departures in his writing life (an article on it appeared in *a fine line*, the New Zealand Poetry Society newsletter in 2009).

The final two collections published through HeadworX in 2013 and 2014 showed further satirical and poetic development. *Aspects of Reality*, his most postmodern treatment of language, focused on social and political issues in contemporary society i.e. the general widespread misinformation and dumbing-down of culture in the information super highway age – a topic also dealt with by Mark Young. *Whistling in the Dark* culled most of his more lyrical poems and prose poems, and seemed to be his most purposeful work to date. Certainly, his work on the prose poem is another key concern in this book, a type of poetry he had been developing since *A Particular Context* in 1999, but which seemed to be flowering. O'Connor was twice the winner of the open section and once of the haiku section of the New Zealand Poetry Society's International Competition – held annually. He also helped to judge

the haiku section of this competition and encouraged its growth in New Zealand. He was regularly anthologised in their competition anthologies, and included in periodicals like the *New Zealand Listener*, *Takahē*, *plainwraps*, *Poetry Aotearoa*, *Poetry NZ*, *Frogpond* (USA), *JAAM*, *New Zealand Books*, *Presto*, *CS News*, *The Press* (Christchurch), *Valley Micropress*, *Bravado*, *Catalyst*, *Southern Ocean Review*, *paper wasp* (Australia), *Social Alternatives* (Australia), *Printout*, *brief*, *broadsheet*, *Spin*, *Truck* (USA) and others. Some of the anthologies that include his work are: *Big Sky: Canterbury Poems*; *Land very fertile: Banks Peninsula poetry & prose*; *The Second Wellington International Poetry Festival*; *The Poem & The World* (USA/Hungary/NZ); *Wild Light* (NZ/Germany); *Something Between Breaths* (India); *Painted Poems: One Artist*; *20 Poems: Eion Stevens*; *The Great New Zealand Pie Cart*; *Facing the Empty Page: 150 Essential New Zealand Poems*; and the New Zealand haiku anthologies.

O'Connor's record of always advancing forward as a poet shows in the diverse list of international magazines and anthologies mentioned above, and this list is by no means exhaustive of his considerable publication record over many years and in a number of countries worldwide.

John was educated at the University of Canterbury. Throughout his working life, he held various jobs but worked chiefly as a schoolteacher and after as a taxi driver. In his youth, he was in the merchant navy, and held a lifelong admiration for the New Zealand poet Denis Glover. A good friend of John's was John Summers, to whom he dedicated *Cornelius & Co.* His wife Sandra survives him.

At the time of his death, John was co-editor of the Canterbury Poets' Combined Presses.

It is expected O'Connor will have left behind several unpublished manuscripts and folders of his poetry, which we may gain access to posthumously in the future.

Mark Pirie



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### Poetry

*Preludes, selections from poetry, 1973-1976* (John O'Connor, Christchurch, 1976).

*Laying Autumn's Dust, poems 1976-1978* (John O'Connor, Christchurch, 1978).

*Laying Autumn's Dust, poems and verse 1974-1983* (Line Print, Christchurch, 1983; new edition).

*Citizen of No Mean City, poems and verse 1983-1985* (Concept Publishing, Christchurch, 1985).

*Don't Kick Me, I'll Kick You* (broadsheet, John O'Connor, Christchurch, 1986).

*Too Right Mate: The Well-Versed Voter's Satirical Guide*, with Bernard Gadd (Hallard Press, Auckland, 1996).

*As It Is, poems 1981-1996* (Sudden Valley Press, Christchurch, 1997).

*A Particular Context* (Sudden Valley Press, Christchurch, 1999).

*Working Voices*, with Eric Mould (Hallard Press, Auckland, 2003).

*Parts of the Moon: Selected Haiku and Senryu, 1988-2007* (Post Pressed, Brisbane, 2007).

*Cornelius & Co.: Collected Working-Class Verse, 1996-2008* (Post Pressed, Brisbane, 2011).

*Bright the Harvest Moon, haiku & renga imitations* (Poets Group, Christchurch, 2011).

*Aspects of Reality* (HeadworX, Wellington, 2013).

*Whistling in the Dark* (HeadworX, Wellington, 2014).

### As editor

*plainwraps*, Nos. 1-5 (1989-1991).

*An Exchange of Gifts* (Wellington, NZ Poetry Society, 2001).

NB: John O'Connor was also an occasional editor of the small magazines *Spin* and *Takahē*.

## POSTSCRIPT by Michael O'Leary

A postscript to Pirie's obituary on John O'Connor has been supplied by Dr Michael O'Leary in the form of an interview that O'Leary published in his book *Alternative Small Press Publishing in New Zealand* (Steele Roberts Ltd).

### AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN O'CONNOR

**1 - What was your initial reason for getting involved in publishing? Please try to think of this in the spirit of what you were thinking and doing at the time.**

For me the decision to start Sudden Valley (with David Gregory as a mostly sleeping partner) came out of two background factors. One was that I couldn't get a press to publish my *As It Is*, apart from Hazard who wanted too much to do so. The other was a background in publishing.

As you can see from my C.V. (enclosed) I put out a couple of pamphlets in the '70s and a couple of books in the '80s (the latter under the Concept imprint). Basically Concept was a distributor - Ashley King - who made out he was a publisher. Late '80s early '90s I also published 5 issues of a poetry journal titled *plainwraps*. Then, in the mid-'90s, the Canterbury Poets Collective (of which I was a co-organizer) put out its second local anthology *Voiceprints 2*, which I was involved with too.

Underlying this was a wish to start a small press, just for its own sake.

**2 - Who or what was your main influence behind your decision to publish? These may include literary or non-literary influences.**

I don't think there was anything apart from the answers to Q.1.

**3 - In your choice of authors was the main consideration for inclusion philosophical, literary or pragmatic?**

All 3.

Starting with pragmatic: you can only work with those who want to and can afford to. If poets have better options they'll take them up.

Literary: only to some extent. I have eclectic taste myself so I didn't have a problem with various styles / approaches to poetry. There had to be a literary standard, however, below which the books couldn't go.

Philosophical: not that it came up, but the only things I would have said no to would have been right-wing seeming texts. (i.e., anything that seemed to favour elites / power / capital. I expect a decent set of human values from S.V.P. authors.)

Overall, then, of all those mss available to S.V.P., rejections have been made on the grounds of literary standard. (I've missed one or two, also, because the author couldn't afford to pay part of the printing costs.)

**4 - "...and if there is still a number of commissioned works which seem to have been dreamed up by a sabotaging office-boy on an LSD trip, there are now each year a growing quantity of books which worthily add to our literature." Professor J.C. Reid from an article introducing *New Zealand Books in Print*, written in 1968. I interpret Reid's assessment as an indication of the rift between the acceptable 'worthy' literature as endorsed by academia, and the new wave of sabotaging office boys and girls who at that time commissioned publishers to put out their works, or simply published things themselves, and in many cases the work of their friends. Comment on this quote in relation to the 'Vanity Press' vs 'Real Publishing' debate.**

There's so much bullshit written about lit., and in this context in particular. Comments that might be appropriate.

1) Academia was then in the more trad. mode of defending the old against the new.

2) This no longer seems to be the case. Good numbers of academics are on the lit-canon trip, e.g. Mark Williams (I think) in the intro to *Opening the Book* makes no secret of the sort of power he & his kind wield in his comments on

bringing through women writers in the '70s & '80s. (No reference to quality, or audience and their response - just (as I recall) "we" decided this was going to happen. Instant product.)

Note: I'm not saying some of these writers are unworthy of status - but I am commenting on the power relationships that create that status.

It seems to me that academia has dropped its trad. defence of the old (against the new) for a quite different role: that of "cheer leaders" for a certain set of often new writers, mainly out of the university presses, and V.U.P. in particular. The counterpoint to this of course is that they try to marginalise &/or denigrate writers who are not part of that "establishment" - often the small press writer.

**5 - Initially, was your focus outwardly cosmopolitan or inwardly New Zealand looking, and how has this emphasis changed over the years?**

Always been a bit of both - maybe as the years have passed I've looked more inward. But I still maintain a reasonably broad focus.

**6 - What were your methods of printing and distribution as a publisher? Did you receive any financial or other assistance from either public organisations, or private sponsorship?**

Printing - off-set or docutech.  
Distribution - reciprocal arrangements with friends:

- Auckland = Tony Beyer
- Wellington/Dunedin = Mark Pirie
- Christchurch = me

(all S.O.R. to shops).  
Plus flyers to libraries and sales at our C.P.C. readings.  
Only one of our 12 S.V.P. books (to date) has gained a C.N.Z. publishing grant - \$1,300 for *The Usefulness of Singing*, which was done on off-set.  
Two of our books, *On What is Not* and *Shoot*, got a \$500 interest free loan from S.V.P. to help with printing. The rest is

author paid. (Almost all the books have managed to cover their costs to date. Certainly S.V.P. got its \$1,000 back - the rest to the authors. We are non-profit.)

**7 - How much of your publishing was commissioned and paid for (either fully or partially) by the author? Was your operation helped by the voluntary work of friends and family?**

- 1) See previous question.
- 2) Only a little. S.V.P. is pretty much a one-man-band. (I do, usually, get the authors to set out / lay out their work though. Lots of hand holding needed.)

**8 - What has been the cost to you personally in terms of time, money and resources, of being involved in publishing in New Zealand? You may consider this in relation to more difficult areas such as relationships with friends, family etc. also.**

Great cost in time. Money, not really - unless one counts what one could have earned by continuing in teaching. However, that was a conscious decision about 10 years ago (to leave teaching and drive cabs over the weekend, thus freeing up time for writing, publishing etc.) I don't regret that decision. Yes, it puts considerable strain on family life and on my health. (25 to 30 hours at night over the weekend, plus however many for poetry during the week. The change of sleep pattern doesn't help either).

**9 - Where do you place yourself and your achievements as a publisher (and as a writer if applicable) in the history of the modern-day New Zealand literary scene? Do you feel that your contribution has been adequately acknowledged.**

S.V.P. is a small press - but it's put out some very good work\*. It (& presses like it) add variety and I think some vitality to the scene.  
As a writer: not really for me to judge. I think one of the big pit-falls for writers is comparing themselves with others. (Usually favourably.) It leads to

illusions about the "greatness" of one's work. (Even one S.V.P. poet thinks he's up there with Eliot & Rilke!). I try not to get on this track. Rather, I compare my work with my earlier work and try to see if I'm changing, making progress, etc.

I'd like to be more recognized of course (only human). But so much of that is political. Writing grants (or another at some point) would be very useful - even the small one I've had recently (\$9,000) will help free up time. In fact it's a big help in that respect.

*\*See Ken Fea's book On What is Not, for instance. It's not the standard poetry volume at all.*

J.O'C. Christchurch, 2000.

**JOHN O'CONNOR  
PUBLISHING BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Canterbury Poets' Combined Presses Publications*

**1 Canterbury Poets' Collective (CPC)  
For anthologies**

- Jeffrey Harpeng / David Howard (eds) *Voiceprints* (1990).
- Jonathan Fisher (ed) *Voiceprints 2\** (1995, 1996 new ed).
- David Gregory / James Norcliffe (eds) *Voiceprints 3* (2011).

**2 Poets Group (PG)\*  
For chapbooks, experimental works, criticism, translations and imitations, collaborative works, light verse, etc.**

- City Council display, *Our Poets / Christchurch Poetry Posters*.
- Bernard Gadd, *Prognostications of the Apricot* (2000).
- Judith Haswell, *Heavenly Blue* (2002).
- Jane Simpson, *Candlewick Kelp* (2002).
- Barbara Strang, *Duck Weather* (2005).
- Mark Pirie, *Tom: a novel in verse* (2009).
- John O'Connor *Bright the Harvest Moon* (2011).

**3 Sudden Valley Press (SVP)\***

For 'standard' books of poetry

- John Allison, *Both Roads Taken* (1997).  
 Helen Jacobs, *Pools Over Stone* (1997).  
 David Gregory, *Always Arriving* (1997).  
 John O'Connor, *As It Is* (1997).  
 Bernard Gadd, *Stepping Off From Northland* (1997).  
 Graham Lindsay, *Legend of the Cool Secret* (1999).  
 David Gregory, *Frame of Mind* (1999).  
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 Andrew Strang, *Things to Know* (with an Introduction by John Dolan) (2014).

†John is known to have co-organised *Voiceprints 2*. It's not known if he was directly involved with the other anthologies.

\*John worked on Poets Group and SVP titles, with fellow Canterbury poets David Gregory and Barbara Strang. David Howard worked on a few of the later titles.

## Classic New Zealand poetry by Jean Hamilton Lennox

This issue's classic New Zealand poetry is by **Jean Hamilton Lennox** (1909-1979).

Jean Hamilton Lennox was born in Dunedin on 29 August 1909. The Lennox family came from Carmunnock, Scotland.

They arrived on the ship *Ionic*, which had left Glasgow in 1908, and decided to settle in Dunedin.

Jean learnt speech and drama from a Miss Helen Gard'ner and decided to sit for her L.T.C. L. in speech through the Trinity College in England.

Jean set up her own studio in the High Street in Dunedin, where she taught speech and drama. Remedial help was also given to children who had stuttering problems as, of course, there were few places to get help in those days, and she taught them breathing techniques.

Writing poetry had always been something that she enjoyed doing from a young age and she published poems in the *New Zealand Mercury*, the *New Zealand Herald* and the *New Zealand Railways Magazine*.

Jean was involved with the Dunedin Repertory Society, and in 1935 she won the British Drama League Lady Ferguson Trophy [Otago Area] for *When Drums Have Ceased*. It was produced and staged in the Dunedin Town Hall.

After marriage, she moved to Napier with her husband Dennis Hardcastle. She continued to teach speech and drama privately and at Taradale Primary School (part-time) with older students. Jean Hamilton Hardcastle died in 1979 aged 69 years.

Besides her periodical publication, her poetry is anthologized in three anthologies: *Here are Verses* ed. Helen Longford (c1937), *Of Trains and Things* compiled by Lynette Fowler (Invercargill, 1986) and *Rail Poems of New Zealand Aotearoa: An Anthology* ed. Mark Pirie (PANZA/ESAW, 2010).

(Biography provided by Jean's daughter Denice Ronner (nee Lennox-Hardcastle))

**Poems by Jean Hamilton Lennox****MY SONG**

I would sing of windy days,  
 Of autumn leaves that scatter,  
 Tiny boats that dip and sway  
 And little feet that patter;  
 I would sing of happy things,  
 No matter what the weather;  
 Life's a lane of ups and downs  
 That roll along together.

(*New Zealand Mercury*, September 1933)

**WILLOW-PATTERN**

[For my father]

Time is a mighty healer I am told,  
 And pain of absence lessens with the  
 years,  
 Until it dormant lies within the heart,  
 A docile thing,  
 Without a sting;  
 A memory—no more.

To-day, I held your willow-pattern cup  
 Within my hands. (Dear God! ten weary  
 years):  
 Where is that mighty healer that can  
 dim  
 This bitter pain,  
 That lives again,  
 And sears my heart afresh?

Time is a mighty healer I am told,  
 And yet, your vision haunts me as of old.

(*New Zealand Mercury*, February 1934)

**THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS**

Coupled with dreams is the ghostly cry  
 Of the flying night express,  
 From a world of sleep to a stirring  
 morn,  
 From the shadowed hills to the plains of  
 corn,  
 Puffing and panting in dire distress—  
 Goes the passenger night express.

And who can tell of its human freight,  
What issues there are at stake;  
Of the trouble stored in a restless mind,  
Of the thrilled expectancy one would  
find,  
Flying the dark to a world awake—  
On the passenger night express?

I only know when the iron horse  
Of the gleaming rails goes through,  
That my dreams are stirred with the  
vague unrest  
Of the wild romance of its eager quest,  
Know that I long to be travelling too—  
With the passenger night express.

*(New Zealand Railways Magazine,  
Volume 8, Issue 3, 1 July 1933;  
reprinted in Of Trains and Things  
(1986) and Rail Poems of New Zealand  
Aotearoa: An Anthology (2010))*

**THE BLACKBIRD**

I saw a blackbird in a tree  
With shining coat of ebony,  
Rounded throat for a joy in throbbing.  
Yellow bill for a joy in robbing,  
Roving eye for a garden’s treasure  
Of luscious fruits for his greedy  
pleasure.  
I saw a blackbird in a tree,  
It flew into the heart of me,  
And robber bold though it may be,  
I only knew an ecstasy.

*(New Zealand Railways Magazine,  
Volume 8, Issue 5, 1 September 1933)*

**MODERNITY**

So many houses, side by side,  
With fences low and gardens neat,  
With paths of white for little feet,  
But ne’er a nook in which to hide,  
Or spreading trees of any kind  
To harbour nests for boys to find.  
  
So many houses, row on row,  
Where flowers, grown to mortal rule,  
Are named and numbered as in a  
school,  
And disciplined by rake and hoe;  
(In truth I wonder what the bees  
Must think of gardens such as these.)

And here, so many children small  
Play quietly with modern toys,  
And make so very little noise,  
They scarcely seem to live at all.  
What memories will childhood hold  
As recompense, when they grow old?

No rambling gardens tumblewise  
Or barefoot holidays from school,  
No running stream or silent pool  
Whose fairies dwelt in strange disguise,  
No golden gorse beside the door,  
To haunt their dreams for evermore.

Oh modern world, immaculate  
In ordered street and villa new,  
I weary of your faultless view  
With lawn and plot so accurate,  
And yearningly I raise my eyes  
To glimpse the beauty of the skies.

*(New Zealand Mercury, June 1933)*

**WATERCOLOUR**

An azure sky—a clump of trees,  
A hill or two—a fresh sea breeze:  
A tiny stream which marks its course  
By yonder hedge of golden gorse,  
Where honey bees in greedy haste,  
Ransack each flow’r to sip and taste  
A nectar, sweet and rarer far  
Than mellowed wine in earthen jar:  
And I, a fool, as God knows fools,  
Would reproduce with mortal tools.  
(Oh, blind conceit of foolish man,  
To boast his will, to dream he can).  
For God can mix a thousand shades,  
In masterpiece that never fades:  
Can shame with scent and shadow too,  
The highest work that I might do;  
For, when at length I raise my brush,  
The ecstasy of yonder thrush  
Soars o’er my head and canvas cold  
In vibrant notes of fluted gold:  
How could I tell of hidden nest  
Where mottled eggs expectant rest?  
How could I lay her secret bare  
When all her joy is buried there?  
Upon the bank for all to see,  
A burrow yawns enticingly,  
And in this hour when all is still  
A rabbit small bobs down the hill:  
I follow it—straight to the hedge,  
Away and over to the ledge,  
Where rugged cliffs drop to the sea:  
And there with look which pities me

It disappears mid’st clover sweet  
In haunts beyond the human beat:  
While in my soul the sweetest song,  
Born of a breeze in grasses long,  
Of warbling thrush at break o’ day,  
And fragrant scent of flow’ring May,  
Rises, and on the morning air,  
Transmuted, fades away in prayer.  
Of humble mind, with trembling hand,  
Before my work again I stand,  
And marvel at my strange conceit  
Which thought to make His world more  
sweet.

An artist might immortalize  
The glory of the dawning skies,  
But only God can hold a thrush,  
And give it music with His brush.

*(New Zealand Mercury, April 1934)*

**Comment on Edward  
Skelton Garton**

**EDWARD SKELTON GARTON,  
1864-1935 by Rowan Gibbs**

**Edward Skelton Garton** was born in Auckland in 1864, son of William Garton (1835-1920) and his wife Emma, née Skelton (1834-1913), who had arrived in New Zealand from Yorkshire in 1859 on the *Matoaka*. The ship carried a party of religious dissenters headed by Thomas Ball who planned a self-sufficient community at Oruati. William Garton travelled north with them to Mangonui but purchased a farm at Awanui, and later ran a store there. In 1865 he moved to a farm at Oruati and then to Hihi, all in the Mangonui area. This is where Edward grew up and the poems in his book of verse, *Lays of Northern Zealandia* (Auckland, H. Brett, 1885), reflect his life there. A copy was presented to the visiting actor Dion Boucicault, with a note on the author: “a New Zealand farmer’s son. This youth has just turned his 20th year, and has spent his life in ‘following his father’s flock’.” *(Auckland Star 7 December 1885, p.2)*. The book is digitized on archive.org:

<https://archive.org/details/laysnorthernzea00gartgoog>

Reviews:

*Observer*, 24 January 1885, p.12;

*Auckland Star*, 31 January 1885, p.4.

At some date in the 1880s Edward moved to Sydney, and he married Helen Rebecca Buckman there in 1887. He trained as an architect, probably under an Arthur Skelton who was practising as an architect there and was presumably a relative. Edward's brother George also became an architect in Sydney. Edward was working as an architect by 1901 and served on the Mosman Council 1904-7. In 1908 he was put into bankruptcy by a slater and explained in February 1909 that he had over speculated in building houses; he was now working as a manager for his brother George. By 1911 he was again listed as an architect but the following year was charged with embezzling money from a business partner. The jury found him not guilty without even leaving the box but a further charge was brought. The result of that is uncertain but in 1914 and 1915 he is again practising as an architect and calling for tenders from builders.

In June 1917 he enlisted for World War One. His military file has been digitized, and interestingly he gave his birth date as 1872, so he was accepted because he reduced his age, saying he was only 44 years, 9 months. He was rated fit for active service and assigned to "Engineer Reinforcements" as a "sapper", but in October 1917 he was diagnosed with "senility" (in the sense of the physical decline associated with old age, with no suggestion of mental decline) and rated medically unfit. He was posted to Rabaul in New Guinea in October 1918 as a clerk and in 1921 was "transferred to civil administration in Rabaul".

In January 1922 he was a government official in New Guinea: interviewed in Sydney in 1924 he was "Mr. E. S. Garton, chief technical instructor in native education, in the territory of New Guinea ... in Sydney at present on several months' furlough".

He remained in Rabaul and died there on July 18th 1935. He is buried in

Ravuvu in Rabaul (death notice in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 1935). After his death his wife opened a tea room in Ravuvu, but this was destroyed by a volcanic eruption in 1937:

...Before the eruptions she conducted a popular tearoom and a private swimming bath at Ravuvu, three miles from Rabaul, on the edge of the harbour. She returned yesterday to find her place a wreck. The place had been systematically pillaged by natives. Everything of any value was gone. Mrs. Garton's husband died two years ago, and she had been carrying on since then, principally catering for supper and week-end parties. The Vulcan Island eruption was only two miles away, and she was compelled to flee, leaving everything she possessed in the house...

Edward never published a second book of poetry but he continued writing, as a poem by him, 'Had I the Wealth of Pharaoh', blending his New Zealand and Pacific island experiences, was published in the *Sydney Bulletin* of 22 April 1932. Archives Australia has a literary work by him titled 'The Carved Table', registered for copyright 22 April 1932 while he was in Rabaul.

Here is the late poem which I have transcribed from the *Bulletin*:

#### HAD I THE WEALTH OF PHARAOH

Had I the wealth of Pharaoh,  
 His power and glory too,  
 I'd build a golden galleon  
 With silken sails for you.  
 With decks of polished amethyst  
 And spars of silver bright,  
 And faëry lamps of crystalite  
 To charm the hours of night.  
 With ropes and cords of gossamer  
 All tuned like viol strings  
 To woo the magic melodies  
 The golden Orient sings.  
 All hung with crimson canopies  
 And soft enchanting blue –  
 Had I the wealth of Pharaoh,  
 His power and glory too!

We'd sail and sail where argosy  
 Have never sailed before,  
 To isles where summer's treasures  
 Retain her golden store.  
 Beyond the siren's pleasure halls  
 To youth's last land of dreams,  
 Where speech is always harmony,  
 A music of lost streams.  
 Where voices from Lemuria,  
 Long past, are singing clear  
 The old world's deepest mysteries  
 That tremble on the ear.  
 All this, O sweetest treasure-maid,  
 I'd gladly give to you,  
 Had I the wealth of Pharaoh,  
 His power and glory too.

Down fern-fringed streams of  
 Maoriland,  
 And lakes of tropic fire,  
 By turquoise seas to wonder isles –  
 The goal of heart's desire –  
 Where rosy dawn comes blushing  
 And even's crimson glow  
 Spreads all her fiery tapestries  
 O'er seas the sun-gods know.  
 To palm-fringed isles that lazily  
 Bask in eternal light,  
 Where the moon brings her sorceries  
 To charm the wonder night –  
 To these fair climes, Carissima,  
 I fain would sail with you,  
 Had I the wealth of Pharaoh,  
 His power and glory too.

RABAUL.

E. SKELTON GARTON

## Comment on Geoffrey Pollett

PANZA Archivist Dr **Niel Wright** received a recent research request from Mark Valentine.

Valentine, an overseas researcher, had been writing on the English writer, Geoffrey Pollett (c1909-1937), who had lived in New Zealand. He found an essay by Dr Wright online.

In 2001, Wright published a booklet: a reading of Pollett's Georgian poetry. Valentine, an English biographer, is writing specifically about Pollett's time in England selling poems door to door,

and hopes to republish Pollett’s memoir *Song of Sixpence* (1936) through an international publishing house, Valancourt (USA). Pollett’s memoir draws some parallels with D’Arcy Cresswell’s more well known memoir, *A Poet’s Progress* (1930).

Pollett took his own life in 1937. In New Zealand, he was mainly associated as a poet with the journal *New Zealand Mercury*, but published poetry and fiction in newspapers in both Australia and New Zealand.

Valentine warmly appreciated Niel Wright, Judith Wright and Rowan Gibbs’s help with his introductory essay on Pollett and tracing biographical detail on Pollett’s life as well helping to assemble a chronology of Pollett’s published works.

Here is the *New Zealand Mercury* piece Niel Wright found:

**VALE G.P**

G.P. is leaving us, to shake a lance and fly a plume in Grub Street. Eight years ago, a dreamy London boy, he became a cadet on one of our back-block farms: later, we find him a clerk in an Auckland counting-house. In those years he has become a good New Zealander, and in the interstices of their daily grind he has crowded a vast amount of literary effort, including a correspondence course in journalism. Yet he has found time to make and weld many friendships and to rub shoulders with all and sundry. He literally “reads as he runs,” seizes every minute -- why, for years he has worked all night each Friday (folding newspapers, egad!) to add a few honest bob to his homeward hoard. Complex, explosive, generous, disputatious, he is the arch-enemy of Absolutism, and doubts with Bentley the existence of matter and with Wells is a sceptic of the Instrument of Thought.

You perhaps know him only from *The Mercury*: I have the privilege of knowing the man and most of his work. Of his writing I will say that its progressive improvement has been remarkable. It may sound incredible, but his

earlier work was often stilted and abounding in cliches. He ignores prosody and relies on ear; after all, form-consciousness might choke his “native woodnotes.” Of the many poems, prose articles, sketches, stories long and short, some grim, more fantastically humorous, which he has already written, more may be heard anon, though he does not think so; he treats it all as preparatory.

Here’s health to him and wealth to him, and may he not be lost to us. --G.L.L.

Niel adds: “This is authoritative on Pollett. Bentley is a misprint. Wells is HG, his essay is called *The Scepticism Of The Instrument.*”

## Comments on Helen Bascand and Paul Hill

PANZA notes with sadness the passing of two New Zealand poets: Helen Bascand, of Christchurch, and Paul Hill, of Wellington.

Bascand, a book poet, had two collections to her credit (published by Sudden Valley Press and Steele Roberts Ltd respectively) and was a well known and widely published poet in Canterbury and New Zealand poetry circles.

Hill, not a widely known poet in New Zealand, had contributed to the Wellington poetry journal *broadsheet*, No. 5, May 2010, an issue featuring the late Harvey McQueen. His *broadsheet* poem about walking his dog Baxter on Makara Hill was republished in *The Dominion Post* in 2010.

Hill, a doctor, who had spent his childhood in India and Dublin, was a well known identity in Karori, Wellington, and his funeral was well attended at Old St Paul’s in Wellington in May this year.

## New publications by PANZA Members: Michael O’Leary and Hussein Jodu (Ali)

Title: *Main Trunk Lines: Collected Railway Poems*

Author: **Michael O’Leary**

Editor: **Mark Pirie**

ISBN 978-0-473-32917-4

Price: \$25.00

Extent: 80 pages

Format: 148mmx210mm

Publication: September 2015

Publisher: HeadworX Publishers

### About the Book

Michael O’Leary’s new book is the first to collect his entire oeuvre of New Zealand railway poems.

Spanning over 30 years of his writing, it runs the length of the railway in Aotearoa and depicts many of the country’s railway stations and towns.

The central poem of the book is O’Leary’s sequence *Station to Station*, a cognac dedicated to the rock artist David Bowie.

Mark Pirie writes in the foreword: “Michael’s poems take the reader on their own rail journey, stopping from station to station and recording the life and times of the people and places around them. But the train can also be a metaphor for life, the great journey we are all part of which encompasses both love and death. There’s no stopping for long with Michael, as the next train arrives and the next journey awaits.”

O’Leary’s well-known love of all things rail led him to become a trustee for the Paekakariki Station Museum after he settled on the Kapiti Coast in the 1990s. He currently operates Kakariki Bookshop next to the Paekakariki Station Museum.

‘I don’t know of any living New Zealand writer who is a bigger railway enthusiast.’ – Iain Sharp, *Sunday Star-Times*

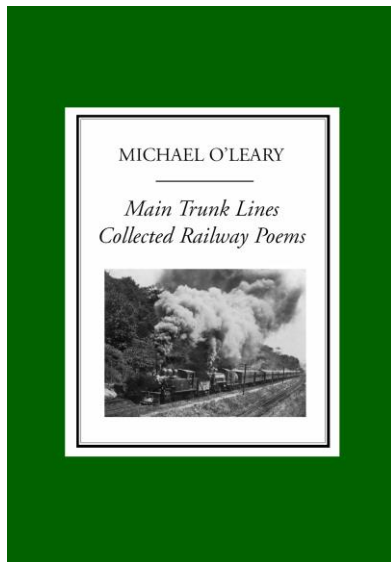
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Title: *Reality of the Imagination*  
 Author: **Hussein Jodu (Ali)**  
 ISBN 978-1-86942-165-6  
 Price: Not for sale  
 Extent: 73 pages  
 Format: 148mmx210mm  
 Publication: July 2015  
 Publisher: Earl of Seacliff Art  
 Workshop

### About the Author

#### Hussein Laftah Jodu (Ali)

“Ali” was born in the Marshlands of southern Iraq in a “sugar cane house”. According to his schoolteachers, Ali was a clever student who always had a love of writing poetry in Arabic. On leaving college at age 18 Ali was required to enter Saddam Hussein’s army – compulsory in Iraq for three years. Due to the Iran / Iraq war Ali was not released from the army and was deployed to a specialised machine gun unit and sent to the southern Iraq border where they were ordered to invade Kuwait. The ordinary soldier had nothing against the Kuwaiti people and whilst they did cross over to Kuwaiti territory Ali’s unit did not fire their weapons. Ali spent a period of time in military prison but managed to escape to Baghdad where for 1000 dinar he was able to obtain a false passport which allowed him to escape to Jordan. He travelled from Amman to Aqaba – secretly boarded an Asian ship that had delivered live sheep to Jordan, and stowed away in the engine room. Ali has “no thought of where he was going or where the ship was sailing to but was grateful to be in the hands of Allah who he felt had led him to the ship”. After two days of being in the engine room, drinking water mixed with oil he was noticed by one of the crew. Fortunately one of the crew spoke Arabic and after he had explained his circumstances they fed him chicken soup and cared for him. 36 days later he arrived in Auckland and was handed over to Immigration services who placed him in a hostel first in Otahuhu and then to Dominion Road, Mount Eden. He was accepted in to New Zealand



### About the Author

**Michael O’Leary** is a poet, novelist, publisher, performer and bookshop proprietor who has been a magnetic figure for many other contemporary New Zealand writers. He writes in both English and Māori; and his diverse and prolific work in poetry, fiction and non-fiction explores his dual heritage: Māori (Te Arawa) on his maternal side and Irish Catholic on his father’s as well as his mother’s. Born in Auckland in the year of the Tiger 1950, he was educated at the universities of Auckland, Ōtago (Dunedin), and Victoria University (Wellington) where he completed his MA and PhD theses. His Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop imprint (inspired by Andy Warhol’s ‘Factory’, the Beatles’ Apple label, and John and Yoko’s ‘Plastic Ono Band’), which he founded in 1984, has published some of his own prolific output, as well as many other New Zealand writers. This press has also featured books by writers from other countries, including the first versions of Richard Berengarten’s series, *Manual*, in four mini-books (2005-2009). The 240-page A-Z compilation, *25 Years of the Earl of Seacliff* (ed. Mark Pirie, 2009), documents Michael O’Leary’s versatile and influential oeuvre.

Michael O’Leary is a trustee for the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA), a charitable trust dedicated to archiving, collecting and promoting New Zealand poetry. He now lives in Paekakariki, north of Wellington. Website: <http://michaeloleary.wordpress.com>

### About the Editor

**Mark Pirie** is a New Zealand poet, editor, and publisher. More information at his website: [www.markpirie.com](http://www.markpirie.com)

### Sample poem

#### THE RAILWAY LINE

Looking out the pastel painted  
 Colourless Cafeteria window  
 Through the long line of leaf-less  
 Winter trees, whose branches  
 Stick out like ungainly stick-insects  
 The railway line –  
 Elevated almost sublime  
 Symbol of our attempt to bring  
 Structure and order, in the form of a  
 straight line  
 To a chaotic and natural world  
 – Looking out into that realm  
 Where the light changes and dances  
 with delight  
 On the leaves and other foliage  
 Which, although sparse is at places  
 Green and lush, and the grey-white  
 clouds  
 When the wind blows, perform a  
 polonaise  
 Beyond the landscape  
 – Looking at the ordered straight rails  
 Slightly quake and shake and then move  
 more  
 Violently as a thunderous goods train  
 approaches  
 Breaking the quiet bleakness with its  
 Threat of danger

Michael O’Leary



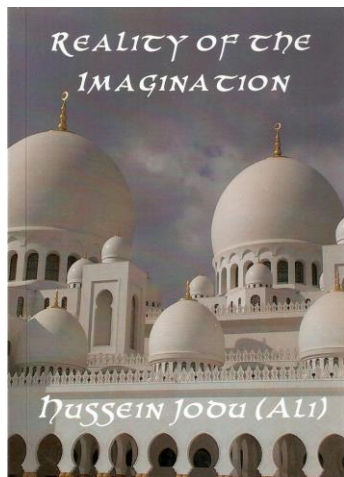
under the refugee scheme and became a self-employed painter travelling over much of New Zealand – making particular connection with Māori on the East Coast, and in Nelson, South Island. As a result of a car accident some years ago Ali became wheelchair dependent and has been able to pursue his passion of writing poetry.

**Sample poem**

**Beautiful Angel**

i love you  
and you are my life star  
and when i see you i love my existence  
yes you are my existence  
and your love is the heaven  
of life and not far  
to feel is the universe  
wanted me to be love poem to be  
love song and sing i love your star  
you are the moon  
on the darkness of the earth  
on the earth i feel you are life  
for all the love  
for all the flowers  
for all the doves  
holy angel your existence means  
the universe without hunger  
just full of love  
you are wanted for the universe's  
beauty  
wanted for the universe's move  
there is no poem words for my love to  
you  
you are my life

Hussein Jodu (Ali)



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You can now become a friend of PANZA or donate cash to help us continue our work by going to <http://pukapukabooks.blogspot.com> and accessing the donate button – any donation will be acknowledged.

## Recently received donations

Cliff Fell – *The Good Husbandwoman's Alphabet* by Cliff Fell.

Vaughan Rapatahana – *Atonement* by Vaughan Rapatahana.

Mark Pirie – 18 titles.

Michael O'Leary – *Reality of the Imagination* by Hussein Jodu (Ali).

PANZA kindly thanks these donators to the archive.

## About the Poetry Archive

*Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA)*

**PANZA contains**

A unique Archive of NZ published poetry, with around five thousand titles from the 19th century to the present day. The Archive also contains photos and paintings of NZ poets, publisher's catalogues, poetry ephemera, posters, reproductions of book covers and other memorabilia related to NZ poetry and poetry performance.

**Wanted**

NZ poetry books (old & new)  
Other NZ poetry items i.e. critical books on NZ poetry, anthologies of NZ poetry,

poetry periodicals and broadsheets, poetry event programmes, posters and/or prints of NZ poets or their poetry books. **DONT THROW OUT OLD NZ POETRY! SEND IT TO PANZA**

**PANZA will offer:**

- Copies of NZ poetry books for private research and reading purposes.
- Historical information for poets, writers, journalists, academics, researchers and independent scholars of NZ poetry.
- Photocopying for private research purposes.
- Books on NZ poetry and literary history, and CD-ROMs of NZ poetry and literature.
- CDs of NZ poets reading their work. You can assist the preservation of NZ poetry by becoming one of the Friends of the Poetry Archive of New Zealand Aotearoa (PANZA ). If you'd like to become a friend or business sponsor of PANZA, please contact us.

**Contact Details**

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**Visits welcome by appointment**

**Current PANZA Members:**

Mark Pirie (HeadworX), Roger Steele (Steele Roberts Ltd), Michael O'Leary (Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop) and Niel Wright (Original Books).

**Current Friends of PANZA:**

Paul Thompson, Gerrard O'Leary, Vaughan Rapatahana and the New Zealand Poetry Society.

PANZA is a registered charitable trust