the ultimate
READER OF LOVE
FOR THE BOOK

An Anthology of Writers Deeply Concerned about Massive Book Disposals occurring at the National Library of New Zealand
Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (the wellsprings of knowledge)

2021
Front Cover
*Puppets:* Unknown
painted gypsum plaster, hair, cotton, silk, 85 x 20cm

Rear Cover
*Bibliotheque,* Sandra Bianciardi
oil on canvas, 130 x 130cm, 2008

Page 44
Edward Tregear, *The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*,
Lyon & Blair, Lambton Quay, Wellington, 1891

Page 51
*The World Lost,* Mary-Anne Bourke
pigment ink, calligraphic ink on paper, 10.5 x 15cm, 2021

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with the generous support of Phantom Billstickers.
We express our heartfelt thanks to Jim Wilson
for a lifetime of dedication
to New Zealand arts, writing and music.

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for the book
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Countries which attempt any widespread suppression cut themselves off from what is most alive in the thought of their time, and may be in danger.

No society can flourish when it is stifled intellectually.

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Book Disposals at the National Library

Mass Book Disposals are being carried out by the National Library of New Zealand/Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (the wellsprings of knowledge).

If allowed to continue, a fine research library will be gutted. This will deprive New Zealanders of a research portal to their roots. Scholars will have no access to published studies about the rest of the world. Future decision-makers will be denied studies about international reforms, social progress, historical understandings, the heritage of literature, philosophy, linguistics, communications researches and political diagnosis.

640,000 books have been earmarked for disposal. It defies comprehension. It isn’t as though our country has no space for these books—there are buildings where they might be stored, and which might be called on; other research libraries do this all the time.

The writers in this anthology feel strongly that these disposals must immediately cease. Since the minister in charge is now the only person who can lawfully and openly stop them, please voice your concern by writing to her. A form should appear if you click on the following link.

Jan.Tinetti@parliament.govt.nz

You might want to say:

Dear Minister, Please use your right of veto to prevent any further book disposals at our National Library.
Anne Kennedy

Reading the money

When the books are gone we will read the money.
We'll watch the spangled tickertape flutter towards oblivion
and shop for bargains at the sale table of thought.

When the books are gone we'll research at the pulp and paper mill.
We'll look up jokes on Huey Decimal in the frowsty light.

At parties we'll swing a bat at the pinata of knowledge
and watch everyone swarming over the long grass.

Reading the old storage room will be an emptiness.

In summer we’ll swim in a river flowing yellow then pink
with the dye of books and the dissolution of experience.
In the distance, the murmur of bureaucrats.

In the streets, the glazed masks of shredded learning.

We will forage at the carboot of democracy.

When the books are gone we will read the money.

Harry Ricketts

We’re Just Rehoming Some Books

“We’re just ‘rehoming’ some books
—600,000 or so.
“We’re not vandals or crooks;
we’re just ‘rehoming’ some books.
It’s not the shambles, it looks;
it’s a really ‘cool project’, you know.
We’re just ‘rehoming’ some books”
—600,000 or so.
An Induced Amnesia

Ray Bradbury once asked: “Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future.” According to Bradbury, the removal of books is a way of inducing amnesia. It carries out euthanasia on history itself. New Zealand cannot build an identity by discarding the many volumes that discuss our ancestral pasts or our diverse heritages and cultures. How will we navigate into the future?

Tossing out books New Zealanders have read in libraries across this country since 1939 erases vital parts of our memories and intellectual heritage. The National Library’s current policy assumes we already know what we need to know, but recent experience suggests otherwise. Did we know anti-Islamic hatred would result in a murderous attack in Christchurch in March 2019? Isn’t it possible we can learn about the source of that evil by reading a 1922 book about the Ku Klux Klan that may soon be discarded?

When we are cut off from international travel, reading can substitute for direct experience. There are 15,000 books about travel and 80,000 historical texts in the National Library. And as for building bridges, there are 60,000 works of literature there, to teach us empathy with people in distant places.

The National Library is behaving as if New Zealanders do not need to read George Orwell, Mahatma Gandhi or books about Islam or Scotland. Aristotle is on the ‘unwanted’ list along with books about apartheid, environmentalism, civil liberties, Omar Khayyam, rugby, cricket, and the Impressionists. Books in more than 50 languages might be thrown away.

It’s also, and mostly, about the cost of storage and the Department of Internal Affairs not wanting to pay for it. Their warehouse in Whanganui is no longer fit for purpose but instead of getting another warehouse, it has decided to get rid of the books. And then there is the notion that NZ stories are only told in NZ publications—a form of inward looking nationalism or insularity, a political decision about NZ identity which the Minister (Department of Internal Affairs) refuses to refute. Ironically, the Department also does passports.

And yet these threatened books constitute tangible evidence of our intellectual formation and of our evolving ‘sense of place’ in the modern world. They must remain in their national home, the National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Mātauranga, in Wellington.
Fiona Kidman

Like Everyone Who Likes to Read Books

I wanted to work in a bookshop to be close to the heart of the matter, all those outward spines hiding romance and blood-curdling terror and chilling moments I wanted to stay at home and be on the road all at once between the covers leaf after falling leaf of words I wanted to know what they told me the minute the author had written them down their newness a prize but how could I release them into the hands of others, that’s what librarians do and for the time that is what I did instead, standing at the library counter giving the books over taking them back until I found my own words and wrote them down.

Cilla McQueen

To the 640,000, Awaiting Disposal

By no means spineless, but disabled by outdated language, fact, philosophy, untouched for years, it seems you must succumb to culling.

Books! Like to the dragon’s teeth that Cadmus sowed, rise up in mutinous tracts! Battle for wisdom’s jewel, stir trouble!
Crossing the Bar:
Remembering the Thwaites

Ann and Anthony, Anthony and Ann
at Low Tharston, Norfolk punting on the mill stream
through reeds and the purple damsselflies
of an English summer,
playing table tennis among the trees
or in winter under oaken beams
before a fire in the Mill House
being bookish together –

he the editor-poet famous for Larkin
(and sometime shaman of the Anglican communion)
she the biographer, archivist of secrets
and family matters
who bounced on their trampoline in the woods
telling me she couldn’t write her life story
while Anthony lived –

and hadn’t she been
my fantasy bossy little Pom
at the Mt Eden Pool of my childhood swims? –

And then at the last Anthony, dying at 90
being read to by Ann
and watched by her –
he silent and seeming unconscious
while she was heard to say
he might be ‘crossing the horizon’
eliciting from the death-bed
in that voice still Anthony’s – ‘the BAR’.

Even at the door
one foot in another world
you must get your quotations right –
that was our Anthony
on his way.
The archive bird

A little story hopped up and announced its fight path trajectory hop hop prestidigitation the book’s in flux ready to land oh wait someone’s torn thru a hole in history derelict unquiet tying small parcels of silence around the heads of nearly uncountable bobbing books they’re swelled in piles ready to be burnt white heat with a regal cut you know some all noble walking toward destruction with their pagey wings they’re like waiting to see (their words are mouths and ears and careful watching) who might turn on the wind machine so they can fly somewhere taut readable trees grow abundant what it means for culture to remake itself continually means we don’t know what we need until we see it and what we have is not always what we need and what we need is not always there and needs to be a bunch of needs etched on
the archive flag
flut flut among the books
with delicate wings
they keep the little story
warm sharp shiny pugilistic
moral company

An Ark

An ark to save libraries from the deluge,
a rescue mission with fire-extinguishers
    for the Serbian militia is firing incendiaries
into the library at Sarajevo
       and the Qin Emperor
has ordered the bonfires of writings
on bamboo and silk.
    Now is the time for all good people
to come to aid of the printed book.
    Crusaders are torching the manuscripts
    of gold Byzantium
& the Wehrmacht burns Warsaw's libraries
    where flames still smoulder.
Canada destroys its 150-year-old library
    of Fisheries & Oceans
    to save $500,000
& the New Zealand National Library culls
    600,000 books published overseas
as if New Zealanders did not wish to know the world.
How many words does it take to make
a human being?
    Many
The books that are unvalued this year
are next year's treasures.
    When libraries are destroyed
        humanity loses its soul.
On the Journal of Abel Tasman

Tasman was born in 1602 or 1603 at Hoorn, in the north of Holland, a town on the borders of the Zuyder Zee, where so many bold sailors were bred, and where, it has been stated, descendants of his family still remain. But, indeed, we know little of Tasman’s personal history beyond that contained in his journal. In this he has truly bequeathed us his monument, though underneath it lies little more than a shadow. An old engraving of him is to be seen in the Christchurch Museum, and it would seem that some personal description is given by M. Dozy in “Bijdragen de Taal- Land- en Volken-kunde van Nederlandsch-Indie” (“Contributions to the Language, Country, and People of Dutch-India”), 5th series, vol. II, p. 308.

In a paper read before this institute last year I gave some account of Tasman’s Journal and showed that it had never been edited and published in its entirety until so recently as the year 1860, when Herr Jacob Swart, of Amsterdam, gave it to the world in the original old Dutch, which not only differs greatly from modern Dutch but is apparently a dialect.

In his edition, Jacob Swart prefixes to the journal publications of all the documents relating to it. These are of considerable value and interest, and were discovered in the old foliants and letter books of the company, presumably at the same time that the long lost journal was found and forwarded from Batavia to Amsterdam.

Tasman begins and ends his day at midnight, the same as our civil day. He reckons his course and the distance run from noon to noon, at which time he took the latitude and longitude. His watches were: The day, or morning, watch, from 4 to 8; the forenoon, or noon, watch, from 8 to 12 noon; the afternoon watch, from 12 to 4; the flat-foot or, as, we call them, the dog-watch, from 4 to 6 and 6 to 8; the first watch, 8 to 12 midnight; and the second, or houad watch, 12 midnight to 4 in the morning. It is curious that of all Teutonic-speaking sailors the English alone use the term dogwatch as signifying the hours between 4 and 8 p.m. Other Teutons use the equivalent hund-hunde, or hondevacht, as signifying the second watch—that between midnight and 4a.m.; and to express their dogwatches, between 4 and 8 p.m., they use platt-fuss, platt-foden, or plat-voet, meaning flat-foot. The neo-Latin, or Italic-speaking, sailors had no such words as dog watch, or flat-foot, but spoke of the second watch, or of the watch from 4 to 6 or 6 to 8 in the
evening. I do not know the underlying meaning of these words, but can fancy they contain the idea of the most restful part of a ship’s day when a dog would be sufficient guard, and when any work on deck could be done without running: all heel and toe, as the pedestrians have it—a flat foot.

His journal is written in a plain, quaint, intelligible style, and abundantly shows that the writer was a bold and accomplished seaman as well as a fortunate discoverer.

My Father’s Library

I opened the door
To a myriad of books
Where my father had found pleasure
In the past

I broke the palisade
Around his library of books
To discover the treasure
From his past

I hesitated, then strayed
Inside his library of books
Where reading was leisure
In the past

I sought my father’s pride
Inside a myriad of books
To make a measure
Of his past

And through his library of books
I sense what the past can bring
And what the content of books
Mean; as I read them, they sing
David Karena-Holmes

Les Élu/es
(pour ma fille, Sonata)

Choisir d’aller sur une route
implique de ne pas aller sur une autre route.
Combien y a-t-il d’autres routes ?

Choisir de faire une chose
implique de ne pas en faire une autre chose.
Combien y a-t-il d’autres choses ?

Choisir d’être à un endroit
implique de ne pas être à un autre endroit.
Combien y a-t-il d’autres endroits ?

Choisir d’utiliser un mot
implique de ne pas utiliser un autre mot.
Combien sont les autres mots ?

Toujours, les autres sont nombreux.
Rares sont les élus.

Lyall Benjamin

If They Were Chairs or Pots

If they were an early collection of chairs and pots or
fashion or God forbid rugby memorabilia;
questions would be asked, voices raised,
hackles elevated.

But books?
Let’s throw out the shit or burn it like nazis.

And years later.
Sheepish grins covered asses and OOPS.
The Chosen  
(for my daughter, Sonata)  

Choosing to go one way  
*involves not going some other way.*  
How many are the other ways?  

Choosing to do one thing  
*involves not doing some other thing.*  
How many are the other things?  

Choosing to be in one place  
*involves not being in some other place.*  
How many are the other places?  

Choosing to use one word  
*involves not using some other word.*  
How many are the other words?  

Allway the others are many.  
Few are the chosen.

Michael Morrissey  

THE SLOW DEATH OF THE BOOK  

Alexandria casts a long shadow  
The long sword of flame and fire  
Which burnt at Hitler’s pyre  
Turned tomes to ashes  
Knowledge roiled as smoke  
I have never burnt a book  
Only given them away to friends.
“While it may be fair to complain about the absence of the Musket Wars from the draft curriculum, for instance, the wars in America and Canada, the Highland Clearances and the Napoleonic Wars are equally absent, with all their brutality and their direct links with musket fighting and the New Zealand Wars”, wrote Distinguished Professor Dame Anne Salmond in the third of her series of articles on Aotearoa New Zealand histories for Newsroom in June 2021.

She was commenting on the proposed New Zealand history curriculum for schools, which – as she and others well qualified to comment are pointing out – leaves out so much. She goes on to say “The failure to discuss Pasifika and Asian histories in Aotearoa is equally incomprehensible, let alone the histories of women.” As someone who wrote the first draft of the history of ‘second wave’ feminism in New Zealand (published in 1985 as Up from Under Women and Liberation in New Zealand 1970-1985), I agree with Salmond on this point and on the other lamentable omissions.

I also tautoko her view that “Just as fine cloaks are woven, and meeting-houses are carved and decorated by tohunga, so experts from the different wānanga, whether Māori, Pasifika, European or from other ancestral legacies, all with their own rigorous standards, should be crafting our nation’s stories, cross-checking each other for accuracy and balance.”

Further, I am painfully aware that at the very point in time in which a New Zealand history curriculum is being developed, the ‘tools’ that historians need to craft our nation’s many stories are being thrown into the dustbin of history! I refer to the hundreds of thousands of books (maybe as many as one million) which are currently being removed or marked for removal from the research and lending collections of the National Library of New Zealand, and from university libraries around the country. Book Guardians Aotearoa (BGA) was formed in 2020 to bring together the many strands of opposition to the National Library’s disposal of New Zealand’s culture and heritage i.e. its book collections.

What this disposal will mean is not just another unwarranted destruction of a public asset without public consultation or approval (bad enough in itself) but worse – the erasure of the possibilities and likelihood of accurate histories ever being written about anything which relates to New Zealand, in the absence of books which tell our stories from their beginnings, and as they have changed over time and space.

Without strands of flax or wool, cloaks cannot be woven; without books from times past which contain the stories and the analysis of those times, histories cannot be written. The wholesale and wanton disposal of the national taonga of books on all subjects published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which do not meet
the Department of Internal Affairs ludicrously narrow definition of ‘relating to New Zealand’ is an act of cultural suicide, which will lead to an intellectually impoverished population.

In a series of articles for BGA entitled ‘The Great Digital Derangement’ I am working on documenting the compelling reasons why “libraries going digital” is not and will never be an alternative to collecting and protecting books and making books freely accessible to the public – all the public. Two of the greatest twentieth century writers were formed by the library books they read. Katherine Mansfield had privileged access to General Assembly Library books for free; Janet Frame, the daughter of a Railways worker, had to win a subscription to a library to be able to read its books.

On behalf of all the girls from poor backgrounds who might be New Zealand’s next great twenty-first century writer I appeal to the powers that be, who do not seem to understand this, to open their minds and their hearts, and build on the existing national collection of books so that the National Library can live up to its name in Māori – Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, the wellsprings of knowledge.

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*tautoko:* support, help  *
tohunga:* expert in tribal customs

*wānanga:* study session, seminar (Whare Wānanga - Study House, University), but also “something like ‘cultural tradition’”

*taonga:* valuable, treasure, &c.

(Thanks DKH for glossary)

Of Poetry

A long rain goes for a walk
on a still white page
precious water on this hot street,
distraction leads us on to on a day like this
in silence of the Quiet of Silences.

If I get us out of here,
will you marry me with all your strange arias?

---

Christine Dann

Alan Brunton
Carolyn McCurdie

Our Stories Held in Trust

This is our library: an elaborate loom, weaves the fluff and tangle, silken shimmer of minds in the shared gift of words. The stuff of us.

Land is the frame. Our skeins and loops, umbilical cords: Polynesia, Ayr, Guangdong, Madras, the whole atlas threaded, so that new startles old, and see, colours shift, become forest-darkened, sun-lit by tussock; deep folds billowed and tasselled by weather.

A people made and re-made, re-journey there, learn our home for returning is here. Is there a nation on earth where to-and-from is more warp-and-weft of the story?

We’re sea-smart, moon-washed and shaped by the tides. So we know tidal lore, that an ebb tide rips the beach bare. A surge of the new clears out the old, scours more than was planned. Pull, pull of the undertow.

And too much is lost. Our children left stranded. They’ll ask: where and why did those memories go? Why didn’t you tell us: we never were islands.

Brian Turner

SKY

If the sky knew half of what we’re doing down here

it would be stricken, inconsolable, and we would have

nothing but rain
the imaginary earthquake hits wellington library

computers pop like butter in the microwave
CDs are flying, Bowie’s last death
inspired album is a throwing star

stairs fall and pile up ancient ruins
the escalator hangs in a zigzag from the top floor
impossible escher in chaos

the handsome customer service representative
who glared at you for standing
too close to ignore
too far from the desk to greet
is run down by a trolley stacked high with
agatha christie whodunits in large print

an avalanche in the graphic novel section
moshpits made of encyclopedieas
the carpet barely holds the crack in the concrete
floor a ledge to a drop and the gap between them
goes straight to hell or someone’s version

the glass in the giant windows turns in the air
some shards as big as a man descending
crescendo
follows the rumble you heard first
rushing closer
as you stand

three metres back from the returns counter
in the safe space far from everything
still as a watching bird
while possibility rains down all round you.
Peter Hooper

trust a man from the West Coast
to write the best rain poems
schooled in the level prosody
of window pane and furrowed roof
so words like yard and paddock
come towards us saturated

wisdom a wiser head instinctively
questions might envisage
walls and fences melting into desuetude
under our habitual dispensation
where everyone knows everyone
or thinks they should

to pass by one’s brother’s name
on the local war memorial
must have stirred havocs in self esteem
only a recompense of tears
centred on impartial nature
could partially assuage

maker of belated tributes
he deserves one too
being read by younger minds
the physical book in the hand
a speaking death had seemed to silence
heard as if alive again

A Book Removed from the National Library is a Ghost

They don’t belong here, except in words. The ghost is housed in their stories, lines of narrative poetry and memoirs resurrecting the displaced lives they’ve otherwise erased. All this is invisible:

the daily retreat into the study; the sanctuary found in characters who don’t exist,

except in words; the spirit bolstered by every rejection-letter. The deep scars no one sees; the blood oozing from open wounds no one notices: these the ghost shapes into inspiration, then writes. Through the witching-hours and spells of self-doubt, they endure ... materialising a book, frail as fuse-wise, brilliant as its illumination. Belonging is found in a library where it awaits moments of request.

For to demand a book is to assimilate the word, pages, ideas, theories, mind, author, study, home and whakapapa of everything which enabled it to be. Then, to remove it? Here’s an emptiness which haunts the library always, a trace absence – a filament broken – of a book, and its ghost exiled from matter - words, pages, ideas, theories, mind, study, home, whakapapa and everything - unknown to us now.
Simon Sweetman

NO WEEDING

In Wellington they’re weeding books – what a term. Words are not beasts. There’s no need to cull. Nurture and grow and build instead – create space for them and that creates need.

If you’re gonna talk gardens how about watering with thought all of the people craving knowledge; leave books in the places where they should be – build more sheds to house them and watch them take root. What’s the worst that could happen? You could create some new jobs. What’s the worst that could happen? A few more researchers are able to keep up. What’s the worst that could happen? Books galore and more and more and suddenly we’re interested in something beyond profit-margins; that alone is reason to invest. Albeit ironically. We need a way to move past profit and loss. We need a home for the things that matter – and not more measurements for if and when and how they matter in any financial sense. In second-hand bookstores every customer is grateful. They almost completely cannot believe their luck. They are finding something they believed lost to time. They are finding something they believed no longer existed. That’s something special. I’ve been there to see their faces. I’ve had my face do the dance of joy upon discovery. Just last week I found a book I was sure was long gone and forever buried. I rushed right home and read it twice. That special way with a book is something we need to teach forever. We need people to know what it’s like to hold words. To have that power in their hands as it transfers through body to mind and soul. That’s a process that needs no weeding, no pruning, there’s always something magical in a book. Just take a look!
A Fairy Tale

There once was a country far from any other.
Its poet-regents built up a people’s library,
the finest in the world, whose books helped them
figure out ways to improve the island,
and even to improve the world.

But the island came to be ruled
by tightrope-walkers and acrobats,
and the poet-rulers were lost to history.
The people lost a generation
to lethal overseas circuses not their own,
and began to think of themselves, mainly.

One day the new rulers decided the time was right.
They would empty the people’s massive library!
It would save them money! How their voices would echo!
How impressive all that space would be!

And so they sent the books to nearby towns,
and to damp warehouses in further away towns.
They said they were going to be kind to the books:
like unwanted pets or homeless people
they would find new homes for them!
Little by little, the books disappeared.

The citizens who had read about what happens
when you dispose of good books
tried to warn of the danger;
but the new rulers emptied the library.

They set up hoops to jump through.
This kind of person should jump through this hoop,
and that kind of person must jump through that hoop.
At the end you received a certificate
and a promotion, and perhaps entered parliament.

So the readers salvaged what they could.
Bill Direen

They memorised some stories and poems, just as in Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury; they lent salvaged volumes among themselves and helped each other with their researches. Then they published an anthology expressing all their feelings and thoughts about books and libraries.

History gave another turn, and the contortionists who destroyed the books broke their own necks jumping through hoops. The readers’ time had come. They formed a new government and built a second library as wonderful as the first.

Richard von Sturmer

The Steering Wheel
I had been heading in the wrong direction for a long time, into darkness and uncertainty. Then, a few hours ago, reading in my armchair, the book I held in my hands became a steering wheel and I was back on the right road. One sentence was all it took for my hands to turn the wheel: ‘Every moment that makes up our life is a mere process of experiencing.’ And the light coming through the window the stillness of the curtains the hum of the refrigerator—all were signposts pointing to the mystery of this world.
Free Pile

DKH tells me over the telephone he picked up a book by Bill Pearson, *Rifled Sanctuaries*, about literary representation of the Pacific Islands, from the free pile outside the local library. I expressed my concern, which is to say nothing about the author of ‘Fretful Sleepers’ (or DKH). Any reader will know what I’m talking about, and obviously that’s DKH, Whose subsequent words, I recall, might have been those of a vegan lamenting accidental or induced consumption of a real pork chop. David rose to the occasion. Resolved to report what could surely only be a prosaic mistake, the late Bill Pearson being found sleeping rough between copies of 70s romance novels, his pages catching the dew present even in the summeriest of South Island towns at evening. Implicitly neglected, whatever the windfall to our acquisitive poet. And now I read of the National Library’s own free pile even as Scribes comes down. Will the real secondhand bookshops please stand up?

Alfred Domett (1811-1887)

Books, the mighty mines
Where all the extinguished forests of mankind
In diamond-thoughts lie crystallised—enshrined.

From *Ranolph and Amobia*, Canto XXIII
Invaluable Places:
The role of libraries in the life and work of Colin McCahon

Researching the life and work of New Zealand’s greatest twentieth century painter, Colin McCahon (1919-87), for a recent two-volume study of the artist,¹ I was continually struck by the multiple importance that libraries had in his career. This importance is of three distinct kinds:

As a source of knowledge and learning, especially about art history
As a venue for the exhibition of his art
As a repository for paintings and archives (including letters) relating to his work.

1.
McCahon’s enthusiasm for libraries began early in life. In the 1930s his family (parents and two siblings) set aside an evening each week for visiting Dunedin Public Library to browse and borrow books. Archie Dunningham (1907-1996), the librarian from 1933, had built one of the best collections in the country; it was particularly strong in art books, thanks partly to grants from the Carnegie Foundation. McCahon remembered these visits all his life. Asked in 1976 about influences on his work in a radio interview with Ray Thorburn, he replied:

You start from the tradition that you find by using the library extensively. This is one of the things in Dunedin while we were there. Dunedin Public Library had the first collection of art books. It was all very useful. No other library seemed to have it at the time.²

In particular McCahon valued the Phaidon books which raised the standard of art publishing in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly the large format books devoted to single artists with high quality plates that began appearing in 1936. Titles which especially mattered to him were those on Van Gogh (1936), Titian (1936), Cézanne (1937), Michelangelo (1940) and Bellini (1945).

Another book first discovered on the shelves of the Dunedin library but originating closer to home was Charles Cotton's *Geomorphology.*² Ron O’Reilly (1914-82), a librarian friend, asked McCahon where and how he had first encountered Cotton; he replied:

*You will remember Pat Hayman.*³... *I talked to him about Cotton whose Geomorphology I’d met up with in the Dunedin Public Library – that invaluable place – Cotton, Cezanne, Bellini, Gauguin. Pat got us ‘Geomorphology’ as a wedding present. A most unusual gift & I’ve used it solidly for landscape information...*⁴

He further explained:

*I loved his drawings for the way they told about things. I have since then constantly referred to Cotton to explain what it is I have actually seen... Nobody told me about Cotton I just found him on a book shelf.*⁵

It was the spare, explanatory drawings of Cotton which enabled the giant step forward McCahon made in *Harbour Cone from Peggy’s Hill* (1939), with its radically simplified landforms largely stripped of surface detail (roads, houses) to expose the geomorphological structure of the land.

2.
McCahon’s first solo exhibition took place at the French Maid Coffee House in Wellington in 1945; his next two solo shows were both held at public libraries in 1948: at Wellington Public Library in February (later shown at the Lower Hutt Library) and at Dunedin Public Library in September.

McCahon first heard about the possibility of exhibiting at Wellington Public Library in 1946 from his friend Ron O’Reilly who was then attending Library School before beginning his distinguished career. He told McCahon:

*Colin: the Wgtn Public Library is now making available the walls of the passage outside the reference room (at the head of the stairs) for one man exhibitions, free...*

³ Charles Cotton, *Geomorphology,* first published in 1922; the third edition (Whitcombe & Tombs, 1942), was the one which McCahon owned.
⁴ Patrick Hayman (1915-88) was an English painter who lived in New Zealand 1936-1947 and became a close friend of Colin McCahon and his circle.
⁵ CM to Ron O’Reilly, 31 August 1972; McCahon’s letters quoted with the kind permission of the McCahon family and Matthew O’Reilly.
⁶ Ibid.
Peter Simpson

The wall space is ample for a pretty good display including big pictures. What about availing yourself of it?6

McCahon wrote to the librarian, Stuart Perry (1908-1982), whose initiative this was, and eventually secured an exhibition for February 1948. O’Reilly, who was by then working at Lower Hutt Public Library, was heavily involved in organising the exhibition (assembling, cataloguing, hanging) because McCahon was living not in Wellington but in Tahunanui near Nelson. The exhibition was dominated by works from 1947–48 (29 of 42), a prolific period which encompassed McCahon’s first figurative biblical paintings such as The Angel of the Annunciation, The King of the Jews and several Crucifixions. The show was sharply controversial and caused a flurry of (mostly hostile) correspondence in newspapers and magazines. It made McCahon’s name as a painter.

Later that year (in September 1948) McCahon held an exhibition at the Dunedin Public Library, organised by Archie Dunningham assisted by McCahon’s Dunedin friends, Rodney Kennedy and Charles Brasch.7 O’Reilly wrote to McCahon in June: ‘Charles [Brasch] mentioned that he is trying to persuade you to have an exhibition in Archie [Dunningham’s] new lecture hall. I hope you will accede’.8 McCahon reported to O’Reilly:

The Dunedin exhibition started on Thursday...On Wed[nes]day hung the pictures & made up the catalogue. Thursday more hanging – that is a very difficult room to hang in... The final effect was pretty good though not so good as Wellington.9

Later he was less enthusiastic, telling O’Reilly: ‘The show was really a flop. Very few people went & it all seemed very flat. The opening was the only busy time’.10

There were 27 items included (mostly paintings, some drawings), made between July 1947 and September 1948. In a hand-written note on a copy of the simple catalogue (with a brief essay by Brasch) McCahon informed

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7 Ron O’Reilly to Colin McCahon 30 March 1946; quotations from O’Reilly’s letters with the kind permission of the O’Reilly estate and Hocken Collections.
9 Ron O’Reilly to Colin McCahon, 27 June, 1948.
10 CM to Ron O’Reilly, 20 September 1948.
11 CM to Ron O’Reilly, [25 October], 1948.
O’Reilly: ‘Quite a lot of new work and even some of the old ones have been repainted.’ Into this latter category came *The Promised Land*, *The Family*, *Dear Wee June*, *Ligar Bay* and *Triple Takaka* (previously *Monday Morning near Takaka*); these had all been shown in February and were later repainted in Christchurch where McCahon had moved in March 1948. Among new paintings from Christchurch were *Hail Mary* and *Takaka: night and day*. Nothing sold; apparently Dunedin people thought the prices were too high – they ranged for paintings from 8 to 50 guineas (for *Takaka: night and day*).

A decade later, in April 1958, McCahon again showed at Dunedin Public Library, once more with assistance from Dunningham, Brasch and Kennedy. In the intervening years he had exhibited his work largely at Group Shows in Christchurch and in solo or two-person shows (with Toss Woollaston) at private galleries in Wellington (1949) and Auckland (1949, 1957). In 1953 McCahon moved with his family to Titirangi in West Auckland to become a curator at Auckland City Art Gallery. The 39 paintings shown were largely landscapes of kauri forest at Titirangi, French Bay and Manukau Harbour painted between 1954 and 1957, partly under the influence of Cubism, which he had studied in Melbourne in 1951. At the opening Brasch said:

*The Auckland paintings seem an entirely new departure. The colour and light of Auckland are different from those of the rest of N. Z...All of them tell us something new about the look of N. Z. They couldn’t have been painted anywhere in the world except Auckland; but they could only have been painted by someone who had absorbed what painters in other countries are doing today.*

By the time the 1958 Dunedin exhibition opened McCahon was in the United States on a four-month visit sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and Auckland City Art Gallery. He criss-crossed the continent from west coast to east coast visiting scores of public galleries, museums and dealer galleries. Back in New Zealand his work changed radically – in scale (much larger), materials (inks and commercial enamels, not oil paints), supports (hardboard and unstretched canvas), and in other respects, such as more gestural paint application, frequent use of words, increasing abstraction and working in series. One of the first works completed on his return was the 16-panel *The Wake*, on large unstretched canvases and incorporating a

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12 CM to Ron O’Reilly, [September] 1948.
13 Charles Brasch, talk at opening of Recent Paintings, Dunedin Public Library Exhibition Hall, April 1958, Hocken Library MS-996 Brasch 2/226.
Peter Simpson

nine-part poem by John Caselberg about the death of his dog, Thor.

The Wake was first shown at Canterbury Public Library, where O’Reilly had been librarian since 1951. McCahon first mentioned the panels to O’Reilly in November 1958, predicting that they would ‘cause much of the same stir that the 194[8] exhibition did in Wellington’. He wrote again in March 1959:

The “Wake” panels of John [Caselberg’s] & mine are now available at any time you want them. It seems they will fit into the room – only just & unfortunately with gaps. This is really one large painting so the order of the panels is important and also the continuity... for John’s sake as well as mine I want the maximum effect. They are an attempt to create a new environment and a quite new visual experience.¹⁴

This was the only exhibition of McCahon’s works at Canterbury Public Library, though O’Reilly also purchased several for the loan collection he started in 1955. These included Kauri landscape (1955), Red and black landscape (1959) and several Northland drawings (1959).

The indefatigable O’Reilly was instrumental in organizing several later exhibitions of McCahon’s work: at the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery in 1962 (the Gate series) and 1963 (the Woollaston/McCahon Retrospective). Years later, O’Reilly organised McCahon’s “Necessary Protection” (1977) at Govett-Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth, where he became director after retiring from his position as head of the Library School in Wellington.

3.

As McCahon’s career advanced and interest in his work among artists, critics, scholars, collectors and art aficionados expanded, libraries became increasingly important as repositories for materials such as inward and outward correspondence, documentation associated with exhibitions and in some cases, notably at Hocken Collections, for art works.

Several of McCahon’s Dunedin friends, notably Kennedy and Brasch, began gifting paintings and other materials to the Hocken from the mid-1950s. In 1955 Kennedy donated more than 20 landscape drawings preliminary

¹⁴ McCahon to O’Reilly 11 November 1958
¹⁵ McCahon to O’Reilly, 11 March 1959. The Wake was partly influenced by ‘environments’ created by Alan Kaprow McCahon had seen in New York.
to McCahon’s panoramic depictions of *Otago Peninsula* in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{16} In 1977 Kennedy also donated numerous drawings McCahon had given him associated with theatre productions McCahon had designed sets for such as *Peer Gynt* (1953) and *The Glass Menagerie* (1956). Brasch first donated paintings in 1963 (e.g. *I Am, Maitai Valley, The Virgin and Child Compared*), followed by another group in 1969 (including *Manukau 3* and *Titirangi Winter*); further works and papers were included in a major bequest after Brasch’s death in 1973, such as *Kauri Trees* and *Fifteen Drawings for Charles Brash*.

In that same year 1973, after the death of McCahon’s mother, some 25 works his parents owned, especially from early in his career, were given to the Hocken as the John & Ethel McCahon Bequest (including *Harbour Cone from Peggy’s Hill*).

McCahon himself began donating important works to Hocken in the 1970s, including *The Song of the Shining Cuckoo* in 1977, *The Wake, Dear Wee June* and *Northland triptych* in 1978, and *John in Canterbury* in 1980. In 1981 the McCahon family deposited a large collection of inwards correspondence and other archival materials in the Hocken; this was followed by another large gift of papers after McCahon’s death in 1987. The Library was also the recipient of papers by other writers and artists such as Caselberg, Brasch and Patricia France which included important McCahon materials, including letters. This accumulation of McCahon materials led eventually to the inclusion of the Colin and Anne McCahon Papers at Hocken Collections in the UNESCO Memory of the World Aotearoa New Zealand Register in 2020.

Many other libraries in New Zealand have acquired valuable McCahon papers and archives; these include Alexander Turnbull Library (e.g. the McCahon–Peter McLeavey correspondence), Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand (McCahon’s letters to Toss Woollaston), and the E.H. McCormick Research Library at Auckland Art Gallery which has an extensive McCahon archive including letters, photographs, and files of ephemera and exhibition reviews.

The first recourse of anyone wishing to research some aspect of McCahon’s life and career is to the archival resources of New Zealand’s libraries, those invaluable places.

\textsuperscript{16} *Otago Peninsula* (1946, Te Papa Tongarewa); *Otago Peninsula* (1946–49); the latter work, painted for Kennedy, was given by him to Dunedin Public Library.
Footnote concerning a vanished book

Never will I lay them all on the table, you know that it will be only one book, afterward I pass on to other things, after the fire if you accept, if you come back.


In consequence of the financial straits of the republic, it became necessary to dispose of the library of the Medici, which had become the property of the state [...] There was great danger that this magnificent collection of books would now be dispersed. Such a loss would have been irreparable; there was at that time no library in Europe which contained so complete a collection of Greek and Latin classics. It happened that the convent of St Marks could then command a considerable sum of money, in consequence of the sale of all unnecessary property which Savonarola had recommended. They agreed to pay two thousand florins at once...

(William Robinson Clark, Savonarola: His Life and Times, 1890: 269)

In a picture book you once gave me: a sixteenth century Florentine painting of the execution of Girolamo Savonarola in the Piazza della Signoria. The fire in long-shot, the austere piazza like a lord’s great kitchen.

I seldom dream of him but when I do we are always dancing, it is always a waltz, the old-fashioned kind it is always light, filtered sunlight and gardenias, and blond wooden floors (there is always a part of this that is for you).

A vague and silent music stops.
And it’s clear you’ve had your heart bro-
ken like a record

All things I built are falling, ruined all/ I saw them fall as dust upon the sea!
(William Dawson, Savonarola: A Drama, 1900: 89)

The small boy asks me to explain: what is happening in this picture? These people have a fire. See, they are bringing wood. Why? I suppose they like fires. I bowdlerize,
for knowledge should come later, long after this rough magic and those injured things, jointed of their bones, fahrenheit; the smoke from Alexandria still lingering in our hair. He is distracted by horses in the foreground, does not see

the three figures hanging there

in the polity of the piazza. How many similar journeys in the previous year with armloads of writing, books he had consigned to loss, the “poetry in Latin and in the vernacular, and other heretical things” —

& some say the painter of the Primavera was inspired to carry his own work to be burnt amongst the rest. Though this is uncertain. A reckless severance from memory, the heat in his arteries flickering against the tunica intima.

There is no longer a book for this. I miss you.
I don't even dream about you anymore; that is how far it has gone.

Last night we were in the library, the last of the afternoon sun, reading Proust aloud he was stroking my hair. Do you see what you have done to me? Bereft.

If I were to put my hand out now, and touch your cheek. That night in 1497, before we lost who we are.

bro-ken like a record
   -like a record
   -like a record

And these people, asks the boy, what are they doing?
Oh, they are just walking slowly towards the pleasant warmth of the flames...
Jack Ross

Library Dreaming

Wallace Stevens Meets the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang

Let be be finale of seem
– ‘The Emperor of Ice-Cream’

Who’s to say it couldn’t have happened?
the young Wallace Stevens
born in 1879
in Reading, Pennsylvania
might well have travelled out west
sometime before going to Harvard
in the Fall of ’97

It wasn’t till 1896
on his release
from Wyoming State Prison
that Butch Cassidy
put together the Wild Bunch
(Stevens was 17)

It wasn’t till 1901
that he and Etta Place and the Sundance Kid
left for South America
(Stevens was 22)

It wasn’t till 1908
he was shot down
in San Vicente Bolivia
(Stevens was 29)

It wasn’t till 1916
that he moved to Hartford
becoming Vice President
of the Hartford Accident & Indemnity Company
in 1934

NOTE: When you start to cull your National Library collection along predetermined lines — in this case, an increasingly narrow definition of what is ‘of local interest’ — you inhibit the ability to make unexpected connections. A nation as small as ours, in so illimitable an ocean, cannot afford to cut off its possibilities in so short-sighted a way. Wallace Stevens may be trusted to stay on our shelves, but even land-locked Bolivia may be part of our story — or we part of theirs. J.R.
Karl Wolfskehl

Lobgesang

Büchern bin ich zugeschworen,
Bücher bilden meine Welt.
Bin an Bücher ganz verloren,
Bin von Büchern rings umstellt.

Zärter noch als Mädchenwangen
Streichl ich ein geliebtes Buch,
Atme bebend vor Verlangen
Echten Pergamentgeruch.

Inkunabeln, Erstausgaben,
Sonder-, Luxus-, Einzeldruck:
Alles, alles möcht ich haben -
Nicht zum Lesen, bloss zum Guck!

Bücher sprechen ungelesen -
Seit ich gut mit Büchern stand
Weiss ich ihr geheimstes Wesen:
Welch ein Band knüpft manchen Band!

Bücher, Bücher, Bücher, Bücher
Meines Lebens Brot und Wein!
Hüllt einst nicht in Leichentücher -
Schlagt mich in van Geldern ein!

München, 1932

Song of Praise

To books I am sworn totally,
Books constitute my world.
I am utterly lost to books,
I am encircled by books.

More tenderly even than girls’ cheeks
I caress a beloved book,
I inhale, trembling with desire
The scent of genuine parchment.

Incunables and first editions,
Special-, luxury-, single-print:
All, all that, I want to own –
Less to read them, than admire!

Books speak to me before their reading –
Since I have had close bonds with books
I know of their most secret ways:
Such alliances there are among them!

Books and books and books galore
The bread and wine of my life!
At my death give me no shroud,
Wrap me up in van Gelder paper.

Munich 1932
tr. by. Friedrich Voit

—Wolfskehl was a great bibliophile. He had to sell his famous book collection when he escaped to New Zealand in 1938, where he died in 1948. Over several years the German Literary Archive in Marbach has reconstructed Wolfskehl’s library, both by acquiring volumes as they came on the market again and with digitized copies, including the small collection he managed to assemble as an exile here in New Zealand. This reconstruction now provides unique and important historical and cultural documentation, illuminating some of the ‘secret ways’ of books as they stretch over centuries and cultural spheres. F.V.
Mac doesn’t say much today, his silence is a kind of speech. Jeremy is thinking aloud, not even words can pass his lips. Anaru makes the most of time he’s doing, doing him. Stevie’s ghosted to a wing out there, but here he is. The books we share today are only half the tale; each soul around this table’s a body never meant to be this shape. It’s what we do, it kills the time. It’s where we dream of endings, waking up in a different story.

Clothbound

my copy of Rilke’s *Journal of Malte Laurids Brigge* belonged to the late Phoebe Meikle who bought it at Zwemmer’s Charing Cross Road London in 1950 a book of horrors in a torn jacket as new between its boards of cornflower blue
21st Century Allegory of Hope

Feeding words in to a Black Hole while
I stand in the garden, outside this house
on the single hill that is Port Chalmers.

It is only a small Black Hole, domestic
in scale to some of its kind, the size of
a cat or large hedgehog maybe.

I smile as my arm lengthens, pulls
away from my body towards the
singularity, and at just the precise
moment I release the word from my
fingers—I pull away my arm from
that ferocious, voracious gravity—

and the word, though static, stretches
and stretches, interminably stretches
and then disappears.

A Hundred Thousand Blessings

May a hundred thousand blessings fall upon your house, O China,
May they fall like the small drops that spatter the dust,
When, after long drought, the land lies warm and waiting.
May they alight on your rooftops like the quiet doves of peace,
Gliding down through the air as softly as the autumn poplar leaves,
And may these blessings be all around you in all your paths,
You and your children forever.

Epigram on a Certain Newspaper

Winds roar, seas rage, skies fall ... nothing dismays me
so long as the New Zealand Herald does not praise me.
THE DEAL

THORNDON STREETCORNER. FOG. DIM LIGHT. A SHADY CHARACTER IN A DARK TRENCHCOAT APPROACHES A NON-DESCRIPT CIVIL SERVANT AS HE WAITS TO CROSS AT THE LIGHTS.

SHADY Hey, brother, got a light?
CIVIL I don’t smoke. And...and neither should you.
SHADY True, true, keep trying to kick’em but they got a grip on me. But, hey, you looking for something...else? Something to get lit?
CIVIL I’m fine.
SHADY I’m selling. I got everything. I got...books.
CIVIL Books?
SHADY Books that’ll rip your head off. From all over the globe. From way back when. I may not look it, but I am...carrying...a library.
CIVIL Look, I’m –
SHADY “Love hits you from behind while you’re waiting for the lights to change”.
CIVIL Are you threatening me?
SHADY No, it’s from one of the books. I got poetry, philosophy, geography, his –
CIVIL Where did you...get...books?
SHADY Secret...but I’ll tell you - Rotary. Rotarians are barbarians. They were giving them away like a lolly scrabble from a fire engine. Picked ‘em up for song. And these books sing songs that’ll --
CIVIL Where are they?
SHADY Inside my coat. On a flashdrive...Yeah, nah, jokes, digital is dead, I got a truck --
CIVIL You know I work for the government. I could –
SHADY You could do the right thing and take these books back? Give them a home?
CIVIL ...Show me.

SHADY SMILES, SHUFFLES OFF. CIVIL FOLLOWS, PULLS A KNIFE.

SHADY Whoa! Thought we were getting friendly?
CIVIL Can’t trust anyone these days. Nah, relax, it’s just a paper knife...
okay, it’s not a paper knife. Where are the books?
SHADY  Not showing you now. Deal is off.
CIVIL  What deal? No money has been --
SHADY  Don’t want money. Want you to take these good books back or
I’m going to tell everyone where I got ‘em and—
CIVIL  But—like you said, the Rotarians were —
SHADY  Nah, they’re just the front, the fall guys, while the real crims
deep six the rest in the harbour - using books as ballast, so your leaky boat
might float a little higher.
CIVIL  What real crims?
SHADY  Your boss.
CIVIL  What boss?
SHADY  You work for the government. Who’s your boss?
CIVIL  ... Show me the books.
SHADY  You do PR for Internal Affairs, right? You find fifty words for
“No”, massage the truth, clean up messes, make memos disappear, and
some unlucky folks, too.
CIVIL  ...Who are you?
SHADY  An avid reader, a concerned citizen. Listen, I got dirt that links
your boss to illegal book biffing, and that the order came from the top,
from —
CIVIL  Show me the books!
SHADY  They aren’t here. (FRUSTRATED, CIVIL WALKS AWAY).
But I do have a memo, signed by your boss. And I’m meeting Nicky Hagar
here, to pass it on if you —
CIVIL  Who leaked it?
SHADY  You did. You got hacked. Damn that digital revolution! You
know if you turn the Beehive upside down, it kind of looks like a sieve.

CIVIL RUNS AT SHADY, HIS KNIFE DRAWN. SHADY SIDESTEPS
AND A DELUGE OF BOOKS FALL FROM THE SKY, BURYING
CIVIL. SHADY GIVES THUMBS UP TO A TRUCK DRIVER
PARKED ON AN OVERPASS ABOVE WITH A TIPPED UP DECK.
SHADY TAKES OUT HIS MOBILE.

SHADY  Nicky, we still on?...Good. Bring your camera. I got picture
for ya.

END
Graham Reid

Back to the Islands

When I was a wee boy, on Sunday mornings I’d climb into bed with my dad and he would tell me a story. It was always much the same story and, with me nudging him awake from time to time, he would spin a tale of a little boy named Robinson who ran away to sea.

I was always that boy in my imaginings, and indeed when I was about seven I did try to run away to sea.

The romance of Robinson, his travels to strange lands, the storms and the shipwreck grew inside me until one day I learned where this had all come from.

I got a child’s version of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. I treasured that book and over time gravitated to literature about islands, passing through *Treasure Island* along the way and of course ending up back where I started with Defoe’s actual *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York*, first published in 1719.

It was tough going but as a teenager I devoured it, and then when at university studying English Literature I encountered it again in a more adult and academic way. New layers were revealed, here was the “economic man” who scorned the money he found on the shipwrecked vessel . . . but took it anyway.

Then there was the problematic relationship with Friday, all the religious and political subtexts . . .

What that book did was take me on an adventure into literature and the context in which it is created. It also took me to the famous Llandoger Trow pub in Bristol where Defoe supposedly met the real castaway Alexander Selkirk and heard his story.

Defoe, whose life to that point had been one of being pursued by bailiffs and political enemies for his pamphleteering, doubtless loved the idea of isolation from society.
Robinson Crusoe got me into reading about Defoe’s life and times, his Journal of the Plague Year and more.

And to Michel Tournier’s Friday, or, The Other Island which is a rather more clear-eyed retelling of the castaway tale.

I still read “island literature” and even settle in for movie spin-offs like Tom Hanks’ Cast Away.

Yes, it is escapism in a sense. But it is an escape into something rather than from the world.

It is storytelling, childhood memories and voyages of digressive discovery through the power of pages and print.

What more could anyone ask from a story or a book than it introduce us to other stories and offer us a lifetime of rewarding reading?

LET THERE BE

As our library increased in size and prestige there was less opportunity for those who kept to themselves, rarely venturing from the basement stacks. After all, stars are stars because they are seen. We couldn’t hold a candle to them.

The word came from above, it always does. Perhaps noon reduces shadows so much that grow and go look the same to the brightest?

They sent us into the world, where one good book among many claimed there was endless space made by the best words ever.

On the last day of the financial year a New York Times bestseller visited our apple box: ‘I love what you’ve done with the space,’ it said recto turning green and verso yellow, ‘where do you go for repairs?’ ‘We lie open to the sky,’ I replied, ‘some nights we become illuminated manuscripts.’
Barbarism Against the Book

We have to indeed have the idea that we are many. ‘We are many you are few,’ Shelley writes in a poem about the Peterloo Massacre, ‘The Mask of Anarchy’. Still, he cared.

Fact: a lot of those who were sent to Australian prisons were in reading clubs, some were radicals.

I thought that indeed, as a side aspect, someone might be making money selling off books also. Mostly libraries don’t.

Young librarians and others are drawn into what is called “technology”.

It becomes an obsession. You start, as I did as a lineman then as an engineering tech working on microwave systems and radio etc ... I became so fascinated by the systems and the electronics or the radio aspects I disconnected from the political or other significance of what I was involved in. But there is big money in technology associated with cell phones. It’s where the big money is and there are private companies who, I suspect, sell systems and push people away from “old things”.

Is this what is happening with the library?

What Capitalism is doing is selling gadgets. Capitalism is in now a stage that Mao tse Tung and others predicted would occur. It has massively overproduced. Now we have the illusion of “Progress”, an abstraction no one can define. We are really at sea.

Marxism was too hopeful and failed to factor in that we need to allow people equality but also allow people to keep their religions and other things. Change must be purposeful and for and by people, not driven by the enormous companies who now drive our systems, nor driven by people with fixed ideas. Somehow, as Auden said, we need to
‘love one another or die’

and stop our obsession with money and “Progress”.

Image: a young woman pushing buttons while walking along a sea shore or passing a beautiful tree as a flight of birds passes over.

We also need humans and good persons to see the beauty of books and what was written in them.

Remember: electronic devices are fallible and likely to fail at any time as with the Hamilton hospital cyber event.

Electronic systems and physical books are not mutually exclusive, but we need to think in terms of the inherent beauty and wonder of the human mind, and not “Progress” and “efficiency”.

We need to think of what is interesting and beautiful. Even what is spiritually deep,

something that can be found in deep or simple poetry, and in books of all kinds.

We have to oppose these pirates of our culture whether “our culture” means European culture, Asian culture, Māori culture or whatever culture. We are a multi-world.

I protest this barbarism against The Book.
Sonnet of the Book Thieves

The National Library tried to slip this one through on the quiet
Telling the Friends of the Libraries, with a certain mirth
The belief that books in the digital age are of little worth
In such a convincing manner that they would buy it

They’d ‘forgotten’ to check the Library books properly
Because of toxic policies towards printed matter
A large number of books, 640,000, lay in tatters
The result is to abandon them from the Library

A recent film remembers well those who destroy books
When a young woman rescued books from a Nazi bonfire
A civilization depends on its attitude to the written word

Thus, beware of thieving, conniving, bureaucratic crooks
Who leave the wealth of knowledge and wisdom in their mire
Of ignorance and greed which is both withered and absurd
The Borgesian instance

The American writing the novel in the café in Prague imagines she is an American writing a novel in a café in Paris

her Catherine leans forward across the table as her hair falls lightly across her brow and she flicks it away while the pulse at her throat beats and Paul notices it and leans across to Catherine to say someone ought to have told you a woman is dead

It’s a novel about leaning across and falling across the mirrored walls of this café in Barcelona mete out repetitions and her Catherine longs for meetings which can be arranged at a price – she gets an actor to play her character back to her

the actor leaves a plot outline from her unconscious scrawled in lipstick on the serviette Catherine leans across to pick it up

—Jorge Luis Borges was Director of the National Public Library in Buenos Aires from 1955 to 1973.
Jenny Powell

Title: Dog Turns at the Top of the Drive

Dog turns at the top of the drive
while workmen and I discuss insulation.
Spine tears, I begin to write.

He leads from the left; my right takes a dive,
damage occurs from partial rotation.
Dog turns at the top of the drive.

Injured ligaments start to divide
trapped in the pull of dual direction.
Spine tears, I begin to writhe.

History notes that hypermobile
sacroiliac joints lose tight connection.
Dog turns at the top of the drive.

Shelved under 'sacred' the aging archive
is deemed irrelevant, inconsequential.
Spine tears, I begin to write.

Will you decide to keep me alive
or declare that I require cremation?
Dog turns at the top of the drive,
spine tears, I begin to writhe.

Peter Olds

I Might Go to Adelaide One Day

I love the word ‘south’
South Australia
Wild South South Dunedin
South Island
‘Down South’.

The South Pole
Southland
South where Scott and Oats went & never returned, their tiny bodies ground to glass under millions of tons of ice and howling gales—like sand on St Kilda Beach. South of the South Pole.

The back of grandma’s place where the bantams scratch for grubs. Beyond Invercargill and Campbell Island where shipwrecked 19th c. sealers lived on seagulls and dressed in sealskins for two years, till they were rescued by the crew of a scientific ship doing research on weather patterns & the habits of sealice.

These Lists are Closed
National Library Collections Management Project

These lists will not touch base with you after a week or so. These lists will not speak to you soon. These lists will not look forward to hearing from you. These lists will not wait for your reply in anticipation. These lists will not thank you for your time. These lists will not look forward to meeting you. These lists will not thank you for your consideration. These lists will not hope to work with you again soon. These lists will not let you know if they have any questions. These lists will not wish you a nice holiday. These lists will not ask you to consider the environment before printing.

These lists are not up for debate. These lists don’t care about you trying to save them. These lists are for your information only, because these lists are closed.

Lynley Edmeades
DISTILLING TEXTUAL TONE: 
TWO AGRAMMATIC COLLAGES

U.S. CRIMINAL CODE vs. THE POETRY OF OSCAR WILDE

States prisoners, which may, discretion roads, of clearing, the maintaining Attorney and be public such reimbursed lands, offense, Sentence the for building and victim; expenses. and there intentionally the constructing is inflicted offense, As likelihood defendant serious such part repairing of who bodily that any such has injury participation an offense the other person’s been that in involved expense public escaping found result of ways before guilty in act the operating or—the constituted enterprise, such works arrest an death attempts camps financed warrant offense of reckless the wholly can described the disregard kill Attorney or be in victim; for General in obtained. Section or human knowingly directs, or of found the provisions: sections theft, depredation repairing the guilty time of participants of—of property, in the destruction offense offense. of referred Bureau property, contraband, mutiny of and riot, Prisons and trespass employees of powers title
Meadow daffodil, missel-thrush should
too love-child frightened trodden
Rich the Persephone Sleep
autumn Spring, glade, been
time, has One wearied kind.
the lingered pale of There
season’s on narcissus are
To loiters flower
trees, harebell afraid of silent he
And spreads Of lads Hylas, chimes,
see her their of columbine else,
his azure own Arcady! Its must
treasure pavilion love
scattered some hidden bee,
wandering look to Kissed instead winter lonely
enchantment leaves, For Love throbbing
held us (Green more un kissed mate is of
the leaves supreme And I kisses, the
king it upon goal. over and stay sailed linnet’s
in tribe her lute Lo! songs upon throat
grows golden while allow, never Is
and sun hair. not
the Green spake
hum grasses the
Of through earth
look the did
upon. yellow turn
As sheaves away
Of Her
pomegran autumn visage,
cut corn from
twain, not God,
is Hecate’s
her boat
crimson
Mary-Anne Bourke

(KLAXON)

Wake up, little children, wake up
Wake up, little children, wake up
We’ve all been sound asleep
Wake up, you children, and weep
The dream is over, it’s nought o’clock
And we’re in trouble deep
Wake up, you people
Wake up, you people

Well, what do you reckon they told Jacinda?
How the hell did they sell it to Grant?
What are we gonna tell the kids
When they say—You did what?!
Wake up, New Zealand
Wake up, New Zealand

So, they told everyone those books there were dumb
Looks like they goofed, and some
Wake up, New Zealanders
Wherever you come from
Is anyone home?

Wake up, you people, wake up
Wake up, you people, wake up
You know this move here is not hot
The DIA has lost the plot
If we’re gonna be sheep, our goose is cooked
Our reputation is shot
Wake up, you people
Wake up, you people

Because who’s gonna tell our story now?
Now they’ve de-selected the past (all that hard evidence)
What are we gonna tell the kids when they say—What were you thinking?
Wake up, little children
Wake up, little children
And weep

—(To the tune of ‘Wake Up, Little Suzie’ by The Everly Brothers).
The World Lost
Harry Ricketts

Indirect Popcorn 2

This agreeably battered and foxed copy of *The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster* (Jonathan Cape, 1970) was given to me by the painter Karl Maughan. According to the flyleaf, it had previously belonged to Peggy Dunstan, whose capital D resembles a distant sail suddenly filled by the wind. Alongside is the price $14.

I’d vaguely assumed that no one read Brautigan now, that he had disappeared into some time-warp, where they still roll up to *Hangman’s Beautiful Daughter*, say ‘trippy tray’, lounge with the shine of youth.

But when I asked Karl’s wife Emily, who’s a novelist and teaches creative writing, she said that some of her students read Brautigan and particularly like ‘The Revenge of the Lawn’ and *Trout Fishing in America*.

Phil, an Aussie friend in Hong Kong, was a fan of *The Hawkline Monster: A Gothic Western*, used to read out bits while the sun, a bloated leech, slid behind Lion Rock.

On page 75 of this battered, foxed copy of *The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster* is a seven-line poem called ‘Indirect Popcorn’ and, underneath, written slantwise in black ink:

> John,  
> Just a little  
> thing you’ll  
> find sometime.  
> I hope you’re  
> happy  
> Ina  
> with love

- 52 -
Kia Orana, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell,

Kia Orana, Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, I greet you from the land of the living. I bow my head in respect to you and your work. When I close my eyes I see your ‘long pouring headland,’ your ‘smoking coast’ and ‘men moving between the fires.’

I wish I had known you, but then we were different generations, linked only by our sensibilities and our love of language. For me, you were a bridge from my white palangi culture to Polynesian ways, to your ‘plant gods, tree gods, gods of the middle world...’ I sank into your ocean. I believe you were the first Polynesian poet to have a collection published in English, *My Eyes Dazzle*, in 1950 when I was only three years old. You were, in yourself, something of a bridge with your Scottish father, Jock Campbell, and your Cook Island mother Teu Bosini, a descendant of the Tongarevan *ariki* or high chief Paroa. You were equally at home with Dionysus and Te aka ia Roe in whom you discovered the root of your existence. You were not afraid to walk the paths of love, or to walk the ‘black path at noon/Walk the tilting earth/between dream and nightmare,’ and you taught me to walk those paths too, the gentle and the savage. To see the gods in a piece of driftwood, and to pass the drinking horn with ‘water spilling over the lip’ in the presence of girls in their none-too-shy mini skirts.

I met you in the street one day a year or so ago, but I doubt that you remember. I was passing the Auckland Central Library when I noticed a battered old aluminum book case stuffed with books. Giveaway books. The library was having a purge. And there I found a jewel, your novel, *The Frigate Bird*, published by Heinemann Reed (who longer exist) in 1989, with an introduction by Albert Wendt who described you as ‘a kaumatue in Pacific writing.’

I could feel your presence, hovering around me, you clinging to the inside of a coconut shell, your *Avaiki*, your shadow in the impossibly long night, and I shivered.

Dead men tell no tales, they say, but that doesn’t apply to writers. Writers can be the dead talking. Reading from *The Frigate Bird* then, standing on the Auckland street with people from all over wandering by, I was listening
Mike Johnson
to a dead man’s tales. The blurb describes the novel as ‘alternating between the comic and the sinister, fantasy and madness, Polynesian spirituality and European angst.’

But what was it doing, discarded on the street, lying sideways like a home-less person, this precious piece of heritage? Later I was told there were ‘surplus copies’ that needed discarding. Nowhere to house them.

I could hear your voice telling me that a culture that can’t house its books can’t house its people either, and that is already true. We have ‘surplus people.’ It was Heinrich Heine, in the early 19th Century who observed, ‘Wherever they burn books, in the end will also burn human beings.’ Perhaps we can reformulate Heine’s observation into its prequel,

‘Wherever they discard books, in the end will also discard people.’

And that is coming true too, my friend. More and more I see discarded people lying on pavements with no one to come and give them a home, as I did with your novel.

Your discarded The Frigate Bird sits in my book case, and is given due respect as a taonga. No longer discarded, but what about the homeless who also cluster around the library? Who is around to treat them as a taonga?

Recently Bill Direen contacted me, and told me how many thousands to books have been shoveled into the fires of oblivion. I daren’t think of how many. Whole sections of our culture and cultural memory pealed away. Burnt or pulped. The bleak logic that drives all this would have been alien to you, I think. Cost cutting, space cutting, human cutting. I see your ‘leaf-green/Bodies leaning and talking with the sea behind them...’ and I think of that dusty concrete expanse with its sad old bookcase and its discarded books.

So Aere Ra my friend, go well in your chosen ocean. One way or another, your words will live after you. Your guardians are on hand.

Waiteke Island, June 2021
Homage to *Fahrenheit 451*

An index of the forbidden, incunabula, completist compendium, the great codex, gospels, epistles, illuminated missals, Sibyl’s leaves, pith taken from the trunks of trees. Book of facts, book of feasts, book of legends, book of nonsense, book of lies, book of dreams, book of lost tribes, book of enlightenment, bleeding edge of devil’s ink, one more time. Book of annihilation, defacement; book thrown, book that bites and stings to free us from us; book buried full fathom five, made of bone. The Viking epic, the Hindu epic, *The Dunciad*, even the Elizabethan world view, dumped on the cart, books sacred or taboo; books forgotten: asked, what happened to you? Books extant bow down, now out on their ear, each extinct volume stamped *NOT MADE HERE*. Books judged guilty till proved innocent. Literature blown to very fine scraps: fragments stuck like wings of bees in amber; books like a squarish chunk of the True Cross. The farce of ‘dustiny’, backward and abysmal, a negation that rejects the universal; leaping from the pages into your arms no more; instead, remaindered and trucked for landfill. Gore Vidal’s four favourite words: I told you so; but who is to know Oscar Wilde tore off the top of each page he read with the flourish of an orchestra conductor, entombed along with his books as a waka sinks on Taupō. Laws to purify the dialect of the tribe; remember us, whisper words of wisdom, though passports revoked they’re shipped offshore. Cathedral where logomancers once held sway, the gulf of which Horace wrote and Homer sang is as empty as a bureaucrat’s head; and those are dollar signs that were her eyes.
David Eggleton

Light creates place, but print is plain meaning,
and absence is melancholy, an ode by John Keats.
God’s anvil, smote by McCahon’s paintbrush, was built
for Jerusalem with Blake’s Holy Word.
Archaic zeal unhouses a legacy,
a bookish harvest crushed to root out heresy.
Dust is dust, and that vaulted ambition
of collections past, a quaint old custom.
Let some muscular aphorist rip shit or bust
this slow-grown forest for Amazon chopsticks.
It’s the same mess made yesterday —
as the landscape erodes in today’s rain —
when conserving was a dirty word in boardrooms.
Beware jabberwocks with their tape measures,
beware contempt of performative franchises,
beware the down-under of the spirit,
grim resistance of civil puritans.
So slash the library until it bleeds,
outsource consultation of our needs;
give books to the collector of left-over souls.
_Urn Burial_, Urquhart’s ‘Rabelais’, all are gone.
Books are noble animals but have to be put down,
because about suffering they are never wrong.
Out of the crooked timber of humanity,
no straight thing was ever made, except books:
books, now martyrs to electronic buzzfuzz,
cancel culture and bonfires of the vanities,
airy nothings of populist politicians.
You screen, I screen, we all screen together.
I dig your screen; screen on, it’s a lovely feeling;
your smartphone screen has got me reeling.
Slam the book shut and get with the programme:
a mass indoctrination by the corporation.
Put books through a paper shredder;
kill the arcane tome, you’ll feel better.
"The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. Although the two are identical twins, man, as a rule, views the prenatal abyss with more calm than the one he is heading for (at some forty-five hundred heartbeats an hour). I know, however, of a young chronophbic who experienced something like panic when looking for the first time at homemade movies that had been taken a few weeks before his birth. He saw a world that was practically unchanged - the same house, the same people - and then realized that he did not exist there at all and that nobody mourned his absence. He caught a glimpse of his mother waving from an upstairs window, and that unfamiliar gesture disturbed him, as if it were some mysterious farewell. But what particularly frightened him was the sight of a brand-new baby carriage standing there on the porch, with the smug, encroaching air of a coffin: even that was empty, as if, in the reverse course of events, his very bones had disintegrated."

(Speak, Memory, Vladimir Nabokov)

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8 Sitting on my bookshelf is a hardback copy of Nabokov’s Speak, Memory, published by Victor Gollancz in 1951. Inside the cover, inked stamps display CANCELLED and DISCHARGED (thrice), as well as the acquisition date 8 OCT 1952. A pasted leaf indicates the last occupied library catalogue was at the University of Auckland, 833.5 Nils, scored in black fountain pen ink in a fine hand, a hand’s touch? One notes as well a printed barcode, converted into numbers: 35556002562448. Do the bars, numbers and handwriting indicate equivalence, one wonders? With such consideration in mind, one approaches the nexus of memory. It turns its page, one by one. Onto a next page, which in my copy, reads: NEW ZEALAND COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE (AEWS), and a next, which reads, N.Z. GOVERNMENT (N.L.S.). What I have read brims with the book held in the hand, already a treasure, before I come upon the first words that Nabokov’s memoir utters, ‘to Véra’. I check and confirm she is his wife, though arrayed here in green, tight-lipped, a gift. And to touch her is to feel a cool resistance, as to touch the upper edge of each individual page, yellowing, musty, verily tactile. Is she the promise of the numinous, of an inside to this experience, in part always untouched? The reflection occurs: is this pulsing in the palm of the hand something to have emulated by way of that other curious misnomer digitisation?
Subverse Protest Time Capsule
from an Offshore Zeit-Traveller

PRESENT
every Berlin winter I light my pale jade Kachelofen with books
found on the street, discarded, no longer treasured
cremated in the service of apartment heating

cal-fired, not to be made illegal till at least 2026 nor its heavily subsidised
  fuel phased out till 2035
no, don’t believe the German government’s greenwash (nor anyone’s)
their power of propaganda learned from forefathers

who also burned books they did not dote on
who in turn spawned spies creating massive binders of neighbours’
  intimate movements, findings
which proved impossible to shred overnight as changing winds churned up
  a fall of wall fall

instead of cover-ups
or uncoverings
I make new books with the covers

where it is tradition to destroy the past and have it haunt us
the tiled oven flames make screwed-up-ball ash ghosts of authors’
  hard efforts
tearing too, red hot through stick-bones of tight-twisted multiple pages,
  the fossilised lignite ignites

glowing oh so cosy, radiant through the slow-release brick and tiles
the optimum spot for snuggling up to read, not those littery lettered
  skeletons, instead
today’s beloved magazines, paperbacks and tomes
PAST
in Welly ‘92 our Unemployed Training Trust big class field trip was
to do Alexander Turnbull and National Library too in a journalism
students’ learning clusterfuck:
two buildings, one morning

how to use their revered bookly, photographic and numerous other
whispering archive resources
how to edge wide-eyed round the Tiriti which most of us then called
— the Treaty
how to be worthy researchers for all our days ahead

returning to the National, I scoured records for the old Racing
Conference Building where I lived
its curved Victoria-Wakefield corner glass made to measure and imported
in one piece from Italy
long before the magical energy-hungry internet, going to the National is
what you did

another time, on a long-haul trip home when that was still possible
I met an old friend for a glorious summer lunch in the sheltered
plaza adjacent
thinking for sure I’d be able to come back again


FUTURE
it may seem nothing to do with the future now but when making to leave
in the past I ditched stuff,
talismans of personal history – books, records; talismans heavy or hard
to store or transport – for
future me had no idea what could or might be counted in time ahead
as irretrievably lost

and here I am there
etching a little reminder message into the hard monumental foresight wall
saying, you never have any idea what future yous will need or want

°
a book in the hand ...

*in October 2020 the National Library declared it would be ‘rehoming’ 640 000 overseas-published books*

*there are approximately 8 000 bricks in an average house*

if books were bricks we could build eighty houses and that would be useful

but they are not bricks, each book already is a home not of straw nor sticks nor bricks

but a House of Words standing on its foundations as deep as the world

and in each house a passageway with all its doors leading through into other places

*here comes the Big Bad Wolf who huffs and puffs and counts the cost of housing books

who will fluster and bluster at those 640 000 houses and might just succeed

but the words in the wind will not stop murmuring they are birds they are autumn leaves

they are kites jigging and jagging tugging at the limits of our hopes and possibilities

they are rising mist at dawn still hanging about until the cows come home

they are clouds in the sky, and clouds are always right for the conditions
they are our future’s seed and spore
adrift like golden motes in that lovely evening light
they are human voices
that long after the wolf is gone will haunt us still
imagine the inhabitants of 640,000 haunted houses
as birds of passage passing through...

* 

there are those who might think a book is passé
that the tablets of the lore
will now suffice
but a book converses tenderly with our fingers
seeps through our skin
its pages and our minds entangled like mycelia
amongst the eloquent root-tips of language
to hold a book firmly in your hands is not at all
like holding a brick
you can heft a brick but a book will heave you
into another space altogether
it is not just another brick in the wall
it is the way out beyond the wall
Save Our Books

The writers in this anthology have made a unified appeal for the National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ) to end its policy of disposing of valued ‘overseas published’ books. To our knowledge, “secure destruction” (the term used by NLNZ) of these international research collections has been averted, but NLNZ is trying to disperse our books in other ways. 12,680 books are being despatched to the National Libraries of Greece, Scotland and the Philippines, and to other libraries who have gladly requested the quality literature on offer. Books have been earmarked for organisations such as the NZ Department of Corrections (our prisoners will be better informed than our researchers). Thirty-two cartons are now at the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at Otago University. 57,000 were donated to Rotary Club, who sold an estimated 7,000 for $2 each; the unsold 50,000 went to a book dealer for an undisclosed sum and may be sold in New Zealand or overseas. The balkanisation of our “wellsprings of knowledge” has begun and must be stopped. There are 600,000 volumes left.

NLNZ tells us that, of these, 428,232 are destined for a scanning facility overseas (Philippines). NLNZ intends to unconditionally give the books to a private U.S.-owned organisation, Internet Archive, who agree to scan as many as they wish and make them accessible digitally on the web. Internet Archive may then sell or otherwise dispose of the remaining hard copies.

Internet Archive stands accused of piracy in an international legal challenge, and a similar organisation, Google’s Hathi Trust, no longer publishes works susceptible to copyright claims (piracy). There are other causes for concern—private providers of virtual ‘libraries’ can disappear, go broke or merge with other companies. The world can change suddenly.

These books are serious volumes of research. Book Guardians Aotearoa have shown how every argument for “secure destruction” or disposal of valued nationally-owned books is flawed (https://bookguardiansaotearoa.com).

The New Zealand Society of Authors/ Te Puni Kaitubi O Aotearoa (https://authors.org.nz) and the Publishers Association of NZ/ Te Rau o Tākupu (https://publishers.org.nz) have shown how such a “digital” deal would deprive writers of royalties and impinge on copyright. Disposing of valued books is a potential abuse of Section 21 of the Human Rights Act 1993, Section 13 of
the NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990, and Article 4 (regarding Toleration of other religions) of the Treaty of Waitangi 1840 (see http://nodisposals.neocities.org).

Keeping our hard copy books is a matter of common sense, and of good legal sense. All librarians I know agree: disposals must cease, lost books must be reclaimed or replaced and acquisition of foreign published books (suspended now for some years) must recommence.

New Zealand is a wealthy, developed, multi-cultural country with a diverse, educated population. We have companies like Phantom Billstickers who work hard to bring poetry and the Arts to the people. Our government should also have a commitment to conserve and promote knowledge for everybody, not to destroy or endanger it.

It is not necessary to give away these books, or swap them for a few digital conversions. The books should be in their proper home in the National Library of New Zealand in Wellington, where readers can access and research them. Three million adult New Zealanders own them and have the legal right to research and access their wide range of knowledge.

Digital conversions overseas will not guarantee their security or survival, and the physical books will be lost to us Kiwis. Once they leave the country we’ll never see them again. NLNZ should keep its own books, curate its own collections, and scan its own books to complement hard copies, while fully respecting international law.

NLNZ will only change course if we all speak up. You can voice your opposition to these disposals by complaining to your local M.P. or writing to the Minister Jan.Tinetti@parliament.govt.nz. It is crucially important you tell them we should hold on to our books and update our library with new acquisitions. Book Guardians Aotearoa, NZSA, PANZ and these writers have begun the job, it is now up to us all to finish it. Good luck.

Bill Direen
Contributors
in order of appearance

Charles Brasch, poet and supporter of the arts, was founding editor of the Landfall. His library of 7,500 books in Special Collections at Otago University and his archives (28 linear metres) are housed at the Hocken Library.

Anne Kennedy, poet, fiction writer, screenplay editor and teacher, has won many awards and fellowships including the NZ Post Book Award for Poetry and the IIML Writers’ Residency. The Sea Walks into a Wall will appear later this year.

Harry Ricketts teaches English Literature and creative writing at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka. He has published over 30 books. Selected Poems, Victoria University Press, 2021. Poems are from Winter Eyes (VUP, 2018) and Newsroom (2019).

Dolores Janiewski is Associate Professor in history focussing on the Cold War. Private Security and the Modern State: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (Routledge, 2020). Parts of An Induced Amnesia have appeared in Victoria University’s ‘Ideas Room’.

Fiona Kidman writes novels, memoir and poetry. Her latest novel, This Mortal Boy, won the Acorn Fiction Prize in 2018. She has been awarded a DNZM, OBE and the French Legion of Honour. This poem is from Where your left hand rests (Godwit, 2010)—with thanks.

Cilla McQueen, poet and artist, lives in Motupōhue, Bluff. She was the 2009-2011 NZ Poet Laureate and received the Prime Minister’s Award for her Poetry. Poeta, new and selected poems (OUP, 2018), and Qualia (Maungatua Press, 2020).

C.K. Stead is perhaps New Zealand’s most respected writer and literary figure. He lives in Auckland. NOTE: Anthony Thwaite (1930-2021) was an English poet, critic and editor of Philip Larkin’s letters and poems. Ann Thwaite (b. 1932) is known for her insightful biographies. She lived in New Zealand in the early 1940s.

Lisa Samuels works with experimental writing, multi-modal art, and relational theory. Recent works are the prose poem The Long White Cloud of Unknowing (Chax, 2019) and Breach (Boiler House Press, Nov. 2021). She lives in Tāmaki Makaurau [Auckland].

David Herkt won the Wesley Wright Poetry Prize for The Body of Man. High Times: The New Zealand Drug Experience 1960–2000 was awarded a New Zealand Film & Television Award. He asserts, his writing depends on well-curated and well-conserved libraries.

Thomas Hocken (1836-1910) wrote of Tasman’s journal referring to translations by his wife, Bessie. He read his paper before the Otago Institute in 1895. He bequeathed an extensive library of papers, documents and books to the people of New Zealand.

Mark Pirie is editor and archivist for PANZA (Poetry Archive of NZ Aotearoa). In 2016, Rock & Roll (selected poems) was published by Bareknuckle Books. He has also written biography art books and currently edits Broadsheet. Website: www.markpirie.com.
Contributors

David Kārena-Holmes has been published widely. *Tē Reo Māori – the Basics Explained* on Māori grammar (Oratia Press, 2020). He contributes a fortnightly column on the grammar of te reo Māori, and articles on various other topics, to the “The Nelson Mail”.

Lyall Benjamin is a former bookseller and teacher. He and the editor met up by chance in his bookshop in Canberra, after many years pursuing different paths.

Michael Morrissey has published 24 books, 23 poetry collections and his stories are often anthologised. His latest poem will appear in *This Twilight Menagerie*, with cover design by Sophie Proctor.

Christine Dann writes regularly about organic gardening and eating vegetarian. She is a founding member of Book Guardians Aotearoa and has a Ph.D. in Environmental Policy from Lincoln University.

Alan Brunton couldn’t give his permission but I know he would have. Alan travelled in Asia and Europe. He helped reshape NZ approaches to theatre and poetry. (1946-2002).

Carolyn McCurdie is a Dunedin writer of poetry and fiction including a children’s fantasy novel *The Unquiet* (Longacre Press, 2006), a short story collection *Albatross* (Rosa Mira Books 2014), and a poetry collection, *Bones in the Octagon* (Mākaro Press, 2015).

Brian Turner’s works include 12 volumes of poetry. In 2020 he was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to literature and poetry. He lives in Central Otago.

Stephanie Christie (who was Will Christie) creates poetry in the form of page poems, text art, installations, theatre, video and sound works. (Re)current interests are discourse analysis and making up songs.

Tony Beyer is the author of *Anchor Stone* (2017) and *Friday Prayers* (2019), both from Cold Hub Press. Recent work has appeared in magazines as various as *Catalyst*, *Hamilton Stone Review* and *Molly Bloom*. He lives in Taranaki, New Zealand.

Siobhan Harvey has published eight books of poetry and creative nonfiction (*Ghosts* OUP, 2021). She has won several fellowships and prizes, and been honoured overseas with various awards. She is a lecturer in Creative Writing.

Writer, radio producer and broadcaster Simon Sweetman released his debut book of poems, *The Death of Music Journalism* in 2020. He writes the subscription newsletter “Sounds Good!” on Substack. You can find all his other stuff at www.offthetracks.co.nz

Bill Direen is a poet-musician. He edited the trans-cultural literary and arts magazine *Percutio* from 2006 to 2017. He edited this Reader.

Richard von Sturmer’s recent books are the memoir, *This Explains Everything* (Atuanui Press, 2016), and *Postcard Stories* (Titus Books, 2019). In 2020 he was the University of Waikato’s writer-in-residence. https://thefloralclocks.bandcamp.com/

Contributors

Alfred Domett, parliamentarian-poet and premier of New Zealand (1862-63), was one of the “fathers” of the General Assembly Library. The other was Herbert Leslie James.

Peter Simpson (born Takaka, 1942) has written or edited many books on New Zealand literature, art and cultural history. He ran the Holloway Press (1993-2013). He received the Prime Minister’s Award for Literary Achievement in 2017.

Olivia Macassey is a poet and editor. Her work has appeared in Poetry New Zealand, Landfall, Takahē, Rabbit, Otoliths and other places. She is the author of two books, The Burnt Hotel (2015) and Love in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (2005).

Jack Ross writes poetry, novels, novellas and short stories. He teaches Creative Writing at Massey University and blogs at http://mairangibay.blogspot.com/. His latest poetry collection is The Oceanic Feeling (Salt & Greyboy Press, 2021).

Before retiring, Friedrich Voit taught German literature and language at Auckland University. He has published monographs on Karl Wolfskehl and edited his work in Germany and New Zealand (Cold Hub Press). For details about Karl Wolfskehl, see p35.


Roger Hickin’s Cold Hub Press publishes poetry & bilingual editions. His own works include Waiting for the Transport (2009) and The situation & Other Poems (2009). He has translated works by Rogelio Guedea (2014) and Ernesto Cardenal (2014).

Scott Flanagan, an exile from his home town of Christchurch, lives in Port Chalmers. He is a visual artist who has exhibited widely in New Zealand. Language plays a significant role in his visual creations.

R.A.K. Mason (1905-71) was “New Zealand’s first wholly original, unmistakably gifted poet” (Allen Curnow). Poems are from Uncollected Poems (Cold Hub Press) from the Hocken Library’s Mason archives, Dunedin. Used with permission of Kat Zolita Mason.

David Geary writes plays, fiction, TV, film and poetry. He lives in Vancouver and teaches in the Indigenous Film, Documentary and Playwriting programs at Capilano University. His latest short fiction appears in Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers.

Freelance writer Graham Reid is a former journalist who has written two award-winning travel books. He lectures at Auckland University School of Music and has a music column in the Listener. He hosts his own music, arts and travel website www.elsewhere.co.nz


Richard Taylor, of Auckland, has published in various mags. Poetry Books include RED, and Conversation with a Stone (Titus Books). He asserts: books, ideas and libraries matter!
Contributors

Edward Tregear (1846-1931) compiled *The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* (1891). He made use of international research in the General Assembly Library, which became the National Library in 1965. His poems are in many anthologies of New Zealand poetry.

Michael O’Leary writes non-fiction, fiction & poetry. He often performs his works with musicians. His latest novel is *Apocrypha Scripta* (2020). He has a degrees from Otago & Victoria universities on literary subjects. [http://www.olearymichael.wordpress.com](http://www.olearymichael.wordpress.com)


Jenny Powell has written many individual and two collaborative collections of poems. She has presented multi-media collaborative performance pieces. Her latest collection of poems, *Meeting Rita* (2021) was published by Cold Hub Press.

Peter Olds was Robert Burns Fellow in 1978 and received the Janet Frame Literary Award in 2005. He has published dozens of chapbooks of poetry. *You fit the description the selected poems of Peter Olds* (2014, Cold Hub Press).

Lynley Edmeades is a researcher and poet, author of *As the Verb Tenses* (2016) and *Listening In* (2019). She is the current editor of *Landfall*.

Johannes Contag is retranslating Kleist’s stories. He also writes orchestral scores for silent films and teaches stage production at Massey University. Sources: U.S. Code, Title 18—Crimes and Criminal Procedure. Wilde: *Poems* (1881).

Mary-Anne Bourke has written award-winning theatre, short film and poetry, and exhibited paintings in Auckland, Wellington and the regions. She is based in Wellington.

Mike Johnson is a writer 24 books to date, of fiction and poetry. NOTE: Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (1925–2009) was a New Zealand poet, playwright, and novelist. His father was a New Zealand Scot and his mother was a Cook Island Māori from Penrhyn Island.


Sandra Sarala is a New Zealander in exile in Berlin, where she is theatre editor for the listings magazine Ex-Berlin.

John Geraets resides in Whangarei. *Everything’s Something in Place*, poetry and criticism appeared in NZ in 2019 (Titus Books). He has also been published internationally.

Cold Hub recently published John Allison’s *A Place to Return To* (2019) and *Near Distance* (2020). He is currently preparing his Collected Poems, for publication in 2022.

Sandra Bianciardi (rear cover and BGA poster painting) is a graduate of ENZBA (Paris). She has exhibited three times in New Zealand since 2001. She lives in Dunedin.