

**Editorial Notes:**

**Out on the Margins the Oddballs Bounce Highest**

**Murray Edmond**

It is some years now since I tried to contact Bridget Furey, the elusive and enigmatic poet whom Jack Ross discusses in his beguilingly performative essay ‘The Lonesome Death of Bridget Furey or: Pessoa Down Under.’ The nearest I got, when I wrote to the only and clearly out-of-date address I had, was to reach Bridget’s older, doting sister, Maud (Maudlin) Furey. Maud replied to me by snail mail (as I had written to Bridget). She explained that her brilliant, but implicitly erratic, sister had long since done with poetry. And the next sentence hinted that she might have long since done with life itself, too. But Maud did not elaborate or unpick her dark hints. All she added was: “I wish she hadn’t!” Then Maud had copied out by hand into the letter a text message, which she said was the last communication she had received, quite a while ago now, from her sister, and that she feared that would be the final: “Out on the margins the oddballs bounce the highest.” And that was all. Except for a PS added in tiny letters (Maud’s hand-writing was very neat and small) beneath her signature: “My sister overdosed on life – I wish I had.”

Bridget Furey’s characteristically enigmatic text comes into sharp and meaningful focus when applied to this issue of *Ka Mate Ka Ora*. This is an issue of high-bouncing oddballs. Merritt, David Kaarena-Holmes, Mary Stanley, Richard von Sturmer, Keir Volkerling and James K. Baxter. What a party! Chris Holdaway’s smart and witty contemplation of the merits of David Merritt treats his writing and his printing/publishing as inter-locking parts of a single entity, a production and distribution enterprise that takes place on the streets and in the malls. Merritt defies the standard product and the sanctioned system. Brianna Vincent brings to the epic work of David Kaarena-Holmes, his book-length poem *From the Antipodes*, the kind of critical attention that wakes us up and turns us round as readers. We are simultaneously in the world of Giovanni Battista Vico and the world of black holes and event horizons and in the world of Te Kore and Te Pō. Mary Stanley, as Susannah Whaley shows us, gifts us a world where learning permeates the intense interiors of her poetic. That Allen Curnow found her work, in his judgement, failed to reach beyond “her private frontier,” now seems a laughable travesty, and her inability to continue writing looms as a notable loss.

One hopes that before too long Richard von Sturmer's delightfully idiosyncratic books receive the critical attention they deserve. *Postcard Stories* (Titus Books, 2019) combines a sustained practice of postcard collecting around the world (George Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* springs to mind) with quatrains, tanka and prose poems. When Richard took these elements, projections, readings, stage set and musician, on the road, then the poetry was a theatre of its own.

*Ka Mate Ka Ora* has a significant record of publishing James K. Baxter scholarship, as the catalogue of Baxter contributions below demonstrates:

John Newton, 'By Writing and Example': The Baxter Effect, No.1, Dec. 2005.

Paul Millar, 'Return to Exile: James K. Baxter's Indian Poems' plus the unpublished Indian poems, No. 3. March 2007.

Dougal McNeill, 'Baxter's Burns,' No. 8, Sept. 2009.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, "'Reason not the Need": John Newton and James K. Baxter's Double Rainbow,' No. 8, Sept. 2009.

Francis McWhannell, 'Hunt's Baxter,' No. 8, Sept. 2009.

Reproduction of Baxter's ms. of 'Jerusalem in Winter,' No. 8. Sept. 2009.

John Petit's photographs of Baxter at Hiruharama, Dec. 1970, No.8, Sept 2009.

Stephen Innes, 'The Baxter Papers at the University of Auckland Library,' No. 8, Sept. 2009.

Paul Millar, 'Jacquie Baxter/J.C.Sturm,' No.9, March 2010.

Paul Millar and Miranda Wilson, "'The Fire-bird Singing Loud": James K. Baxter's Relationship with Composer Dorothy Freed,' No.15, July 2017.

And, therefore, we are pleased to be able to include another Baxter item in this issue. Keir Volkerling's memoir of his times with James K. Baxter, in the Fat Landlady in Symonds Street and in Grafton from 1970 until Baxter's death in 1972 shines a light on that final period of Baxter's life. The revelations of Baxter's recently published *Letters*, which, though in some way a kind of secret 'common knowledge,' have nevertheless ushered the long-cultivated Baxter mythology quietly out the back door, leaving only some kind of ghostly outline behind. Volkerling's's closely argued analysis of the corner into which Baxter had worked himself and the possible way he might have gone (had he lived) to escape that place, is a welcome antidote to the guru-versus-monster debate that followed publication of the *Letters*. Keir Volkerling's own biography is part of the evolving memoir he presents, himself a figure of cultural significance, as Baxter himself acknowledged.

Hail the bouncing oddballs, hail the ectoplasmic Bridget Furey!