

## Evoking the insubstantial: two poets

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The two poets I write about have, on the surface, little enough in common. Maybe it's a spell I wish to weave between them; I'm not sure. But then again part of the appeal in analysing their respective writing is that, despite obviously distinguishing stylistic and thematic features, other deeper preoccupations are shared. Both Hawken and Harlow are fascinated by the processes of transformation: they explore the strange capacity language has to embody life at its most profound level, to sharpen individual sensibility and to extend it into a hoped-for reinvigoration of relationship at all levels. Their writing constitutes an idealised *eros*.<sup>1</sup>

Hawken was born in 1943 and Harlow six years earlier in 1937. Of Greek–Ukrainian descent, USA-born, he arrived in 1968 in New Zealand, where he has since more or less remained. Hawken, born and raised in Hāwera, following extended periods overseas, returned to resettle in Wellington and more recently in Paekākāriki.<sup>2</sup> They write about nature, the four seasons, great cities, tumultuous world events, gender issues, constraints upon freedoms of choice; they detail interactions with a broad spectrum of individuals, explore the exigencies of human thought and its response to challenging situations and, threaded through all of these, they appraise the predicament of language in our contemporary culture. Both have had training as therapists; Harlow's a Jungian therapist and Hawken has had similar training and experience as a counsellor and community worker, including during her stay in New York in the 1980s. Both have travelled extensively and are winners of a number of literary awards. Harlow's first book appears in 1974, Hawken's later in 1987: to date he has produced 11 books of poetry to her nine. Each is primarily known as a poet.<sup>3</sup>

I shall write about the poets individually before going on to consider together two representative extended sequences (a form both favour): Hawken's *Small Stories of Devotion* (1991) and Harlow's 'Texts for Composition' from *Vlaminck's Tie* (1985). The two sections that follow are largely based on their respective *Selected Poems*, hers appearing in 2001 and his in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

## Dinah Hawken: the authentic

*Poetry can seem peripheral and soft in the scheme of things. But still we look to it.*

‘One Shapely Thing’

Hawken is an astute, deliberately non-intellectualising, poet (see the takedown ‘She Goes to a Lecture on Deconstruction’). Hers is a poetry of the searching out of affinities: with organic life, with friends acquaintances and strangers, most essentially within herself. While she is fully cognisant of external physical objects and demonstrates an exceptional fineness of observation, her natural impulse is to be drawn by their inwardness, their inner timbre or pulse, and the resonances that occur between her and them. Internal and external facets of existence permeate each other. At times this inward exploration is couched in a language that verges on an impulse to complete self-surrender (the many active Christian allusions are secularised). The turbulence encountered due to the interpenetration of natural, personal, social and political life is regarded as witness to a profoundly unified field of existence. This underpinning unity is represented in the poems as an infusion of bodily forms. Instead of detracting from life, disappointment and turmoil actually provide an enhanced opportunity to deepen one’s own seeing-into relationships. Hawken turns on their head our usual taken-for-granted mundane priorities of individual entireness, durability, gender singularity. Physical distinctions quickly metamorphose into an inner state of being. Such a single-minded approach might seem to render the task of critical analysis somewhat tricky, if not downright problematical, when the inclination in the poems is to negate critique in favour of an affirmative comity that exists between and among all things. How is one, through analytical discourse, to approach a writing that conflates inner and outer in such a deft, thoroughgoing manner?

Stylistic blemishes in the early work – the obvious similes (‘serene / as Krishnamurti’, ‘like an empty erection’); a reliance on adverbs to enliven nondescript scenes (in ‘Choosing Horses’: ‘wildly, newly-panted, deeply-flowing, unrelentingly (x2)’); overuse of markers like ‘now’ and ‘here’ to underscore *immediacy*, plus the variant ‘oh’s and other insistent repetitions; persistent references to ‘dreams’ and ‘dreaming’ – while minor in themselves do nonetheless indicate the obstacles that Hawken runs up against in order to maintain a softly-spoken, heartfelt spontaneity of utterance. Even a later poem like ‘On the River after Months of Bitching’ exemplifies some of the verbal hazards:

*so now I will dwell on the small raft  
of kindness, its five totara planks strapped  
firmly together with flax, shifting amongst  
the currents and travelling wickedly on.*

(1998, emphasis mine)

While there are drawbacks to the self-betterment mode (an insistence on ‘I’ invites acquiescence rather than scrutiny), the closely related quality of unguardedness appealingly links Hawken’s work to that of her nearest local precursors, Ursula Bethell, Robin Hyde and Ruth Dallas. Nature (the network of all that is known to ‘our senses: / all six’) is the domain of a scrupulous relatedness, a called-to-ness. To this end, Hawken employs long everyday titles and the poems frequently take shape as actual or imagined conversations, either with inanimate objects like stones or statues or else with animate ones including trees, animals, humans and divinities (‘Talking to a Tree Fern’, ‘Her Smaller, Lighter Body Fitting in with Him’, ‘Let me put in a Word for Trees’, ‘The Question of Gulls’).<sup>5</sup> Whether actual or not, the landscapes are at once tangible and evocative. The sky may be ‘blue’ but blue is more than a denomination of colour:

*... it's only in dreams that we are swinging  
from place to place on a rope through the sky  
we love because it has no sound and is blue.*

‘Traces of Hope’, 2

The dreamscape aspect of the poems provides a means to incorporate multiple aspects of experience. Sometimes dreams are literally recounted to reveal inner quandaries (dreams of fear for herself or her husband Bill during the 9/11 Trade Centre attacks, or for a friend or acquaintance or unknown creature facing difficulties). Other times they involve an imagined event, or indeed imagined *imagineds*, that don’t necessarily negate the mundane but strongly imbue it with a psychological poignancy. These assimilations are signalled by small, dramatic shifts in the use of language and imagery, whereby nature and the mind are able to cross boundaries and redefine each other. Dreams serve this dual purpose also in the prose journal entries (another favoured form). Take, for example, the following excerpt from ‘The Softening of Steel’ found in *One Shapely Thing*, which has Hawken wake abruptly from a dream in which a circus stall woman had invited her in ‘*to see this exhibit of the heart*’ and so ‘*have surmounted all fear*’. The entry goes on to conflate scientific knowledge of the biological heart with ‘matters of the heart’, extending all the way to the *heartless* (my term) attack on the Twin Towers in New York where she and Bill (a UN lawyer) were living at the time:

*The fear woke me up and I lay for a long time wondering why I was so terrified. I realised that my greatest fear was not of seeing the heart but fear that others in the queue [at the circus] might push into this space behind me and I would not be able to get out. (49)*

Words strings perform this kind of metonymic looping ('heart' → organ → exposure → fear (of exclusion) → denial → protection → 'claustrophobia' → 'red'). Indeed, it is her ability to slip almost at will among the various meanings ascribed to words and images that permits Hawken's work to appear so genuinely welcoming, open-bordered. The impact made is separate to and more compelling than what any superficial paraphrase might suggest. The poems reach into imaginary dwelling spaces. Acts of violence, war and terrorism are closely examined yet they do not elicit a simplistic, if understandable, dire judgement at the extremity of violence portrayed: the recounting always holds on to that precarious transformative possibility whereby innocence and guilt coinhabit 'That thin crack between night and / fall'.

This same crack (elsewhere associated with the ever-shifting line of the horizon) ushers the reader into the heart of the work, which embraces an innate correspondence that exists between things, made possible by a poetic seeing-within that resolves feelings of isolation and estrangement ('Where there is affinity between / one thing and another travel begins', 82). Such kinship occurs at diverse levels ('the neutral, natural world, / in which I am kin', *OST*, 19). This is especially clear in the early sequence 'Traces of Hope', mentioned above, as well as in several later sequences including 'Water, Women and Birds Gather', 'The Sound of Places and Names', 'The Tethering of Trees' and 'The Brain and the Leaf'. Introspective, inquisitive, warmly-disposed, undaunted, assured-if-not-always-exactly-sure, fired-up: these qualities start with words, reach out to the objects described, and return enriched to words to start again:

*You could never still  
this foliage with words.  
It just reminds me  
to speak about the trees  
from which we have come  
and continue to come  
without knowledge  
of our true bearing.*

'The Tethering of Trees', *OST*, 26

In the six sections of 'Traces of Hope', situations are internalised as part of an ongoing renovation: 'it's the nature of things I'm opting for' (1); 'the traffic drones on, with us in it' (2); 'the sought for arrangement, one / that every so often we become' (3); 'A classically sad / tone is where I'll have to fall to' (4); 'they'll wind me in their branches' (5); and 'I could drown in the calm behind these lines' (6). What makes the poems especially hospitable is that they disavow appropriation or any ransacking force: the external world, meticulously presented in its own physical terms, is intrinsically *known* to

the inner world of the experiencing speaker, without self-aggrandisement. Hawken's attention is often playfully drawn to the medium of language on which she depends, to the words and lines of the poem. For example, here she is drawn to the 'soft consonants' of 'hope', and there to the benefits accruing through a patient unfolding, as in 'It's taken months to get this final line'. When individual letters are singled out, they are typically the softer, gentler sounding ones: 'Chuan. Chant. Chi' (*OST*, 43); 'the sound of stone // —o hold one / round' (94); '*relevance*... is the lift of the *le* in the middle and altogether the whole word' (*OST*, 84).

*Who put the el  
in the word world,  
changing things forever? (12)*

*The v in give  
is a valley  
you can walk down. (17)*

*the verb to give has thirty-six senses  
(twice as many as the verb to love)  
and so thrives on being received.*

(*OST*, 61)<sup>6</sup>

Earlier I mentioned Hawken's propensity to disrupt the obviousness of things. One way she does this is by treating the literary sign as part of a scale that signifier and signified are free to navigate, so that meaning becomes a tacit accommodation between the two moving points. At times individual components like letters or syllables are isolated and themselves become signs, pools of shimmering possibility. Hawken dangles the prospect of an open figuration over each word used. Names of persons known in real life are, in the poems, also performers within a poetic creation: 'new presence inside me. / You'; 'your whole being / will open fearlessly like a flower'; 'All our colour is inside'; 'Middle, beginning and end / I bear you all because I have to'; 'And they are as soft—your intentions towards me—as the word moth'; 'Heaven and earth, north and south, / you and I—confounded, as if by trees'. The language invites a roaming porosity of reference, breathing out internal things while simultaneously breathing in external things, in the very way that the ubiquitous tui 'comes, / like kindness, / sings joy / and suddenly leaves' (*OST*, 19). Disarmed, the reader feels encouraged to enter the spaces that the poems make available. The same disencumbering of straightforward binary oppositions safeguards the poet's own vulnerability: 'I am too hard to forgive' (19).

She meets a broad range of individuals in her social work role in New York, where she accompanies her husband Bill in his work as international lawyer working within the UN, initially in the USA and later in Europe. Various self-portrayals – part expatriate, part local, part companion, part lover, part fellow-traveller, part own-woman, part onlooker, part voyeur – are presented as facets of agency rather than the necessarily often-changing expressions of an integrated, self-identical persona. It is not the person but the *capacity* to be right there within the occasion that assumes a more singular identity: ‘I have animality, from *animalis*, living, breathing and from *anima*, air, breath, spirit. Feminine’ (*OST* 92). The body is an accommodative thing. Seldom a follower of straight lines, the poet is drawn to other shapes of alignment:

*You're not ashamed of your past.  
It hangs there in rust-coloured layers  
and you curve out of it  
fully at ease.*

‘Talking to a Tree Fern’

In ‘Water, Women and Birds Gather’, part invocation, part prayer, part self-deprecation, part seduction:

*I'm always wanting to improve something or somebody.  
Clouds are natural too you know.*

*Pruning, watering, picking off the dead leaves  
which drop infallibly and do their decadent good.*

*Show me the difference between meddling and love.  
Teach me the patience to be graceful*

*– after years of idolising time.*

*I forget you almost entirely*

*until I remember you  
and how lightly you love to be taken (8)*

Again, identity slips, reforms. Of the water, women and birds invoked in the title, the closing erotic reference logically involves an individual woman, or perhaps it could be women collectively as woman, or more broadly nature (itself feminine rather than masculine), or Hawken herself? That is

not entirely clear – clearer is the degree to which all four are somehow co-bound, allowing one to be (nominally sexually) ‘taken’ as readily as the other in this etherealised strange (inter)textual space – as if pure libidinity supersedes the constraints of specifically gendered bodies.

*At last we’re in each other’s arms. (1)*

*You are welcome*

*to me under and over, through and through  
since I love your tongue.*

*I love to speak with it.*

*It is the one that does no harm.’ (7)*

Syntax is itself affected (unusually for this punctilious poet, parts 8, 9 and 12 end without full-stops) in this redolent seduction scene. The reciprocal ‘I/you’ of personal relationship conflates with ‘clouds’, given that pronouns and clouds are parts of nature (‘natural’), as should be obvious (‘you know’); and woven through all of this are allusions to an inhibiting moral code (‘infallibly, decadent, meddling, love (x2), patience, impure, graceful, idolising’) – sublimated within an irreducible wholeness-is-all relationship. The quasi-mystical invocation to an encompassing love is – almost – blasphemously undercut at the end with the insinuating way ‘you love to be taken’. Love trips over itself, at once uplifting and – invitingly – naughty. Again: ‘Your footprints lead to strange water / for which I secretly long’ (12); ‘We long to belong to the whole / tremulous scheme of things’ (26). Another aspect of this amorphous loving sees the poet align herself with an array of un-belonging poets and thinkers – locally with Hyde, Brasch and Baxter (she models herself, early and not wholly successfully, on his Jerusalem sonnet sequence); and internationally with primary mentors Sappho and Adrienne Rich, alongside Phyllis Webb (a ‘wonderful’ Canadian poet) and Hélène Cixous (a French poststructuralist feminist theoretician, playwright and poet).<sup>7</sup> Hawken does such combinations in her own way.

Let me close this section with a consideration of the sequence ‘The Brain and the Leaf’, found in *OST*.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to her partner Bill’s (see the lovely anniversary poem ‘365 x 30’) predilection for ‘authoritative knowledge’ (‘international legal brain... its precision and beauty... likes to make distinctions / between one thing and another / as exactly as possible’ 68), the poet irresistibly gravitates towards her own ‘inclinations, / to see the image of the leaf // and the image of the brain / in the same frame’ (66):

*And divaricating*

*is exactly the right word  
the way it remains firmish*

*while spreading in every which  
way from one central stem. (72)*

That word *firmish* does it: 'Sensual is the most sensual word' (93). Taking her cue from the mid-century poetic naturalist Loren Eiseley, Hawken animates the leaf and poeticises the brain: 'I see both, one after the other. / Imaginatively' (62). Legal and scientific analysis – whether that of Bill or that of her own scholar brother 'in the lab / at NYU' (67) researching 'how parts of the cortex and the eyes // actually work together' (70) – prove neither fully adequate nor do they satisfy the speaker, for whom the poetic imagination is the true 'analogue of the human brain' (71):

*And I don't know how you account  
for that kind of looking,*

*but it is similar to the way a word  
– say inkling – that you might have been*

*searching for systematically  
in the dictionary of your brain*

*suddenly appears effortlessly  
when you loosen and begin musing. (71)*

Until we have come full circle in the appeal of imaginative rumination and humanitarian feeling, one weightlessly blending into the other, ethereal bodies:

*Let the imaginable  
and the unimaginable –*

*animal, vegetable, mineral,  
abstract, numinous and fanciful –*

*enter the human brain, by night*

*and by day, to help us to live*

*and to last. (74)*

### **Michael Harlow: articulate music**

*true words / emptied of song have no life in them ('On the fault line')*

Michael Harlow's poems conform to a fairly standard rubric. This is evident in the structure of the *Selected Poems*, which for the most part belong to one of two prevalent modes: either brief lyrics composed of regular compact stanzas or else paragraph poems (in some ways similar to Hawken's prose poems) that employ flowing lines and include elements of confabulation (reminiscent of magic realism or fairy tales). Musical motifs recur ('I am always thinking about words wanting to be music all the time') to suggest the paramountcy of fluid movement in the way that words *form* meaning. *Selected Poems* ends with 'A field note on poetry', which depicts poems as 'risk[ing] delight' despite 'the absurdities and shadowy things thrown up by life'. The key endeavour is to give form to a patterning that underlies the surface mispatterning that constitute our usual understanding of reality ('the undeclared declares itself' 107). 'There is no such thing as chance', insists one epigraph.

Overall, the poems are not particularly self-revelatory nor do they constitute a rendering of therapeutic life-advice: rather they seek to educe a transformational configuration developed through gaining a deeper insight into everyday situations, alongside a corresponding keenness of observation.<sup>9</sup> As with Hawken, the endeavour is towards wholeness and reintegration. Not so much an autonomous entity, language serves as a cloth to be cut well in order to attire and thus distinguish a living form beneath, to elucidate or bring out the figure within. Literal veracity, duly honoured, is not where the poems' power derives. Words used 'give cover' in two senses: on the one hand they provide a shaping attire that is in part protective, and on the other, more ethereally, they evoke a field of broad resonance and associative meaning that emanates from the poems at their relational depth. Sound is *affinitive*. Harlow's 'persistent imaginal' wants life events to be 'restored' in a stepping-through-the-surface-of-appearance enterprise that he shares with Hawken, distinctive as their individual poetic strategies are. Beyond presenting rational arguments, these poems are recastings of cerebral profundities. They occupy transpersonal space: the speaking of the poems encompasses a panoply of essentially interchangeable pronouns: 'you' 'he' 'she' 'we' and 'I'. Invariably the 'he' goes unnamed, as the speaker effectively dissolves into the fabric of the poems as a kind of attentive, companionable Watcher – not excepting the relatively few, delicately nuanced, love poems. For example, 'Lovers' quarrel' tracks a spat in which language comes to predominate:

*Something about how we live through  
so many betrayals only to discover our  
own, you said – trying to stay alive inside  
the alphabet, and meet up with old friends.*

The quarrelling speaker is drawn towards what words ‘stand for’ in representing the strained relationship. In ‘a place we called the world’ where ‘little is said / and always it’s meant to mean more’, because ‘words don’t do well // in loneliness’, the reader cannot help but notice the conjoined adequacy/inadequacy of language as a resolving force (Hawken’s ‘thin crack between night and / fall’). While certainly a necessary means, it somehow fails to be fully sufficient, especially when tumultuous emotions are involved. With the chairs missing from the garden, with the ‘stone Buddha’ a witness to their missingness, and with the hypothetical map-maker’s desire to be given an ultimate ‘one map’ pointing a way ‘to the // future drawn to perfection’, everything present is marked by an ingrained falling short, leaving only paradoxes and contradictions scattered in place of any well-phrased reconciliation. Eventually one finds oneself soonest ‘by being lost’ and, at the close of the poem, the speaker acknowledges, somewhat belatedly to be sure, that ‘there is a tenderness to attend to, and now’. Again, this very self-exhortation is somewhat lacking in conviction, arriving almost as an afterthought. The relationship with language is ambivalent: while language may not be a guarantor of truth, it nonetheless quickly exposes any untruth.

Given words’ shortcomings in terms of epistemological completeness (one thinks of Hawken’s propensity to have them disassemble into component letters or sounds), they are shown to richly compensate in *other* ways. The prevalent tone in the poems is one of a sustained inquisitiveness, images are pinpoint sharp, and the diction ever tactile. Through it all, a sophisticated patterning of musicality – sound as the ineffable *inner mystérion* – shows Harlow to be a master at unearthing nexuses of meaningfulness. In ‘Parallax poem for the co-incident’, dedicated to Alan Loney, preeminent New Zealand poet of the strictly-measured utterance, the reader is directed to the fact that ‘the art / is the measure // beyond words / look: a bowstring / twanging on air’. Or we can take as representative the early poem ‘Kite’:

*It is kite: pure kite  
as the strike of  
light its swift distance*

*the measure  
right hand wakes*

*the left, for what*

*secret grammar of wish*

*it walks the air.*

Synchronicity involves apparent disarray's collapse into concrescence. It's like when a suitable light is shone through a piece of 2D holographic film, shapeliness suddenly emerges in the 3D image created. The dimensional forces surveyed in the poems lead not to easy resolution but rather to a stepping away from and then back into a reconfigured state of affairs, a reorientation in newness of possibility. Achieving poise out of experiential flux is for this poet the quintessential challenge. In 'Kite', the flyer's two hands (any two contraries) are synchronised in order to best elucidate the 'secret grammar' that resides within the kite's agitated motions, within its 'swift distance / the measure'. The same equipoise is sought in the third section of 'Parallax', '*Naming an occasion*', where we are informed that the dancer's unused foot serves as a necessary adjunct to the other active one: 'dancing / on one foot the other / is not, forgotten'. The emphasis is on finding stillness in gyration: 'air-dancing, swooping, hovering' ('Kite'). In this architectonic, we notice complexity of thought is anchored in carefully chosen words and images, used to suggest ever deeper resonances. One instance of this is the way that simple primary colours, rather than shades or composites, appear in a number of places in a symbolic, almost talismanic, manner. The kite is 'all in blue / red and yellow'. More tellingly, the ubiquitous mood-invoking 'light' and 'dark' dominate, creating everywhere a curious stage-lit quality, a darting into and out of the shadows. It is as if 'reality' is always caught between phases of shadow and light (equivalent perhaps to the interstitial horizon and twilight moments in Hawken). Contrivance *contrives* to represent something as *really* real, suggesting that what is most important for us to realise is made visible only under certain lighting (or heard through certain sound) conditions, which shortly we shall observe is precisely the case in 'Texts for Composition'.

Again, as noted with Hawken, frequent 'dream' references enable Harlow to combine otherwise uncombinable qualities in an evocation of a truthfulness graspable only through fabrication; ironically a kind of essential distillation ('that unknown place / that wants love out of hiding' 107). Dream functions as a form of consciousness that sees far into the mundane world with its complex panoply of causes and effects. In the Wallace Stevens-inspired 'Anecdotal aesthetics in Athens', several characteristics coincide: nature appears as an abstract formulation ('of a / lady's figure') and the inferences are pressingly cerebral ('the eye / is most *erotiko*'). And, in another short poem, 'Missing the mark', we meet yet another figure who 'juggles space': on this occasion a high-wire artist doubling as the performing poet-minstrel ('jongleur'), whose Icarus-like over-reaching risks an ignominious crashing down to earth, leaving us, as nervous onlookers, 'twitching in our hands'.

Elevation (or transcendence) is available only in terms of a groundedness that is simultaneously necessary, threatening and uncertain:

*On the high-wire  
one foot  
in front of the other  
he weaves  
his act together.*<sup>10</sup>

Anticipating the fall, there comes the admonition: ‘we feel / for the earth under us’. By this means, the poems investigate what is proclaimed, in another epigraph, as a renovation of ‘this inner unconscious life [through a corresponding] change in our art forms’. Indeed, epigraphs that epitomise Harlow’s aesthetic predilections appear in a majority of volumes. The one quoted from above is taken from Anaïs Nin. Others include Kurt Schwitters (‘There is no such thing as chance’); Kandinsky (‘the voice of inward necessity’); Stockhausen (‘A moment can last an eternity if it isn’t changing’); Octavio Paz (‘language becomes the double of the world’), and Jean Arp (‘this magical, almost impossible subworld’).<sup>11</sup> Harlow brings the familiar and exotic into proximity, highlighting the struggle to achieve order in an unstable, unpredictable, enchanted subworld. The poems are such configurations, conceptual footholds or handholds giving bodily purchase in what otherwise amounts to a world risking freefall. In contrast to Hawken’s pursuit of ever-available rendezvous through affinities, Harlow institutes a ceremonial of occasions in timespace, where two hands, two feet, light and dark, achieve a tenuous self-possession only within paradoxical dichotomies of proximity and distance, intimacy and isolation.

The social historical background encompasses Harlow’s own Greek heritage, embedded in the tradition of European thought and literature. Whether in reference to the Greek civil war of the late 1940s, or other conflicts and displacements of people across Europe, the element that stands out is the recurrent, almost anonymous, feeling of shock in realising the capacity humans have to inflict pain on each other through brutality – tellingly evoked in one Russian doll image in which the figure of the suffering human serves as doppelganger for innumerable others who link in an unending chain: ‘& inside that, another man / & another & another’ (32). The endeavour to rehumanise the dehumanised brings Harlow’s mind back to a familiar impulse to secure grounding: those dehumanised must ‘feel / one by one / for the earth / under them’ (also see: ‘Stop-time : Galata Kebabci / Dunedin’ and ‘Brief history of the jackboot’). In a fundamental way, Harlow is an avowed Europhile (unlike Hawken who, despite her travels and travel-based writing, remains an apparently contented Haweraean and lower-North Islander) who takes his language and his terms of reference from that longstanding tradition, proud of the names he names and draws inspiration from, proud of the tradition’s achievements, proud

of the continuing modernist aesthetic and musical culture that welcomes his participation. Even the fulsomely titled volumes entice with their unfamiliar-sounding, exotic associations: *Nothing but Switzerland and Lemonade*, *Today is the Piano's Birthday*, *Vlaminck's Tie*, *Giotto's Elephant*, *Cassandra's Daughter*, *The Tram Conductor's Blue Cap*, *Nothing for it but to Sing* and *The Moon in a Bowl of Water*.

Let us take 'Nothing but Switzerland and lemonade' as reflective of the modernist affiliation. This tableau poem includes imagistic snippets characteristic of the lyric poems within a conversational (quasi-narrative) paragraph format. The account is of Cézanne's 'mistress' (wife?) holidaying ('drinking lemonade') with 'her gentleman friend' (Cézanne?) in the Swiss mountains.<sup>12</sup> The reader is presented with extreme close-ups that counterpoint far-distant panoramas – a glass of lemonade surrounded by expansive mountains – in an experience that combines in one space the elemental, the encompassing, and the disorientating. And blanking suddenly: 'The mountains are white with snow'. What the ogling waiter sees is not the female patron herself but a figure that his mind immediately eroticises as 'two glasses on a red tray... the remote possibility of her breasts... green grape... red grape... a bite of your raison': a Cézanne still-life? Whatever 'raison' may represent, it surely stretches well beyond the faculty of reason, which has no jurisdiction in this poem, and the inference is something that Harlow happily enough leaves to the reader's imagination. Regardless – lavishly, coquettishly, contrarily,

*She winks discreetly at her gentleman friend in his fawn waistcoat and lemon gloves.*

The penultimate sentence-paragraph zooms in again to offset the waiter's ogling: 'A glass falls shattering on the stone floor'. Captivating as the portrait is, Harlow allows the 'characters' mannerisms and erotic pretensions to shatter while remaining oddly emblematic and enticing. The poem's closing sudden shift in attention – a leap from the Swiss mountains to 'across the terrace' and the smiling pedlar's 'fan / of postcard scenes from Provence' (ironically, Cézanne's native soil and the love of his life!) – has an estranging effect that surpasses any biographical analysis of the persons and the relationships depicted. It seems all inordinately make-believe. The majestic stillness of the mountains (reality?) and this ridiculous, ill-fated seduction scene (illusion?) are obliged to share space. Verisimilitude (the details are accurate) and magic (what desire promises) and symbolism (of colours and objects, of meanings that exceed intention) are obliged to share that topsy-turvy space. The insouciance on display suggests that 'just looking' is as close as most of us will ever get to the deeper satisfactions of human relationship. And yet, at the centre of these disjunctive contesting elements, there is that same aura of stillness, a settled watching from inside this weird internal dynamic.

In contrast to Hawken's endearing intimacies, Harlow's poems exude a surprising degree of estrangement, distress, even alienation. In 'No problem, but not easy', he self-presents as the resident of Alchemy House Christchurch, a name that suggests his work as a therapist. Yet the healer's personality is amorphous, a male-female composite, *animus* and *anima*: 'And there are times when you see him / From afar, say, from across the room / He is also a woman'. In a world without fixity, creativity merges with potentially unresolvable conflict: 'And you know, sometimes even they go to war. / There is destruction all over the place'. Harlow's inclination is to elicit out of conundrums an 'archetypal *mystèrion*'. The poem is an active field that allows contrary tendencies to embrace in alterity. Within yearned-for intimacy, an element of irresolution continues to reside, uneasily:

*One word one word and then another,  
one word and another, waiting for the  
light to come stealing in, you ask what  
it is that loves dares the self to do?...*

*the love-mess of it all – when so much  
forgetting is always about remembering;  
on the long backwards to meet  
himself coming the other way...*

*how he lives in the buried talk of others;  
inside the long history of goodbye.*

'The longest day of the year'

The known and unknown must join hands as aspects of a diverse unity. Or: one's vulnerability is always in another's hands and one can never be completely sure of a mutual, reciprocal intimacy: 'if you love me will I love you too, will you?' Sublimations, shadows and dreams, ambivalences abound – as this brief inventory of excerpts from the poems illustrates:

*the heart / has reasons reason / cannot know  
how mysterious / we are even to ourselves  
We are not less by dreaming more  
Well, my love / let us be content then, to talk / about the way in which / we say nothing  
Listen, to how one voice / lies down with another  
music makes / a world of tenderness, and ours  
the riddle / does not exist / if you are // listening / to the silence / buried in // sound, the / great  
hole / behind words*

*Shadow ourselves we have never / From the beginning had a hope of / winning over  
sings and singing / says we are alive  
such intimate / conversation between strangers  
in a body made strange  
No matter how / pretty, how right sounding we play / ventriliquo's dummy, there is always /  
the waywardness of our words  
It may be true words / emptied of song have no life in them / What is so unspoken, I hear a  
heaviness that / throws too long a shadow.*

To be fair, at times the defamiliarizing wordplay can feel to the astute reader almost like a fending off of the very thing sought. "I am a tyger" gives an account of a client/patient, for whom, despite '10 years of "talking cure"' involving 'such intimate / conversation between strangers', there comes no resolution to his affliction, which has presented as an unyielding, befuddled Blakean tiger assumption of self-identity. No fixed form of identity proves entire or durable. The acknowledgement that the 'talking cure' offers no guarantee can be extended to language in poetry, which is less about promising specific 'cures' for human behaviours than it is about delivering a searching reification of the human predicament. To return to the early poem 'Kite', the deeply satisfying connections in which we humans rightly seek comfort and reassurance are accompanied by an unshakeable risk of unexpected unhooking and chaotically plummeting, like a kite when severed from its anchoring finger.

Another quintessential poem, 'Opening the book', exemplifies Harlow's inclination to step beyond the merely intellectualised, or reasoned, in order to articulate an aesthetic, deeply penetrating response. A triangle is drawn between the word, music and sentient existence:

*Dear savants, I know  
you are maestros of the mind  
but are you sure?  
Such certitude  
is hard work and tires me out...*

*And there is  
no measure called for, after all  
'Earth's the right place for love'.*

*...here in a place  
where words can dream again and become*

*what first they imagined themselves  
to be.*

*Above is  
below – what lies behind  
the eye, ‘from this the poem springs’.*

As we witnessed with Hawken, Harlow’s is a distinctive voice that explores what various encounters in life might mean, or might enable, or how they might best find uplifting form. There is a musical and verbal tautness in the poems that prevents them from becoming merely wistful or inconsequential. At the same time, the treatment signals an almost necessary detachment that is quite unlike Hawken’s search for the familiar and dear. It is to their each seeking essential emotional harmonies of scale to which we will now turn our attention.

### **Angels on a pin**

How are we to speak of a mutual ground of concern between these two very individual poets? In what manner are differences and things that are shared able to co-exist? What do we mean when we refer to a writer’s ‘body of work’ or their ‘body of thought’ or even to the sense of ‘bodying forth’? What do quintessence and inviolability mean?

The first thing to observe is that both poets have maintained an impressively steady output of books.<sup>13</sup> The satisfaction in this is that the continuity keeps adding to and extending its own possibilities, or to give a simile, their achievement is like a piece of fruit that sweetens as it ripens. The analogy is apt because it indicates the nature of each writer’s endeavour, which is not simply to achieve discrete linear increments or eventual arrival at a final destination that was always intended, but rather from the start has signalled a determination to keep evolving their adopted treasure of inward relationship based on a deliberate self-conscious use of poetic language (several pieces address strictly poetic concerns). Each poem is considered an act of definition. Such an ongoing exploration is reminiscent of John Keats’s ‘vale of soul-making’. How is one rightfully placed among others in the surrounding world, adapting and articulating as one goes? How am I best able to formulate a response that remakes my language and thus my world?

This is to intimate the legacy of poetic idealism associated with Romanticism.<sup>14</sup> Let’s discuss this (the homegrown variant is Baxter’s ‘a cell of good living in a corrupt society’) in regard to two extended sequences, Harlow’s ‘Texts for Composition’ (1985) and Hawken’s *Small Acts of Devotion* (1991). The latter takes its inspiration from the myth of the Sumerian goddess Inanna.<sup>15</sup> Harlow pursues a

more abstruse, cerebral route in the spare verse notations he has written to accompany a graphic score for free-performance. He eschews the role of persona and the 'voice' used transliterates into a kind of notational *mustikós*, rather than referencing a well populated *mythos*, as is the case in Hawken.

The sequential structure each employs is important. Hawken's poem divides into four parts corresponding to the phases of the moon (with an added epilogue). The proto-feminist speaker (usually 'she', occasionally 'I' or 'you') self-identifies as the voice of Inanna's 'New Zealand cool': 'she wants me to talk simply and to reach you'. Once again, Hawken includes dream accounts and advocates for vitalising dreamscapes over the mere facticity of facts ('the unconscious / is fresher and less contaminated by history than history'). Hawken's diary-like third-person account takes things one at a time, reflectively. In addition to the ancient goddess, the roll call includes other preeminent, archetypal seekers: Jung, Rumi, Basho, Papatūānuku (earth mother).<sup>16</sup> Like the quarters of the moon, or the four elements earth-air-fire-water that underpin existence, or the four seasons, or the four economic quarters, or 'Jung's / four psychic functions', the writer's (or Inanna's or Papatūānuku's or Woman's) breast is also 'mutilated' into four quarters, representing perhaps humanity's (read: masculinity and analytical reason's) exploitation of its given resources and its failure to sustain a coherent existence. The four dimensions of time-space that give rise to materiality may also be mentioned. But what all the 'groups of four' give rise to here is the unlimited capacity to create and transform and include – to *square the circle*, if you like. Snippets of myth, biography, personal encounter, local and intellectual life coalesce around the celebratory speaker. While different in mood, the following is reminiscent of Harlow's allusion to a Russian doll-like stacking of figures-within-figures:

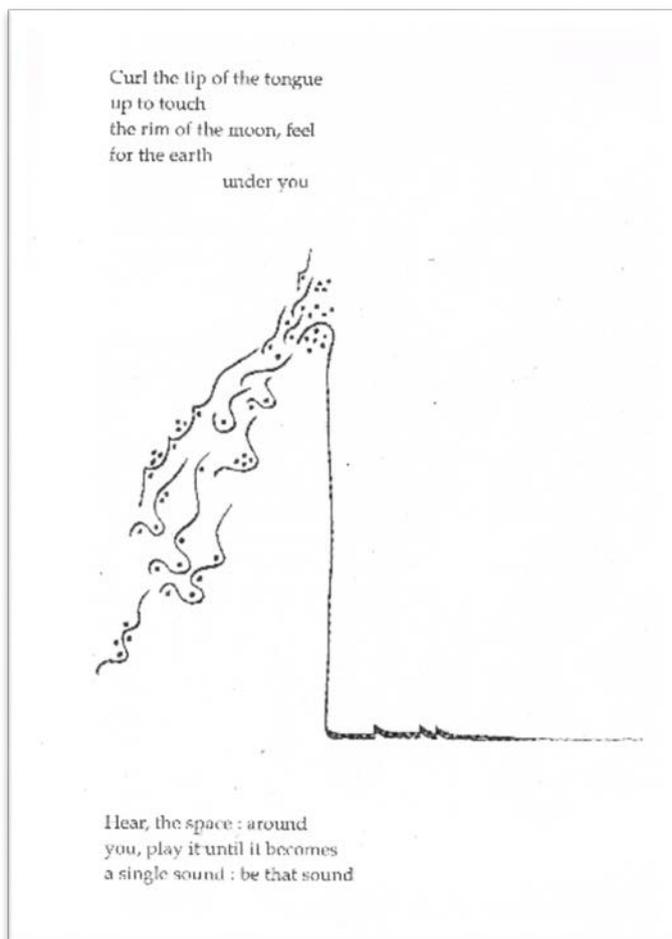
*The movement of one unravels the movement of the other  
and the movement of the other unravels the movement of the other and  
of the other and of the other and of the other until they are dancing  
and shouting yaa-hoo yaa-hoo ooo-eee oo-ee.*

Harlow's inspiring Inanna-like figure comes in the guise of Stockhausen's innovative modernist compositions 'aus den sieben tagen' and 'Für kommende Zeiten'. 'Texts for Composition' was written in collaboration with the composer Kit Powell, who provides the 'graphic scores', as a sequence of 10 texts to be performed. Reviewer Ian Dando, writing in *The Star* (Christchurch, NZ) October 7 1983, provides a sense of how the texts are designed to function as 'total theatre':

*The poetry which is sensuous and rich in imagery, is almost music itself. Lines such as Curl the tip of the tongue up to touch the rim of the moon; feel for the earth under you have a musico-pictorial richness which motivated composer Powell to draw*

*graphic abstract designs to each poem. These designs reacted further on Harlow who added musico-poetic aphorisms for each. The trio of poem, graphic and aphorism are projected on to a large screen as a backdrop to this theatre in the round presentation with Harlow's own expressive reading adding intensity to each poem. In the stage circle stood Powell's trees of \*instruments\*—clusters of suspended iron, steel, wood and glass of different shapes and sizes.<sup>17</sup>*

As Powell states: 'The deliberate ambiguity of texts and scores means that there is no limit to the number of new works *Texts for Composition* can inspire'.<sup>18</sup> Harlow's concise phrasing and the



potentially infinite extensibility of the sequence, restricted here to 10 discrete days/passages, provides an interesting corollary to Hawken's own sense of sacred transfiguring numerals and the portrayal of her everyday world as a mythical journey. Yet Harlow's very different frame of reference works towards the same end. The sequential, small 'world' that each poem constructs and inhabits functions as a microcosm of potentially infinite extrapolation.

In Harlow, each numbered day occupies a full title page (a *lit* space) with an accompanying page that includes a brief verse preceding and another following Powell's centrally placed 'score', basically a monochrome illustration, to which they supply a commentarial before and after, an above and beyond. The

dedication to Robert Lax (*vide* Inanna, both are figures of inspiration) adds a further layer of interest, given that Lax is another purist: a Trappist monk-poet who knew and worked with Thomas Merton and who later opted for a life of effective self-exile on the island of Patmos in Greece, content to relinquish what was an already considerable reputation. The division into ten days (why 'days'?) suggests an iteration of arbitrary enclosures without a single finalising one, unless of course that is taken to be the overarching challenge in occupying a strictly 'numbered' ground – effectively a site of reclusion – located as a particular somewhere between an ever-present nowhere and everywhere.

Neither sequence is a testament to standard measured time; they are structures that the reader is invited to fall into and through, immerse in, resolve into.

While for Harlow images and sounds are highly figurative (as a template for the physically improvised theatrical performance incorporating lights, images, a stage, music, bodily presence and movement) and thus participated in by the attending audience only in a passive manner (as onlooking/overhearing *transpersonals*), the relationships depicted by Hawken are explicit, interactive and quite deliberately sensualised. Relationships with men – whether those in state care, local Taranaki workmen, Māori neighbours, a son, or a ‘first / best boyfriend’ – whatever the extent of their reciprocity, devolve into a statement of emphatic self-proclamation: ‘Rejoicing at her wondrous vulva, the young woman Inanna / [in dalliance at ‘the sheepfold’ with ‘the shepherd’] applauded herself’. Notwithstanding, the bodily celebration is tricky. Homecoming to small town Hāwera from cosmopolitan New York necessitates a return to the underworld and the perils of disillusionment, with ‘boys and the men... getting themselves pissed and getting boys laid... South Rd river... the railway bridge ... and spearmint suckers’. It includes encountering sexual violence: ‘She loves the great word mute’ and ‘Rape is a plain word’. ‘Both Sides’ says

*She goes on and on uneasy  
towards the place she’s chosen, and she gets there, and it is possible to see over  
both sides.*

In a related manner, Harlow deploys a public transport motif to suggest arrivals and departures in a journey that stretches beyond the terrestrial. An assortment of Wellington train stations functions analogically as an ensemble of musical instruments and furthermore exhorts a fundamental realignment in understanding how events move in life, how the many form one:

*Play solo / play ensemble*

*Wellington*

*and*

*Woburn*

*or*

*Melling*

*or Linden.<sup>19</sup>*

The preceding piece speaks of a ‘medley / of voices’ that ‘go / down, / the line’, in a lovely play on language. Similarly, images such as ‘Curl the tip of the tongue / up to touch / the rim of the moon, feel / for the earth / under you’ utilise astronomical allusions whose purpose is to ground the music-verbal

quality of an etherealised, undetermined movement: ‘be that sound’. The richness, or textured quality, is enhanced by Powell’s beguilingly suggestive graphics. While actually 2D, their appeal to the mind’s eye is 3D or even 4D because they do not form immediately recognisable ‘figures’ and because their combination of dots, curves and dashes is both lucid and disorientating. Drawings and poems, in this respect, infuse and inform each other.

Harlow’s is a generic landscape (the exhortation to ‘connect’ is addressed to a ‘you’; no ‘I’ appears). One imagines a voice arriving bodiless on stage – or else a body arriving voiceless – and improvising a language of movement from the sound of the music and Harlow’s words (remember the locution material taken from the Speech Studio of T.G. Cutler).

*Listen, to how one voice  
lies down with another  
how a song enters the room curled...*

Everything in ‘Texts’ suggests a luring of disparate inclinations into a confineless vicinity, essentially

Her Body  
 Now she is finding a place  
 of her own in the sandhills  
 and she is beginning to abandon herself  
 into her body, into the calm  
 accommodating sand.  
 A woman is suddenly interrupting her, telling her that a man  
 is darting  
 in and out of the sandhills  
 watching her abandoning herself  
 into her body.  
 During the night the same man is darting in and out of her dreams  
 watching her there.  
 Now her anger (which has accumulated) is accumulating and accumulating  
 it is rising  
 like a wide deep swell in the ocean  
 while all she is wanting  
 is to abandon her self into her body.  
 Now she is walking miles along the beach and there are only  
 two clouds in the sky small ones over the island.  
 Now she is on the most deserted part of the beach lying her body down  
 in a hollow in the sandhills  
 from where she can see  
 and not be seen: it is utopia.  
 But utopia is broken by beach bikes roaring down the sound of the sea.  
 So now in the soft hollow in the broken  
 utopia  
 she is beginning to lower herself  
 into her body she is letting  
 the sun, and her own hands, and the sea’s breeze and the sea’s sound  
 settle over her she is weeping  
 over her exposed breasts and loving  
 her own whole exposed body  
 for once  
 and for the first time

one denoting harmony achieved (engendered rather than gendered) amidst apparent dissonance. Such empathic connection, albeit quite differently *en-gendered*, is similarly sought by the more communally-oriented Hawken. Relations with others, whether those involving the sexual predators she is keen to avoid, or else with the children and their talismans, or else those with whom she shares a bus ride, are transformed into affection and companionableness: ‘Stepping up she looks around and knows / that she loves every single person on the bus’. Such feelings of affinity allow her to reconstitute herself physically, every part of the body (suggested by line fragments spreading across the page) contributing to an inward dwelling that risks at any moment an intrusive ‘utopia is broken’ for one who ‘can see / and not be seen’: wanting – rather than the menacing presence of the man on the

beach, or any form of male predation – ‘the whole / lighter half of the natural world’ to ‘enter her body’. One image given to the gender battle is that of a physical tug of war between male and female teams (in a concessionary gender-kind 100:110 ratio). Just as the men are convinced that they have won, the women ‘let the rope go’ – and wham! Clearly out of kilter with its own assumptions, the notion of male gender superiority is left to collapse onto itself.

Another motif Hawken evokes is that of foundation, a coming into being or ‘into her body’. One epigraph refers to the Tahitian foundational myth: ‘*in affinity there is otherness*’. Images of giving birth, here seen as a ‘transformation happening in her womb’, and there as ‘they dance the dance of sensational celebration’, and elsewhere as a ‘thinking that she herself is bound to contain and be contained’, are presented as different and shifting forms of non-exclusive containment rather than divisive separations. The affinity that Harlow depicts in the abstract or musical line, is depicted by Hawken in the infinite capacity of living forms to be ‘curving round the spine’ of each other:

*Here they are now like a wave in the wide bed:  
A woman curving round the spine of a woman  
Who is curving round the spine of a man  
Who is curving round the spine of a woman  
Who is curving round the spine of a child. (Epilogue)*

Mirror-images iterate an endless play of sameness and otherness. There is quietude and receptivity, interrelatedness: ‘Redemption’, as a ‘Whole world / in our hands, smiles’, indicates that the woman (symbolised by Innana) is the figurehead of all. In 4<sup>th</sup> *Quarter* the ‘she’ who is ‘you’ advocates an endless birth-giving: ‘the wrenching where one thing (greatly loved) must leave another’. The moon is an ‘inseparable’ arrangement of dark and light. For his part, Harlow also envisages the cycles of dark and light, stasis and movement, silence and sound, arising out of and enhancing each other. It is this epicentre of stillness within difference, this non-place suggested by all places, that is valued by each writer as something that can be intimated but not definitively reproduced. That intimation is what poetry embodies in its giving-form. The lure (‘Oh let’s recognise the silence’) in each sequence is towards a betweenness whereby contraries (day and night, she and he, you and me) consummate into an immediate eschewing of boundaries. The needle suggests a precise locus of interpenetration at the innerness of the human heart:

*Exaggerate the way  
you relax  
say, that the day  
lies down with the day*

*the night with the night*  
*be still, inside*  
*the heart's needle. (Day 2)*

and Hawken:

*She's the fissure, the source where no one has been,*  
*the secret to be discovered. She may be too generous*  
*for you, and too ruthless. Too fruitful, too fierce,*  
*too gentle, too precise, too sensual, too naïve. (Epilogue)*

States of encompassing being, rather than conditions of material accomplishment, is what each earnestly seeks. In 'The Harbour Poems', which serves as an epilogue to *Small Stories*, Hawken points towards her confidence in the proper place of words: 'We need words to take us towards what words / reveal', as she works her way through words like 'fuck, intercourse, Him, single-sexed god'. Curvings align and reinforce rather than displace: 'The man/woman struggle is over it's over / we're over we're over the moon!' Similarly, Harlow's sequence of days suggests re-occasionings rather than any abrupt closure:

*Say the number 9*  
*9 times in lines*  
*9 lives long...*  
*then begin*  
*again.*

Whereas Hawken's insights are framed topographically, Harlow frames his as a topological psychic energy that emanates 'between perception and recognition' to reveal 'the voice of inward necessity' (from the Kandinsky epigraph). As an electron jumps orbit, the words are encouraged to do likewise – sound is 'meaning' as it (trans)forms into and out of words on the page, much in the way that the spring season emanates from contrary winter ('rapidly calculate / the arrival of spring'). Such contraries – 'like (two) boatmen / rowing', or our breathing in and out, or the image of the actual that resides in the mirror ('let light & dark / be as a mirror') – signal a source that gives rise to them and that can be reclaimed when the contrariness of contraries is released. Meanwhile, 'Texts' is bestrewn with imperatives, urgings, importunings:

*Be, as a pendulum suspended*  
*between two cypress trees :*

*wait, for that stillness to  
reach you : play it.*

*Day 2, emphasis mine*

One opens one's eyes within a geometry of dreams, with words stretched out as far as meaning allows, each word affected or renewed by those adjoining it. Words and meaning occupy non-definitive loci, whether that is Harlow's 'A perfect circle, you are / a stone inside' or Hawken's (a reminder of her various other meditations on the purity of stones):

*She tells no one but she knows  
that the smooth green stone  
is as boundless as a soul.*

For the right way of seeing, everywhere there are inducements to release, to comprehend congruence in struggled-with incongruence – to 'Let the sun / bury itself under / your tongue' ... 'until / you are / at rest inside / that note' (*Day 5*). Again, a moment of unalloyed poise, achieved when you stand self-admiringly before a mirror, 'until / you can / no longer see yourself':

*Hear, the space : around  
you, play it until it becomes  
a single sound : be that sound.<sup>20</sup>*

In the following *Day 9*, the mesmeric repetition of the number 9 reaches as far as 'the edge / of the century', and the piece ends in a series of – yes, *nine* – incantatory Joycean 'yeses'. The closing words of Harlow's tenth and final day of creation, 'earth = air = fire = water', are exactly those used in section 9 of Hawken's 'Water, Women and Birds Gather':

*water    fire    earth    air  
a state of grace preventing death.*

Each in their own way, these two poets bring to recent decades of literary writing in New Zealand a freshness and inventive inspiration in exploring new ways of looking at things and articulating a fitting response. They also demonstrate a more far-reaching enterprise: they lift the definitive representational use of language out of its usual constraints and *re-story* it as an embodiment of the evocative and a fluidly suggestive wholeness.<sup>21</sup> What they evoke is a manner of attending to events and experiences that in turn invests them with a greater vibrancy and fullness. They instil in the substantial something otherwise insubstantial.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> A bearing can be taken from the following: 'In essence, Jung's concept of eros is not dissimilar to the Platonic one. Eros is ultimately the desire for wholeness, and although it may initially take the form of passionate love, it is more truly a desire for "psychic relatedness", a desire for interconnection and interaction with other sentient beings'. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eros\\_\(concept\)#cite\\_note-21](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eros_(concept)#cite_note-21), accessed 26 April 2020>

<sup>2</sup> Her special interest in her own origins and rootedness in Hāwera is seen in Hawken's latest book *There is no Harbour* (Wellington: VUP, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> To be sure, Harlow has other strings to his bow: librettist, creator of music-for-performance pieces, literary editor for *Landfall* for some 10 years and judge in literary competitions, as well as the winner of numerous poetry awards and fellowships. Further, Harlow has published a small number of critical texts, including most recently in Spanish translation, *Poetry and Psychoanalysis: The place of the imagination, the imagination of place* (2006).

<sup>4</sup> Respectively: *Oh, There You Are Tui!: New and selected poems and Sweeping the Courtyard: Selected poems*.

<sup>5</sup> The tendency to choose extended titles focused on the natural world occurs also in the names of books: *It has no Sound and is Blue* (1987), *Small Stories of Devotion* (1991), *Water, Leaves, Stones* (1995), *Oh There You Are Tui!* (2001), *One Shapely Thing* (2006), *Ocean and Stone* (2015), *There is no Harbour* (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Not to mention homonyms: 'I bear you with my bare hands' (85). Frequently enough the language is eroticised, suggestive at times of another participant, male or female, or even of a plant form, while at other times the poem-making activity suggests its own curious auto-eroticism: 'You fill me with ecstasy / when I inspire and am inspired' (87).

<sup>7</sup> Sappho is an obvious pole of attraction in these lyrics, as she is in *Small Stories of Devotion*, to be considered later. Sappho aligns with the goddess Innana as a sensual, self-knowing being. Among other mentors is the feminist USA poet Adrienne Rich: early on 'when a quiet and terrifying poet, / Adrienne Rich, stepped in' (15) and again later: 'the crucial comfort of discovering Adrienne Rich's lines – which have buoyed me up ever since' (*OST*, 43). Hawken's feminism is non-militant, in contrast to a poet like Rich or New Zealand's own Michele Leggott, whose avowed intention is to reclaim the 'andocentric tradition' – the impression one gets is that Hawken's 'campaign', while multi-faceted, occurs primarily in the human heart rather than on a terrestrial gender battlefield, though that is also entered.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the brain and leaf, the image of the stone is important in this poem, as elsewhere. It appears in two volume titles, as well as in a number of individual poem titles. 'Stones', 'A Matter of Stones' and 'Choosing to Sit on a Stone' in *Tui*, and the commissioned poem 'Afterword: The Company of Stones' (*OST*), epitomise the poet's capacity to be absorbed in the objects of the world. Near emblematic word images of this type remind one of Francis Ponge's animation of objects without obviating their natural characteristics.

<sup>9</sup> I do not propose to conduct a Jungian reading of this Jungian therapist-poet (as I have not sought to counsel Hawken in her various introspections), in part because I lack the necessary expertise, but more tellingly because the encounters in Harlow's poems are elaborated within their own carefully constructed terms of engagement. For example, while the mention of transformational configuration may be associated with Jung's concepts of archetypes and synchronicity, this analysis focuses on the poetic manner in which such principles are explored in the situations as they are presented.

<sup>10</sup> See also 'La trapéziste': 'a dream away – like your high-wire / walking twin, *La Trapéziste* / how she strides the silky air'. As an aside, it is interesting to note the connection between Harlow's acrobats, including the 'field note' exhortation to 'risk delight' in the face of 'absurdities', and the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who in the title sequence of *A Coney Island of the Mind* (NY: New Directions, 1958) refers to the poet who 'like an acrobat / climbs on rime / to a high wire of his own making'... 'Constantly risking absurdity / and death' (15).

<sup>11</sup> A similar (essentially Europhile) name-dropping frequently occurs within the titles of the poems: 'Pace, Voltaire...', 'Anecdotal aesthetics in Athens' (Stevens), 'Paschal transfiguration', 'Printed matter / *ein Freud'scher Verscriber*', 'Xenophon's dog', 'Giotto's elephant', 'reading Mandelstam', 'Icing on the cake, with God and Darwin', 'Translating Narcissus'. Among dedicatees, we find Robert Lax (x3), Berryman/Hoover, Hugh Lauder, Alan Loney, John Clare (x2), Kevin Andrews, Nikolova, and Cavafy.

<sup>12</sup> 'A childhood friend reports that Cézanne confided in her that his wife Hortense, with whom he was often cross, "liked nothing but Switzerland and lemonade"', *The Muse: Psychoanalytic Explorations of Creative Inspiration*, ed. Adele Tutter, (Routledge: USA, 2016). In his own Notes, citing Henri Perruchot, Harlow refers to Cézanne's 'mistress'. Indeed, the couple shared a relationship over some 17 years before they married in 1886. <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Cezanne>, accessed 5 June 2020>

<sup>13</sup> Hawken: 1987, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019. Harlow: 1974, 1980, 1981, 1985, 1991, 2005, 2009, 2014, 2014, 2016, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Distinguishing these two poets from the earlier phases of Romanticism, and from much of its manifestation among 20<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand poets, is that to idealisation Harlow and Hawken add a process of reification. This stands in sharp contrast to Baxter's more public 'a cell of good living' pronouncement, which in retrospect appears more a form of licence-giving than a strict moral imperative and, given more recent revelations about his own misbehaviour, has led to charges of hypocrisy and dissimulation. It could be said that our two poets are shape-givers to consciousness rather than consumers of its potential: Keats's 'vale of soul-making' in preference to Shelley's 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'.

<sup>15</sup> See *Tui!* endnotes. Also, Wikipedia: 'Inanna is an [ancient Mesopotamian goddess](#) associated with love, beauty, sex, desire, fertility, war, justice, and political power... Inanna has become an important figure in modern [feminist theory](#) because she appears in the [male-dominated Sumerian pantheon](#), but is equally as powerful, if not more powerful than, the male deities she appears alongside'. <accessed 20 July 2019>

<sup>16</sup> The journey motif comes from Basho ('*the journey itself is home*') and the dreamscape allows the speaker to assume multiple identities (Jung's or Inanna's lover among them). In this ragbag: Papatūānuku, Jung, Basho, Tītōkōwaru, Gandhi, Genghis Khan, the 'Sumerian goddess of love'. Also, 'the words shift and mingle to make two new stories', enabling the

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familiar and the exotic to merge into a localised underworld, via places like ‘a disused gun emplacement’, and a self-confrontation which asks ‘Who, and where, are the tangata whenua?’, institutionalism (taking the child), the Desert Fathers, Kote-kauru-o-te-Rangi (the speaker ‘stands with him for a long time’ in the New York Metropolitan Museum, both wanting to be ‘home’), along with American ecological champions and writers Wendell Berry and Louise Glück. The inclusion of a wide range of reference is similar to Harlow’s practice, although the emphasis in Hawken is on personal or mythic endeavour in contrast to his impersonal formalised modernity.

<sup>17</sup> <[https:// www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition](https://www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition), accessed 5 October 2019>

<sup>18</sup> ‘We set out to make a piece using found objects, tapes and movement – and the *Texts* themselves. These last were both seen and heard. Slides of texts and graphic scores were projected – white on black – for each section of the piece. This became a visual effect as well as a projection of the pages of a book, because the image was thrown across the acting space and danced on the backs of the players and on the sides of their instruments. The texts were also the impetus and material for spoken improvisations, which follow one or two of the “straight” readings on the tape’ <[https:// www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition](https://www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition), accessed 10 October 2019>. In his Notes, Harlow further states that the texts ‘owe something of their initial impulse’ to composer Powell and that ‘Some of the material has been extracted from FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES by T.G. Cutler, from his Speech Studio, Christchurch’.

<sup>19</sup> An added awkwardness is that, while all four named are stations on the MetLink Network, Linden is on the Kapiti Line, while Woburn and Melling are listed as stations on the Hutt Valley Line, which divide beforehand at Petone, though elsewhere the branch line that takes the train to Melling is shown as taking that town’s name <<https://www.backpackerguide.nz/public-transport-in-wellington/>, accessed 5 October 2019>. As mentioned, the logic Harlow employs extends beyond normal limits, allowing multiple directions (or chosen destinations) to be incorporated into the single overarching ‘headedness’ (soundscape).

<sup>20</sup> Reviewer Ian Dando, *The Star* (Christchurch, NZ) October 7 1983: ‘The most imaginative of all... occurred in Day 7. Here the five musicians played, acted and danced with large plywood wobble-boards which they later used as shields to defend themselves against the attacks of these same sounds thrown back at them from the corners of the room by delayed electronic feedback. Such a scene epitomized two strong features of this work... Powell and his four players simultaneously act, move in structured formations and *play* instruments. Although each of these three elements has its own unity within each piece the close interrelationships of all three elevates this total theatre from the random to artistic unity.’ <[https:// www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition](https://www.kitpowell.ch/works/textsforcomposition), accessed 5 October 2019>

<sup>21</sup> Have we come a full circle? I am reminded of Curnow’s cautionary praise of Baxter when he included poems from the eighteen-year-old’s ground-breaking *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45* (Caxton, 1945): ‘he seeks the eloquent rather than the inquisitively precise word’.