

Milk & Honey

MICHELE LEGGOTT has published five books of poetry, including *Milk & Honey* (2005) and *As far as I can see* (1999). She is co-editor of *Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1960–1975* (2000) with Alan Brunton and Murray Edmond, and editor of Robin Hyde's long poem *The Book of Nadath* (1999) and *Young Knowledge: The Poems of Robin Hyde* (2003). Leggott is also the author of *Reading Zukofsky's 80 Flowers* (1989) and completed a doctorate at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, in 1985. A major project since 2001 has been the development of the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre (nzepec) at the University of Auckland where she is an Associate Professor of English.

Also by Michele Leggott

Poetry

Like This? (1988)
Swimmers, Dancers (1991)
Dia (1994)
As Far As I Can See (1999)
Milk & Honey (2005)

Criticism

Reading Zukofsky's 80 Flowers (1989)

Editor

Opening the Book (1995, with Mark Williams)
The Victory Hymn by Robin Hyde (1995)
The Book of Nadath by Robin Hyde (1999)
Big Smoke: New Zealand Poems 1960–1975 (2000, with Alan
Brunton and Murray Edmond)
Young Knowledge: The Poems of Robin Hyde (2003)

Milk & Honey

MICHELE LEGGOTT



CAMBRIDGE

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#17 of 'so far' is adapted from 'The H.D. Book' (Part 1, Chapter 3) by Robert Duncan in *TriQuarterly* 12 (Spring 1968). 'cairo vessel' is a free variation on K A Kitchen's reconstruction of a fragmentary text in *Poetry of Ancient Egypt* (1999). *Milk and Honey Taken Far Far Away* is the title of a bilingual site work by Lawrence Weiner in the Sophie-Gips-Höfen, Berlin. Translations of Federico García Lorca by William Logan (1955), Robert Bly (1973) and Greg Simon/Steve F White (1988) are used in 'words beyond light'; also translation of Miklós Radnóti by Zsuzsanna Ozsvath and Frederick Turner (*Foamy Sky*, 2000). The base text of 'salto, salto, where are your shoes?' is a review of Cirque Éloize by Alan Brunton for the *Evening Post*, Wellington, February 2001. I wish to thank James Fryer for line drawings in the text.

wilderness

I hope I'm not disturbing you
fellow traveller
renamed Constant and much taken
by revolutionary copy writing
on the outskirts of my
dream that you are dead

soon I'll walk from the wreckage
carrying a small case of smoking documents
no more diamond body no wild goose
this is what was left after the explosion
I'll open my hand and show you a heart
like a black sun on the other side of time
and I'll walk out of here soon

atman I breathe
and the light shatters

1 to open the eyes



so far

on the first day of October
in a city without hot water
the temperature climbs to 31 degrees
and I

 in a room with full-length mirrors
wash like an odalisque *petalled self*
on the tiled floor, diffuse light
as of jalousies or halogen
keeping the frescoes chalky

2 spruiking
for love's boy on a pavement
covered by fallen blossom
victorious armour
washed away in the night
endless headlights bearing
one avenue to another
three thousand solar showers
have been purchased
since the explosion

3 the fire-eater juggles
torches knives an iron ball
five teeth missing by the river
his bride sings a cappella
veils tied to a balcony railing
fructus ventris fructus sanctus
white laburnum on the river path
warble on a bike
who will enter the shadows
under the bridge at noon?

4 the tests are successful
and service may be resumed
sooner than expected
I live like Utnapishtim in the distance
six floors up in a confluence
where Burnton meets Jolimont
that is how we got here
the trains wake me before dawn
each day is a bird in another place

5 Ingres fingers on the sidewalk
was she done, his shrieking Medusa
before the rain in the night?
bookstores stay open coffee is cheap
light falls in the Shrine of Remembrance
as if one body lay sleeping
on the cumulus of another
champagne sustains the wait
as urns are sent from kitchen to tub
elevators groan and whirr

6 it was a translation I brought back
nothing but guesses with expensive names
at wrist and throat I gained
two hours of sunlight
clouds of words
dispersed at the edge of space
a kiss disappearing off the page
I will never print again

7 days of purification
signs in the sky
pretty mountain rites
rigmarole of the hours
you were lucky
I was very lucky
a feral girl without hands
a green flame
before the invasion
loving till it hurt

8 I smiled at the poet
and bought lunch in the white cafe
his new book lay on the table
he talked of past and future works
and of the device he would carry
for one other's call
farewell poet
may you never be alone or unhappy
may your archives download safely
into tomorrow

9 John Lennon is 59
IMAGINE—somebody
encountered this week
could become one of the most
important people in your life
over the next two months
don't reject new contacts
just because they don't meet
your normal standards
take that feather off the scale
of expanded light

10 there's been a lot
in the news and in the movies
about the threat to Earth
from asteroids and comets
the idea that we're at risk
from a cosmic collision
was first dreamed up
by the science fiction writer
H G Wells now the astronomers
have followed suit
your day is the operatic condition
of the world

11 birds wake me
wind and moonlight
surf driven high on the beaches
a church bell later on
those raptors
released over upturned
faces the gloved hand
jesses strafing the ground
little mouse *carpe*
carpe diem
no singing will ever
bring you back

12 *commanded*
to pray between
two crystal trees
candelabra of the soul
darkened, waiting

not a dream
but a gallery where I
unlace the huntsman's
boots praying
another nature will
survive the skin

13 let's be clear
I am the huntress
you desired
cleaning a flesh wound
also designated
for you are the hunter
of heaven
am I one of twelve
labours
or is the circle
twenty four?
will you step out
of the trees
when I call you
to the game?

14 past midnight
lights lighting
in the high branches
deep reaches
far festivals lighting
lights in the branches
high overhead

15 minutes
of an ecstatic literature
in collapse o o o
experimentation lyricism wit
all three angels all
double deleting the record
setting the circuits ablaze
checking the alternate settings
the unreleased versions
campfires of footsteps leaving
for the end of time all night
all night long deadly snakes
in the desert boots and all
leaving no trace

16 the platoon hops along
in rubber suits carrying its flippers
and singing endorsements
that was yesterday
now the release forms include
hill work where they return
for the exhausted one
can you run can you run can you
keep him in the middle
wipe away the tears
pick up the suitcases and
continue wiring safe to sound
with the green flame

17 Psyche before her sin
is a dilettante
To read to listen to study
to gaze was all part of being

loved without loving
a pleasure previous to any trial
or pain of seeking the beloved
The light must be tried
Psyche must doubt and seek to know
reading must become life and writing
and all go wrong
There is no way but Psyche's search
the creative work of a union
in knowledge and experience
At the end there is a new Eros
a new Master over Love
Eros, like Osiris
or Lucifer (if He be the Prince
of Light whom the Gnostics believe
scattered in sparks throughout
the darkness of what is matter)
is a Lord over us in spirit
who is dispersed everywhere
to our senses
We are drawn to Him, but we must
also gather Him to be
We cannot
in the early stages locate Him
but He finds us out
Seized by His orders we *fall in love*
in order that He be
and in His duration the powers
of Eros are boundless
We are struck by His presence
and in becoming lovers we become
something other than ourselves
subjects of a daemonic force
previous to our humanity

18 horse on the hillside
horse climbing the hunter's belt
horse of dust and hot stars
embedded in dust
horse on a field of heaven
almost dawn almost
not leaving the ground
almost not there at the door
leaving the ground

19 sweeps and may queens
sweet beaumes-de-venise
pools deeper than orange groves
now I have to kick away
do it all, the invitations
the chance meetings the
eidolon encountered walking out
buds and fruit I will patiently
reinvent your foment

20 door to door
Captain January's maple sugar
corroborates impurities
of purpose, stitches one side of paradise
to all the others, how to
fly over celebrations with a star map
torn out of the voice recording
heartbreak and joyous guard
She wrote:
She wrote:

21 on wings, on springs
on sails, on gales, on this
hommage à piazzolla
look forward and leave behind
the sad paper flowers
a violin in the dark

22 let's take
a holiday
in other places

23 boldly bodily
soft ophidian
I'm counting countries
every day of my life
I'm forgetting refractions
who was a beloved

24 bathing in the soft water
rain just gone from the window
air and water and orangeries
an ivory lace of the mind
refusing gifts *go from me*
go where I cannot see you
rescinding what's left

25 drums
every other morning
drums
where the sun lifts
drums
against the new green
drums
practising immolation
drums
of the whirring soul
drums
in the flowering tree

26 lunar shadows
crashed on the mountain
errors of judgement
a comedy a love
immaterial wandering
just this
and this

27 if he is all heart
coming in to some body
on the other side of the universe
the moon the room the valley
where messages from gods
are pegged on the blue
and every night is an education