

The
Other Side
of Dawn



by Hilary Baxter

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Hilary Baxter



S P I R A L

INTRODUCTION

Hilary's work is free-ranging; embracing a variety of forms; a mosaic of her experience over the past twenty years. A number of the early poems, in strong ballad form, echo the herstory of many young women for whom that small possibility — freedom — is seen in the ballad of leather and the bikes. A story of the road — the Kerouac scenario. Set against this a more mature reflection about the limitations of such freedom in *An Inspiration From the Mob*.

The flashing moments of the shorter 'haiku' poems are interwoven throughout the work with the longer dream/visionary sequences. The strongly worked lyric pieces offer moments of grace in her turbulent journey. A journey that drives us from the deep south 'up the Octagon streets' through motorbike clubs in the Wellington of the early 60's to Auckland in the street express dope days. From the green stillnesses of the Wanganui River to Rapid Creek Road and Western Australia 'forty four degrees and flying high'.

The poems are not only landscapes of place but reveal the topography of the soul. Thus:

Love is
the black wind that
blows down the pines
on the mountain

Also a woman grieving for '...my friend insane/. . . taken away/to the mental hospital/where the mind is prised open/and the heart is never known'. Or blown away by the image of '... some bikies/Half a dozen red arm patch members/on . . . beautiful machines shining/stirring into the sun'. It is pain; 'unspoken language/of raw knifed love'. And erotic force '... we lay and broke ourselves/in one another/spreading enough love/for venus to wonder at'. In the intimate tone of the last poems we experience with her 'the pain, the pain and no-one there/. . . sultry nights incognito/nights derelict at the pub/nights the roughest I have known'. These dark solitudes relieved by the 'domestic' poems which show us the companionship of a woman and man going about the commonplace activities of life at an ordinary level.

Are there angels in this book? '...on your bike/chariot from either heaven or hell/it seems not to matter which/. . . you rode away/in indecision and burning guilt'.

Hilary speaks for voices that are seldom heard in our community, 'the people of the invisible dark'. These people are rarely at ease. They share the 'moaning vision of the hothouse angel'. She speaks for the young, for innocence slaughtered: 'the boy in his country town', who finds in the city '... a trap/in the pit of blue fire'. For '... the grey child/who sprawls on

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all the stones'. And for a sister/brotherhood that holds staunch throughout 'the prolonged storm'.

The women in this work are those enigmatic figures glimpsed on the edge of experience. 'May she at the heart/of your true dream move'. Often in the twilight, handy to the dark, the wild girls who move at the centre of their own freedoms.

Will anyone get away?
The moon turns golden
it cannot say

Strong women connected with the moon 'mother/of the void between/ loving and despair'.

Most of all Hilary speaks passionately for herself. These are her songs. And we decided with the author to print some of them without refining any of their unevenness, the occasional naivete — displaying a true image.

There are deep strains of anger about the divisions and imbalances in Aotearoa: 'Hey Koro, man! Explosives, dynamite please/under the court-house'. And loss: 'In a timelocked arrowed whale of a lost time/I saw my blood brother give far more than a fine'. There is a hope, reiterated, in the earth itself: 'I am going back to the land/I am going back to the marae'. And in the essential justice of its people: 'Hey e hoa!/Crying for freedom and the day'. And a strong belief in her guardian principles.

Oh people of my ancestry
remember your Arohanui
your brown dove
Astray in a strange land
One day of cold
I will return to the tribe
never leave again.

Producing this work has been a collective effort and we would like to thank all the people who gave us their support. Kia ora koutou.

Juliet Raven Jane Bowron

There is no level plain
which is not succeeded
by a slope
There is no peace
which is not open
to disturbance
There is no departure
that is not followed
by a return

/ Ching (Book of Changes)

ONE OF THE GANG

To feel the wind wildly tearing at my hair
to hear the terrible roar of the bikes
it's my life

Gone are the days when I played with
a little girl's toys and did as I was told
Be one of us they said and drew me
away from that life through that
forbidden door guarded by them
The smell of leather and tobacco
with me all the while

I suffer silently doing what they want
mixed thoughts inside me stay
We're afraid of each other wild I am
and wild I'll be

To be a boy I wanted
and always will I want
it's my life

I've nothing else, nothing always
bored life is dead I only live for kicks
to wear my mates leather jacket to share
his life for so short a while then let
another break his way into my heart
I ride with the gang always on the run
through the grim black night we go
I with not a care for myself

yet still longing
still hoping for that day
(1963)

CARITAS

Love is
the black wind that
blows down the pines
on the mountain

BEFORE A NEW DAY

Before a new day
comes my love
There will be light
for love was born
from darkness
and obscurity

(1963)

TO MY MOTHER

The moon lowered itself
round and gold hugely
to your window
Let you see
its caverns of ice

And you knew
that in watching
too long it would
burst through the window
to take you back

(1967)

PEOPLE OF THE INVISIBLE . . .

People of the invisible dark
take me there
across the twilight zone
To speak in that high room
behind the stars
with your man of reckoning

FOR A BIKIE

You remain
under the one big same
the same burnished trees
of waxen green
a necessity still untold
Cold wind from further south
sweeps autumnal leaves
up the Octagon streets
Blurs and chrome plated motorbikes
stationed military style
like some secondary school assembly
One uniform the young must have
or else rebel

You watched intently
like a wounded dog seeking shelter
as I passed in sun and snow
Something leapt and met halfway
between us unspoken language
of raw knifed love

You looked once long
scrutiny of a kind
then turned but back again
one decision
seemed to be your boss

The other girl in hunger spread
sharpened and stuffed into leather and chains
too tight was left unnoticed
When you swung on your bike
chariot from either heaven or hell
it seems not to matter which
you angel you —

Then rode away
in indecision and burning guilt

(1967)

EARLY BIKIE DAYS

I now can
recall that night
many years back
at the motorbike club
in Tory Street
Boredom hung like
chandeliers of flames
in the upstairs
coffee lounge
Each record played
in the gaudy jukebox
displayed each individual's
cut off thoughts

We left the club at two
on brazen bikes
A chancy friend
expelled from school
several months back
had taken my footwear
so I rode astride barefoot
jean-clad

A screeching corner
on the narrow gorge road
almost laid our machine
flat on the churning gravel
Exhaust pipes blew
golden sparks distractedly
into the blackened gorge

I dragged my foot
along the speeding gravel
my boyfriend stopped

with screaming brakes
to bandage with his handkerchief

The night frost closed in
around each bike
Nothing visible
in front of my goggles
in twos and threes
bellowing and singing
A group of black and silver forms
marched up
the country road
to an old horse paddock

Streaming moonlit manes
swearing under their breath
Each chose one
bareback and steaming

Some galloped with rebellious shouts
but others more thoughtful
did not drive
their animals forward

One built-up hour later
we at last could see
one another under
flashing neon-signs of
the silent sleeping town

As if someone had suddenly
thrown dynamite on a fire
We let loose
and stampeded
with tremendous drumming
down the long side street

We took the horses back
To their grassy oblivion
Returned to the bikes
outside the murmuring club

Years later
met in the street
after a days work
we laugh at those wilder days

(1966)

WHILE THE RAIN FALLS BEFORE THE FRUIT

Come brother
knock at my door
I lost you
at the beginning of
the prolonged storm

Where did you hide
during that storm
I ate the earth
and drank from muddy waters
Missed the day
and twisted the night

Come friend
since you say so
Show me the place
where all men
beat the same drum

Read me the language
we all understand
Sing the song
we sang before man
became man

There's no air in this town
only fear to be
what we were made
No the election
has not come

It will not
as long as we

trample him who walks
on the hills

Seeing the gullies
and valleys between
Still he crosses these
beneath the crumbling sky

(1967)

REINCARNATION

I once knew a man several years back
who stepped inside his friend's forest hut
antelope head adorned the wall
wild staring eyes
Verse prone books by a day spun sill
enough to call a library

His friend blundered in
from dusk
pale cold blowing on his fingers and snow crusted coal

The stranger's feet were horses hooves
his eyes of deja vu
That night he took his friend
the animal hunter hut dweller
clean away
to unbroken mist
and sabre toothed hills

They returned breathless
about the year 2000
too late to catch the final storm Home

(1967)

REMINISCENCE

I remember as a child
my father would carry me
high up on
his shoulders or head
I would suffocate
in the red knitted jumpsuit
and father wearing
his old gabardine coat

He would gallop through
the Karori bush
with me precariously above
across the paths banks
lost streams
made of wet brown leaves

Then coming up
the gravel drive
onto the old road
No more would I feel
as though my throne of trees
looked down on the world

that lay there waiting for me to grow

(1967)

SUBURBAN AUTUMN

Smoking hillsides before the rain
an early winter perhaps
Golden flaming poplars
still shedding leaves
Bruised in red and amber

The blood red maple mass
outside my bedroom window
glistening dancing alive
Like an all year round
Christmas tree of Jerusalem

The sudden outburst . . .
great white pillars of rain
marching down the hill
dissolving into a white scarf
Hung over north east valley
The swollen Leith
Rubbish junk piling the surface
squelching boots leaching
carried leaves brown
and dead inside
each back door
Drops of water shaken
gone back to the rain

A sulky log fire
gurgling cracking staccato
from the radio
The cat silently playing
bag pipes in the centre
of the sitting room carpet
And the weary dinner plates
before a troubled heavy dusk

(1968)

INNOCENCE

The boy in his country town
see the hyena
jump from his eyes
and leap laughing
then screaming
away from the blaze of light

After having milked cows
in the astounding glare of dawn
and ploughed the soil
that will remain
in the chambers of the memory
He grows to what seems manhood
to the eye

And away from home
smother the town with
a long hidden hunger
Only to find the hyena
nailed to a trap
in the pit of blue fire

(1969)

THE HOT HOUSE ANGEL

You and I fronting
across the day hour
the pain hour
the 'lord give us light
but don't make it hard' hour

Floating up Park Road
flapping old sandals
through a warm winter sun
The aura sun
with shades perhaps
Bustling to where we assume it's at
stoned out of our skulls
down into the canyon
where the traffic moves
and makes me crosseyed
with pain made of iron
Unable to know on this plane
the other void locked
in the eddying sacrifice

And a moaning vision
of the hothouse angel
sings of freedom
that is not there
And will not be
until we've filled the mouth
of the grey child
who sprawls on
all the stones

(1969)

AORANGI

In a small plane two or three
bored temperamental
American tourists
I looked down
saw for the first time
broken ranges running like
blue veins through the land
I remembered
the terrible moko beauty
of the old Maori chiefs

They once moved
barefoot through mountain snow
with the forgotten land
We will never
own their tragedy

(1967)

FOR YOU KNOW WHO

Sitting in the blue-band-Auckland-streak-express
spilling yellow plastic sun cups of tea
and seeing no hangups in the sky
(with bent surprise)
But a broken pock marked ground
(with the usual resignation)
And kidding myself to death
that what still lives out there is OK

I saw a jet plane
write L-O-V-E across the universe
in smoke and air

(1969)

BOYLE CRESCENT AUCKLAND

I remember
many years ago
lying just awake
in a junkie house in Grafton
The land of a thousand grassfires
where the moon is mother
of the void between
loving and despair

The scream of a siren
barking of dogs
running footsteps
muffled breathing
scuffling outside the window
And cries from a black van
as my friend insane
is taken away
to the mental hospital
where the mind is prised open
and the heart is never known

(1969)

AUCKLAND '69

In a singing room
of a thousand stone suns
We lay
and broke ourselves
in one another
Spreading enough love
For venus to wonder at

Waking under the dawning rain
each morning reborn
in a junkie house
And living closer even
than to the second
where it's all at

I remember him I left
But he knows now
through the window of his love
of other stars behind
the rain and mist on the hill

(1969)

NORTH WINDS BLOWING

North winds blow
from some point or source
hit out at the south
we need not always remember the south pole
freezing frozen broken crapped out countryside
to a forgotten stillness that was
always there only
behind the screen
breathless wars perhaps
you and I fronting across
the twelfth hour

(having been the twilight zone)
dying leaves rattling after us
before the milk truck
we drank in together
a thousand blue stars
on our ciggies
I walked the gutter
beside you in
a swinging silence saying
I wanted to be smaller
than you and your laugh
in deepened waters of my mind
only I was deadly serious

Nearing your room
thinking stones and trees
remembering
ancient fires
found for first time
again we walked up Tinakori Road
in that greying afternoon
and the nearly dead leaves purple Hower walk

through the seven gardens of eve
claiming red and burnt-out ferns
later for a milk bottle
on the communal mantlepiece

Till walking out the gate
saw a time-filled cracked
(with tired standing)
notice all ways explaining
some obscure reasoning
why I couldn't take them
from the public eye

And then watching a fresh
faced family
feeding swans bread
and I felt bare-handed
you said
swans are vicious and
kill

(1969)

POEM

Remember
those Sundays my love

There's a little bit of your mind
in each hour
and the wind

Even when dusk falls down
crying from the wound

(1969)

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Even before my father died
I saw in Naseby
his name on a weed marred stone

Was stunned by foresight
reeling through time
The tombstone thrown upwards
a crooked angle
Split corner to corner
from some underworld
forgotten outcast

(1967)

OCTOBER 1972

My joy is a tribal joy
My loneliness is strong loneliness
and my sorrow
is pathways of flowers
leading to the river
where the taniwha moves

And the moreporks called
for a barefoot father
My father
disciple of the Maori Christ

I hear an old man singing
and there is sunlight in his hair
(1973)

TO TOTALITY . . .

To totality all good things
all blessings come to
Myth could be legend
legend history
and history could be now

Thunder is
God moxing tables upstairs
(1977)

MAY SHE AT THE HEART . . .

May she at the heart
of your true dream move

So I, in the dark shunting
Paekakariki night
Turn no more to the candlelight

I AM GOING BACK . . .

I am going back to the land
I am going back to the marae
and I will relive Jerusalem
before I die

(1981)

WHERE THE SUN SHINES DOWN . . .

Where the sun shines down
on a many angered day
Remember your Arohanui
when the sky swallows up
the dove

(1981)

UP THE COLD SEA ROAD . . .

Up the cold sea road
at two in the morning
before the morning star

Jumping a goods train
and proud of it
Sitting quietly
raving away
through the burnt-out night
we go deeply south

Caught in the tree of sorrow
of timeless notions
torn from the grasp
of my father's bones
May that never happen
Great tohunga of noa

Have a damn good look
where the breakers come in
at Island Bay
An orange carrier across the tarmac
flying over Atlantis
on the wing of a bikie,
in through the door
All in a strobe Mescalito!

TO READ IN THE BOOKS

To read in the books
about Hell's Angels chicks
Sam, one eye — one out
Will anyone get away?
The moon turns golden
it cannot say

One red star outside
your kitchen window
To the sky — ae
Our Indian brothers
had it made
By inanga greenstone
Navaho turquoise
a ring I assure you
and the cloud above the moon

Before eight to wake then
and the nought of all
one per cent on a ten-pool ball

(1979)

AN INSPIRATION FROM THE MOB

Man, why don't you
just hold her head
kiss her eyes
and take her to bed

Well now I rape the telephone

IN A TIMELOCKED . . .

In a timelocked arrowed whale of a lost time
I saw my blood brother give far more than a fine

Behind bars e tama! Hey e hoa!
Crying for freedom and the day.
(1979)

TODAY GOOD FRIDAY . . .

Today Good Friday
I fell in love
with some bikies
Half a dozen
red arm patch members
on the beach front
outside my place

They rode on out
beautiful machines shining
stirring into the sun
And the message read
in waves across the Tasman
not Seig Heil brothers

(1979)

HEY ROAD-RUNNER

Hey Road-Runner!
Hey Koro, man! Explosives, dynamite please
under the courthouse
and a dog named Blue
the watcher
and who knows who
Come Guy Fawkes, man
I will be there
blowing fire up the stair

(1981)

YAY HEY FRIDAY NIGHT . . .

Yay hey
Friday night
Your old work boot
against the open door
my Darwin bought thongs
facing into the wall
heading south

I obnoxious, tense, ragey
You peaceful silent
with every right
to read your book
from Palestine

Hey babe! When they knock
the walls down and we awaken
from our drunken stupor
Tell me then
what made the w'orld an orange

(1986)

FOR JOHNNO

There was one star
every dawn
those mornings
Always only one star
outside the back door
of a Lims Hotel unit
I counted

But one night it was
Red and black
deeply tropical
I will never forget
the rain
the infrequent rain
The pain, the pain and no-one there
and the deep deep dark
as only the tropics are
Yet red and bright distant light
beyond the fronds of palm trees

I remember those mornings too
walks up Rapid Creek Road
Either for smokes to the Dolphin
or to the hospital
Yes I remember mate

And sultry nights incognito
Nights derelict at the pub
nights the roughest
I have known and I
a wanderer from way back
“Fuck off” ye?u said so many a time
“Fuck off” you said “you rag”

but one Saturday
really talked to me
now weTe top friends again

(1986)

ISING TO MYSELF . . .

I sing to myself
into the crazy troppo
Darwin night
Sitting in your flat
surrounded by trees
smiling
drinking moselle
Watching
you sleep the drunken sleep
Flaked out and happy
naked upon your balcony

As for me?
Well, thousands of miles
away from home
I sometimes wonder
what I'm doing here

Oh people of my ancestry
remember your Arohanui
Your brown dove
Astray in a strange land
one day of cold
I will return to the tribe
never leave again

(1986)

BEYOND A DARWIN SUNSET

As I watched you in your sleep
Moving in your waking deep
I mused through the tropical night
lying on your bed directly under the ever turning fan
Well mate in all happy nakedness
we made it somehow back to the Garden

Now I swim back to crab world
and when I get there
and meet King Crab
I will tell him that all
is alright here

(1986)

AFFLICTED . . .

Afflicted by the demon drink
I dream of W.A.
Tropical seas Indian
ocean turquoise
Seasnakes thicker than an arm
the worlds deadliest
On blinding white rolling dunes
forty four degrees and flying high
(1986)

DARWIN

That Sunday near the end of the 'wet'
both of us dry tired and down
No money to go to Lims Sunday session
Waterfront bars
No cans in the fridge no-one came around
but we did the washing defrosted
the fridge together
You roasted the lamb from the meat-tray
you won at the pub
While I walked up the road
for some bread from Woollies
with our last dollar

I was pissed off sat looking out the door
you were reading not talking to me
again we were near the end of the cigarette butts
You said 'let's go for a walk'
so out we went I felt happy
our walks never fail to bring peace of mind

We passed along Casuarina Drive
past houses and pools surrounded by trees
You said 'We'll go to the beach'
I smiled to myself
Johnno's pub now Johnno's beach
But the beach is yours
you built the wall for it the steps leading
to the sand and rocks long ago

Forgetting the stingers and seawasps
we stood on the rocks and I soaked
my infected hand and legs in the warm sea
The great wondrous Timor Sea

wounds come from running amok
in the Dolphin last weekend

So we splashed salt water over our wrecked bodies
watching the sky slowly turn inky black
Looming up behind us the great build-up
air and sea changing
Your countdown dead on and the cool rain began
we walked laughing saturated
You commenting that everyone should be crammed
into Lims bars out of the beer garden
out of the rain

Back at your flat towels on the line
so we dried off with your sheet and old sarong
remained half naked
made a cup of tea
You couldn't find anything to read
and I sat and wrote this

(1986)

TO WAIT . . .

To wait for you
at the heart of the jewel
wind seaspray
mist the wild coast
of your soul

(1968)

1870

Received of the
Hon. Secy of the
War Dept.
the sum of \$1000
for the purchase of
land to be used
as a military
cemetery.

Witness my hand
at Washington
this 10th day of
April 1870

Geo. W. Brown
Secy of War





Hilary Baxter was born in 1949 and began writing at age fourteen. She is now a grandmother, occasional writer, labourer and traveller, living temporarily at Paekakariki on the Kapiti coast of Aotearoa.

She had several poems published in university magazines in Dunedin in the mid-60's. She sees what she has written as recalling many stages of her life to date; moving out from the shadow of her literary background and parentage: — the writer J C Sturm and the late poet-playwright, James K Baxter — into her own creativity.

Hilary is descended, through her mother, from the Taranaki and Whakatohea tribes and, through her father, from the McMillans of the Western Highlands; she has a strong affinity with these ancestral ties.

In the past few years she has developed an unexpected attachment to Darwin where she is now based. Her feelings for Aotearoa are, however, very strong. She knows there will, one day, be a final homecoming.



S P I R A L