



RHYME BEFORE REASON





*for Anne-Marie*





# Rhyme Before Reason

Scott Kendrick

HEADWORX  
WELLINGTON



© Scott Kendrick, 2001

First published 2001

ISBN 0-473-07389-7

*Published by*

HeadworX Publishers  
26 Grant Rd, Thorndon  
Wellington  
Aotearoa / New Zealand  
<http://headworx.eyesis.co.nz>

*Printed by*

Publishing Press

HeadworX® is a registered  
trademark of HeadworX Publishers

Typeset by HeadworX Publishers  
in AGaramond 11pt

*This book is copyright.  
Apart from any fair dealing for  
the purpose of review, private research  
and study, as permitted under the Copyright  
Act, no part may be reproduced without  
written permission from  
the author.*

Some of these poems previously  
appeared in the following places:  
Bar Bodega *Bulletin*, *JAAM*, *Poetry NZ*,  
*Spin*, *Takahe*, *The NeXt Wave* (ed. Pirie)

Published with the assistance  
of Creative NZ/Toi Aotearoa

The logo for Creative NZ, featuring the word 'creative' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with 'nz' in a larger, stylized, lowercase font below it. The letters 'n' and 'z' are connected. Below the logo is the text 'ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND / TOI AOTEAROA' in a small, uppercase, sans-serif font.

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND / TOI AOTEAROA



## Contents

### I



#### *Simple*

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Simple               | 11 |
| Burn                 | 12 |
| True Love            | 13 |
| Duet                 | 14 |
| Towards a Love Poem  | 15 |
| Love Means Suffering | 16 |
| Chance               | 17 |
| Chill                | 18 |
| Reciprocation        | 19 |
| Always and Forever   | 20 |
| Renting Kisses       | 21 |
| Modern Love          | 23 |
| Elemental Prayer     | 24 |

### II

#### *Leave Your Loathing at the Door*

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Posing the Question                | 27 |
| Mirror Games                       | 28 |
| Leave Your Loathing at<br>the Door | 29 |
| I Don't Know Everything<br>Anymore | 30 |
| Trade Secrets                      | 31 |
| Poetry by Numbers                  | 32 |
| Self-help                          | 33 |
| Epiphany                           | 34 |
| What is Resisted Persists          | 35 |
| Wilde Thing                        | 37 |



III  
*The Social Kontrakt*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Fearytale                                      | 41 |
| Petition                                       | 43 |
| A Millionaire Hippy is Something<br>to Be      | 44 |
| An Interview with the Minister<br>for Treasure | 45 |
| The Social Kontrakt                            | 47 |
| Fives  | 48 |
| Politics                                       | 49 |
| Commercial Breaks                              | 50 |

IV  
*Uptite*

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Uptite                            | 55 |
| City Cycle                        | 56 |
| Thy Kingdom Come                  | 58 |
| Futility                          | 59 |
| The Lambton Shuffle               | 60 |
| Summertime Framing                | 61 |
| R S J                             | 62 |
| Yeah — Right Mate                 | 63 |
| Sleepers                          | 64 |
| At the Bar                        | 65 |
| And Man Begat Cocaine             | 66 |
| By Candlelight in His Kitchen ... | 67 |
| Rodent Requiem                    | 68 |
| Tom                               | 69 |

V

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| The Ballad of One-hand Joe | 73 |
| Headstone                  | 80 |

‘There’s something about being restricted that opens up the possibilities. With a synthesizer you can do anything you like. I don’t want to do anything I like! I wanna do something that ties me down, where I can manoeuvre.’

— Keith Richards






I  
Simple







## Simple

in the earlobe of your lover lurks a logic to discover  
that's applicable to mother's when she told you not to lie  
and in the iris of your chosen where acerbic truth is frozen  
is the finest place to pose in when you're pleasing to the eye  
for in the smile of your double may be ridicule or trouble —  
love is armpit hair & stubble  
love is *always* asking why



## Burn

Girl, we've got a love here  
As forbidden as they come.

Lovers have been flayed alive  
For lesser sins than this.

I feel like the tragic hero  
In that Greek play I've never read.

Can't quite recall what happens  
But I'm pretty sure everybody dies.



## True Love

I whispered low, I whispered sweet,  
I whispered sonnets near complete.

I spoke about a broken man  
Who left a rifle in the sand.

I then described the pleasant grave  
Wherein my father's bones are laid.

I gave a list of lovers missed  
And all the corpses I had kissed.

She yawned a smile, sighed, and said  
'I'll really miss you when you're dead.'



## Duet

It's no secret that she needs me  
Needing her more than I know,

And her forcing me to face her  
Means I'm glad to let it go,

Since her answers merely question  
What I'm asking her to say —

In this duet of collusion  
There's a re-write every day.





## Towards a Love Poem

Sometimes  
I think she thinks that just  
because the situation's changed  
that I could (or should, or will)  
discard her on my memory heap,  
a shard of my selected past.

But this is less  
than I deserve  
& more than I can do.

See before I met her  
I had never known God,  
never wrote stoned,  
& had never once  
listened to trout.




## Love Means Suffering

does it just?

if dirt is dirt until it's dust  
& inner-means mean outer-must  
then here's to liberty, laughter, lust  
(in god we hope, in drugs we trust)  
we'll boom oblivious till we bust —

see her & me got loving sussed.



## Chance

A beer, her bag,  
my books, the bed;  
I did deny  
(but never fled)  
the implications  
when she said  
'You lead your life —  
but I am led.'





## Chill

This wan  
winter sunlight  
is poor recompense

for the press  
of your skin  
radiating desire.







## Reciprocation

There's a rhythm of life and a rhythm of death,  
As breathing begins so it ends with a breath;  
It's a rhythm of solace,  
A silence of soul  
That will welcome release  
To replenish the whole.

There's a pulse to the present that stems from the past,  
All blood is in passing till bleeding has passed;  
It's a pulse of pursuance,  
Compelling decay  
As the dying recall  
What the young disobey.

There's a tempo of love and tempo of hate,  
What hearts are unbroken the heartless will break;  
It's a tempo of distance,  
A measurement known  
By the depth of the gaze  
That is gauging your own.



## Always and Forever

The boy is talking banking  
To the girl who's looking bored,

She's thinking 'What an asshole'  
While he wonders if he's scored.

Then he mentions what he's earning  
And her eyebrow gives a twitch;

She looks again and thinks 'Amen';  
Such love is always rich.

## Renting Kisses

Maria's way of weaving  
Was mysterious in style;  
Her sympathies were silent,  
Her rage a knotted smile —  
(The grace of her beginnings  
Left no options to my end;  
She a sinner born to sinning  
As a feather born to bend).

Maria's medications made  
The sweaty summer slip;  
G and Ts for dinner,  
Hashish on every lip —  
(And I a sinner too of course,  
But young and easy plucking;  
Still unaware that decadence  
Is more than merely fucking).

Maria's kind of kissing  
Was historical in stamp;  
A lick along an eyelash,  
A stomach sticky-damp —  
(Stumbling to seduction,  
Virgin boy, astutely led  
From the garlic in the kitchen  
To the bouquet of the bed).

Maria's fiscal policies  
Began my sharp descent;  
Asleep in London sunlight  
As she tallied up the rent —  
(Mistaking my desire  
For a license to consume,  
Never sniffing out the history  
In the scent of her perfume).

\*





## Modern Love

I gave my love a questionnaire  
Out of a glossy magazine.

My love for her it trembled;  
She scored three out of fifteen!

My chosen wailed loudly  
'But my love for you is strong!'

All the same, I hope a therapist  
Can show her where she's wrong.





## Elemental Prayer

Come fine rain falling faintly  
In a baby-kiss cascade,  
And cool these cold lips burning  
With the promises they've made.





## II

### Leave Your Loathing at the Door







## Posing the Question

I was drinking  
From the mirror  
With a narcissistic thirst,

And the cracks there  
Had me asking  
Which of us will shatter first?







## Mirror Games

The mirror game is tricky  
Coz the mirror never shows

How we come across to others  
In the pathos of our pose.

So go push out all your pimples,  
Pinch your cellulite and muscles —

Just be wary of conclusions  
Coz it's you the mirror hustles.





## Leave Your Loathing at the Door

Wasted body, wankered mind,  
I'd care if I could find the time.  
Spitting through another day —  
(Cough a coffee? Dull café?)  
Charming shit I'm sure to say.

Fake a laugh, bluff a glance.  
Not a stud without the stance.  
Pretty girl across the table —  
(I'd be great if I was able)  
Fantasize a fucking fable.

Ritual drugs, random shame;  
Picking at myself again.  
No soul will ever satiate —  
(A bitter truth? A bitter fate?)  
A bit of bourgeois bullshit mate.



## I Don't Know Everything Anymore

Instinct mocks intelligence,  
Intelligence just sneers.

Yuppies yawn in winebars,  
Builders bullshit over beers.

I'm de-labelling this bottle  
Wishing Christ that you were near

To loan me twenty bucks  
And stop me getting too sincere.



## Trade Secrets

I want my friends  
To meet tragic ends  
So I can write  
Their requiems.





## Poetry by Numbers

You are (free) — therefore (choose);  
Leather feet or wing-tipped shoes?

You are (free) — therefore (decide);  
Nine to five or suicide?

You are (free) — therefore (speak);  
Bluff is simple, truth oblique.

You are (free) — therefore (act);  
But keep your precious arse intact!

You are (free) — therefore (curse);  
The whip, the mirror, and the purse.

You are (free) — therefore (pause);  
Is this ambition really yours?

You are (free) — therefore (sigh);  
What you ask has no reply.

You are (free) — therefore (rage);  
All you stand to gain is age.

You are (free) — therefore (pray);  
It's pointless? Do it anyway.

You are (free) — therefore (love);  
Heaven's here not up above.

You are (free) — therefore (weep);  
Your lover will be buried deep.



You are (free) — therefore (laugh);  
Keep a razor by the bath.



You are (free) — therefore (fear);  
All you are shall disappear.

You are (free) — therefore (sing);  
Harmony is everything.





## Self-help

my addiction is my reverence

my reverence my pride

my pride betrays my preference



my preference can't decide

my decision is deferral

my deferral seeks prediction

my prediction needs a reference

refer to my addiction



## Epiphany

Standing

Standing at

Standing at the

Standing at the bar

Standing at the bar thinking



Standing at the bar thinking

Jesus ...

Jesus ...

Jesus ...

I'm drunk



## What is Resisted Persists

1. This boy's being torn apart,  
An angel ripping at each wrist,  
  
Singing songs of sealed contracts  
And the demons that he's kissed.  
  
The room is full of children,  
Black-eyed, blinking at his moaning;  
  
It's his innocence they're mourning,  
It's their love that he's disowning.
2. He reads science and religion  
Finding rhythm and design  
  
In the way the patterns gather,  
Independent — intertwined.  
  
There's faith in each hypothesis  
And love in each negation —  
  
But these echoes are not answers  
And this hope not affirmation.
3. Nihilism seems too simple  
But he won't admit to Jesus,  
  
So he reads interpretations  
On the passing summer breezes;  
  
But the message carries meanings  
Wholly mute to ego's ends —  
  
He blames this on his lover  
And avoids his closest friends.

4. He gives debauchery a hearing,  
Getting boisterous in bars,  
  
Fueling lust with every bottle  
Draining blood to feed the scars  
  
His unfaithfulness has left him;  
Scars of bitterness and grief —  
  
He calls his love illusion  
And his soul a petty thief.

5. He's so sure he has a death wish  
Yet he doesn't want to die.  
  
He thinks suicide is noble  
But he's too afraid to try,  
  
He separates his sources,  
Sets his mind against his heart;  
  
The anger's in the laughter —  
Yeah this boy's being torn apart.



## Wilde Thing

These impossible people who pry underneath  
Every surface are simply alarming,  
Playing the sleuth, trying to pin down the truth  
Like a butterfly caught for embalming.





### III

## The Social Kontrakt





## Fearytale



Stalking alone in the park after dark  
For a lesson in love from the law.  
Aching to kill, for a bit of a thrill,  
To flourish my forearms in gore.  
The coppers were creeping, the widows were weeping,  
Desire was washing my mind  
Free of money and men and technology zen  
And the words I would never rewind.  
My mother, my brother, my unlikely lover,  
To say this I first had to see,  
So I waited and waited till panic abated  
Then tore out a throat that was free —  
(And god help the free with their buying to be  
All they would all they could all they can't;  
Help them design a new law to define  
What exactly it is that they aren't).

Talking alone in the park after dark  
With a lawyer I met in a dream,  
Discussing how rules are disguises for fools  
Who are searching for something to seem.  
He said 'A disease is the best thing to leave  
When they're scouring the bowl for a skid;  
Let's legalise theft and ban everything left —  
Do you think I should prozac my kid?'  
I said 'What the hell give it morphine as well  
And a visceral fear of all feeling!  
Batter its brain with consumption and gain —  
The tv will see to his squealing!'  
'So glad we agree' (he concluded to me),  
'For the night is too cold for debating.  
Do you note how the breeze is harassing the trees?  
I hear God's getting weary of waiting.'

\*

Walking alone in the park after dark  
And the path wasn't paying attention,  
Slipping and tripping, haphazardly skipping  
Across any grounds for contention.  
The coppers were prying, the junkies were buying,  
Ambition was icing my eyes  
As I thought of my bed and of lives never led  
And the women who could have been wives.  
And all the moon's venom, the bitterdick denim,  
The whores singing 'Hi!' in the night?  
They left me alone and discreetly disowned  
Any further occurrence for fright —  
(And God help the frightened all twisted and tightened  
By futures that threaten to fall,  
Build up their strength with a lust for the length  
Of a life where the I is the all).

Standing alone by the park after dark  
When the silence was broken by laughter  
From somewhere behind me, as if to remind me  
A taxi was all I was after.



## Petition

If I'm to die a young man  
God promise it will be  
That politics and poetry  
Ensures the death of me.

But if I'm to go out old  
God see to it I age  
In a land where law and money  
Are no rationale for rage.



## A Millionaire Hippy is Something to Be

*Keep you doped with religion and sex and tv  
And you think you're so clever and classless and free,  
But you're still fucking peasants as far as I see —  
A working class hero is something to be.*

— John Lennon, 'Working Class Hero'

I'm not doped with religion or sex or tv  
And I don't think I'm clever or classless or free  
And all my peasant friends have got fucking degrees —  
A working class hero is nothing to be.

They bleed you with taxes and bluff you with stats  
Loan you a shirt and then load up your back  
As you lick at the trickle-down greed and disease —  
A working class hero is nothing to be.

So you stone yourself stupid and drink yourself blind,  
Despising the pedants with management minds  
While knowing the future will come with a fee —  
A working class hero is nothing to be.

## An Interview with the Minister of Treasure

*Minister — do you have any comment for those who claim to have gained nothing from the government's economic reforms?*

This question is a common one and has a clear reply:  
The people who don't profit are the people who don't try!  
We've all made sacrifices & in time all stand to gain,  
(Although economists are warning of a marginal delay  
Because the market has a headache, & investors are afraid  
That the public still will not admit the strides that we have made).  
The public interest is so fickle — their emotions lead the way  
And hamper real understanding of realities today.  
Health & education? These have value — it's agreed;  
But with businesses to subsidize & warships that we need?  
You can't allow the speculations of these socialists to blind you  
To the fundamental issues, so again, I will remind you  
That our destiny is simple — & in time you'll understand —  
The economy, the economy, the economy's at hand.

*But Minister, what about the notion that the current system rewards the rich & penalizes the poor?*

Do we really have to listen to this communistic rot  
When there are those in North Korea who would kill for what we've got?  
'Money speaks for money' is a notion I detest —  
Why you don't hear people I know credit birth to their success!  
The problem is the bludgers born without the will to work;  
They'd rather live off public money, smoke & sleep & drink & lurk.  
So if you wish to vent your anger — they're the ones on which to turn;  
The uneducable rabble with no discipline to earn!  
They breed in filthy families, hold the better classes back —  
Well there are no more excuses! Don't blame us for what you lack!  
See the law states very clearly all are equal in its eyes  
& the law of competition states the worthy always rise.  
The playing fields are level & the chances are the same  
So if your family's full of failures it's yourself you've got to blame.  
It's time we put these leeches under, quit dissent, & made a stand  
For the economy, the economy, the economy's at hand.

\*

*What actually is the current economic outlook, Minister?*

Oh the economy is marvellous! Simply splendid! Quite! And how!  
Even as we speak the treasury is sacrificing cows  
& once they've analysed the entrails I've no doubt they'll find a sign  
That will reassure the public the economy is fine.  
It's good Kiwi slog that's needed, honest graft & then some more;  
Spend & work & never shirk & watch our status soar!  
For we're the envy of great nations. We're the freest of the free.  
Why if we get any freer we won't need democracy!  
Because freedom is a state of mind — if you think it then you are.  
Freedom's fifteen different yoghurts & the latest model car.  
And if I may I'd like to say it simply *is not true*  
That nineteen twenties fascist theory is where corporatism drew  
The essence of its social plans for giving folk a place,  
For keeping them preoccupied while working them at pace.  
Oh no — that's ancient history; all that jackboot stuff is gone —  
Nowadays we have far subtler ways of stringing folk along ...  
But I was saying ... I was saying? Ah yes freedom — free indeed!  
Democracy! Hypocrisy! Resentment, fear, & greed!  
Oh no no no — oh that's not it ... oh you know what I mean!  
'Equality' & 'Rights for all' & 'Keep the planet green' ...  
But all the same we can't relent, for there's profit in this land,  
& the economy, the economy, the economy's at hand!

## The Social Kontrakt

I really love the IRD,  
I know they really care for me —  
They send me letters all the time  
And all they want is what is mine,  
They're extra nice and so precise  
In working out the proper price  
And if I can't afford to pay  
Well — they take it anyway.

I really love the ACC,  
I know they really care for me —  
Two thousand dollars once a year  
Is all they ask — then disappear.  
So when at work I get a bash  
And lose four hundred dollars cash  
They sigh and say 'That's real tough  
But four days off ain't long enough.'

I really love all my MPs,  
I know they really care for me —  
The vision they must have to let  
These economic fascists set  
The social order, moral frame,  
To pull the rug in profit's name —  
Our leaders are such clever things  
That you can barely see the strings.



## Fives


Some bankers who drink gin & tonics  
Think themselves marvellous comics  
When they piss on the poor  
From the thirty-third floor;  
It's called trickle-down economics.

—

An economist fond of abstraction  
Was hailed to his great satisfaction,  
When he said 'Though the gain  
Will not be without pain,  
It'll tickle the wealthier faction.'

—

An exuberant young politician  
Thought he was quite the magician  
In conjuring wealth  
By cutting up health;  
The trick was to lose the petition.



## Politics

left  
    right  
left  
    right  
left  
    right  
left  
    right  
left  
    right  
left  
    right  
left  
    right  
all  
    fall  
    down

## Commercial Breaks

1.

From the good times to the bad, from real problems to imagined ones, we all love eggs from our head down to our legs while being backed by a competitive interest rate giving you the chance to be a winner! That's why we believe in helping people with more than just money matters, because hey — no one said childbirth was going to be easy. So let's put it to the test ...

— *Pamela! What's it going to take to undo this much damage?*

— *I don't know. I hate it when the colour starts to fade ...*

— *Of course you do — but 4000 washers & 2000 fridges is a pretty persuasive argument!*

— *Maybe it's the air around the fruit that ruins it ...*

— *Pamela! The power is in your hands! Can you hack the pace?*

— *I can't believe it! I really can't believe it!*

— *Now you've got it — kids already get it!*

— *And I feel so much better about water!*

That's right — why hold back? You can't stop so don't even try! No rent means lower fees & less pollution, so why not let your fingers do the walking & on angel wings we'll guide you to a place where all your dreams can come true by thinking care, prevention, recovery — & remember: To harm an albatross is to truly court calamity!

2.

For those that believe that you simply cannot develop a sportscar in an age of conservative sedans, well, you're about to witness some real emergencies as they happen in a system that's going to set up your child for life as they come face to face with their greatest fears in the trivia test from the disorderly side of chaos. Can you afford not to get connected to a world where a strange phenomenon is taking place that's packed with information from recreation to racing and comes complete with your own personally signed All Black captain's ball? Oh — What an offer! Like to see more? Then just say yes to everything and share the dream. They're waiting for your call!

3.

Because all honey-glazed prawns on nests of lettuce aren't the same we asked some typical teenagers if when it really matters the test of time is the best test of all:

— *Yeah it's great! 500 stores makes a big difference!*

— *What I like is the way it goes towards the heat, it likes the heat, it eats the heat ...*

— *Yeah, there was a period in my life when I was overweight.*

— *Wow! What a day for a daydream!*

— *There's no doubt in my mind; the international pop sensations are back & mean business!*

There you go! It makes no sense to keep your silver locked away for those special occasions when in four easy monthly payments you can avoid common mistakes & protect your cat from the sun's evil rays with a product that's 100% natural & so healthy it shines! And if you're wondering what we call this high-intensity calory burner, it's the She's-Got-Love-She's-Got-a-Life-burger. Made by New Zealanders for New Zealanders — so take one bite & go all gooey! (batteries not included).

4.

The people here are surrounded by style and elegance every day and aren't easily impressed by allergies that stop you getting out and about to sculpt sexy arms and shoulders which is why, to stop those costly overhauls, something wild has happened to men's grooming that involves a revolving line of credit while guaranteeing to reveal your true colours. Yes it's confidential, yes it's fun, and yes it's perfect for home and commercial cake storage! So take the plunge and relive the swinging sixties by talking direct on the mystic line and you could be in to win a holiday to Brazil with the Spice Girls!

5.

If you thought losing your hair was inevitable — think again! We're looking for more Kiwi talent to stay motivated and stress less this Christmas so they can take advantage of our 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week, fully assembled no term contracts that makes us proud to carry the hopes of a nation while keeping you moving with infinitely variable resistance so you can lose weight and feel better about yourself. So hurry hurry hurry! — join today and we'll help you walk arm in arm through the obsessions of the rich and famous with the option to charge labour costs while releasing water from every pore. Let's face it — free ham equals no deposits so if you're serious about stretching and flexing with the curve of your undies then love it, drink it, always. Inner Strength — it's more than just a saying.



IV

Uptite





## Uptite

are you in are you out are you on are you for?  
check if it's whetherman — loan me a law  
because i gotta know is it hotter than cool  
if i ration a fashion and right up a rule?  
i mean fall if i fall if i've already fallen  
or what if i'm carrion somebody's calling  
or what if i leave it and leave it too late?  
what if my liking applies to my hate?  
so how does it tellyman? even or odd?  
just wanna be goodman don't wanna be god  
and whadda you reckon on? better or worse?  
to count on accounting or kiss and coerce?  
why coming so coyman? why locking the gate?  
don't wanna be strutman just wanna be straight —

(say what if i shove you this tip off the side —  
i knowledge in narrow and idiot wide  
so lay me in logic as long as i lie  
and i'll slip in a couple of curses to cry)

now say what you seeman — is so what atall?  
can you estimate ears by the size of the wall?  
it's ok to tell me — i either in awe  
are you in are you out are you on are you for?



## City Cycle

I am inhaled at dawn  
To be exhaled at dusk;  
I habitually practice  
Holding my breath.

\*

Eggs, bread, butter, milk,  
Coffee, sugar, cheese,  
Chicken, spuds, and razor-blades;  
That's sixty dollars please.

\*

The café table's crowded  
With sophisticates of fun  
All ordering attention while  
The waitress bites her tongue.

\*

I want the money *now* machine;  
The *money* that is *mine* —  
I've aged my seven stated days  
In record fucking time.

\*

I hope you can forgive me  
For staring at your breasts,  
But your pendant formed a pathway  
& aesthetics did the rest.



\*

The harbour is in harmony,  
She says that I'm the one;  
This hangover is wearable —  
The weekend has begun.

\*

Did the Sunday city sniffle?  
Yeah the Sunday city sore.  
Think the Sunday city sleeping,  
Hear the Sunday city snore —  
(Until somewhere in the city  
Someone opens up an eye);  
All the Sunday city seeking  
Is a sympathetic sky.



Thy Kingdom Come

See him trip  
an acid two-step —

Watch her move  
a message meant —

Can you fry  
the blind potato?

Is your sweat  
a subtle scent?

It's a dissidential catacomb  
of calabanic strut;  
the liturgy of libertine's —  
Too much is not enough.



Try to dodge  
the boulders bouncing —

Look and learn  
the steel moon —

Won't you writhe  
a little sweeter?

Shall we go  
and sniff the spoon?

It's a dithyramb of rhythm with  
a sacramental glance  
in this penitential paradise —  
The furnace of the dance.



## Futility

She feels her body creaking  
In the gym and gives a groan,

Then she adds two extra barbells  
To the four already on —



She will not submit to nature!  
She shall not resort to grace!

She's fighting for her relevance  
And dying for her waist.

*Editor's Note:* 'The Lambton Shuffle' on p. 60 starts at the bottom of the left-hand column and reads up and then down the right-hand column.

Time to tally up your sins    Time to see what they got going  
 It's time to think about redemption    In the CD clearance bins  
 Do you wanna know the time?    Time to shuffle in the traffic  
 Do you think she'll still be waiting?    Calculate a lucky break  
 Feel that sweat along your spine?    Tap a dance along the gutter  
 Do you hear the lawyers calling?    Like you got a soul to stake  
     So justify the greed    On by the honey handing flyers  
 But you know needing isn't wanting kid    For a bar with bargain beer  
 And what they got you never need    Past the old guy pushing pamphlets  
 Coz what they got you can't afford    For a god that's never there  
 Less you're checking out your hair    Past the park in summer sunshine  
 And you can skip the window shopping    Where the office legs are toasting  
     Coz ain't no-one lives on air    While the hippies flip a hacky  
     So light a cigarette and hustle    And the businessmen are boasting  
     But he's welcome to your trash    And you wanna stop and join them  
 And pity may not make a profit    Wanna tell them what you know  
     Not ashamed of making cash    But your innocence is over kid  
 Yeah we're a people with a purpose    Remember what you owe  
     Where some poverty's allowed    You gotta keep a little distance  
     That we finally got a nation    Gotta walk a certain way  
     Making everybody proud    Gotta fake it fake it fake it  
     About the ragged guy in tatters    Gotta swing you gotta sway  
 Like you couldn't give a damn    On by the secretary strutting  
     Now you skip a little quicker    Like a poem's in her hips  
 Now you push it past the prams    Which you got no right reciting  
 Now you squeeze it past the grannies    With that sneer across your lips  
 That you ain't got time to waste    And there's a busker doing reggae  
     And your time is on a budget    There's a kid with violin  
     And you're overdrawn on haste    Who didn't even think to thank you  
 Coz you can hear the money ticking    When you offered him a grin  
     While you marvel at his gel    And when you think you're gonna make it  
     So manoeuvre that Armani    Then somebody calls your name  
     It's a little inner hell    And now you gotta play a part  
     Coz an ego ain't a secret    If you still wanna play the game  
     Who ignore you anyway    So you stop and do a ritual  
     It's the face you show to people    And you try and make it rhyme  
     It's a phoney steel gaze    But the rhythm isn't coming  
     It's a bullshit air of boredom    And you're messing up your lines  
     To hide your lack of grace —    And you gotta keep it going  
 And log the Lambton Shuffle look    Coz the city's never slow  
     And then set yourself a pace    So you pat him on the shoulder  
     So step yourself a pathway    Saying 'Man I gotta go  
     Dunno who you're gonna see    Coz I got demons on my tail  
 While keeping count of all oncoming    I got debts I gotta pay  
     Then you slide it up the quay    And I know a woman waiting  
     See you slip it out the station    With a word or two to say  
     Or an actor on the make?    And the movies almost started man  
     Are you an attitude to study    They're gonna form a line  
     Do you ask before you take?    And no I ain't afraid of death  
     Can you do the Lambton Shuffle?    Coz I ain't got the fucking time.'

## The Lambton Shuffle



## Summertime Framing

'Go hard or go home' is the call from Jas climbing  
On high to the head of the four-by-two framing,  
Unhooking the chain as I nail off the bracing  
While Danny, the man with the plan, is re-checking  
The measurements marked on the deck & I'm rolling  
A fag while I can before dwanging then cursing  
Some unforeseen fuck-up that calls for de-nailing  
The bottomplate timber; the wicked sun wasting  
Our bare summer backs as the skillies are screaming.

Best job in the world man is summertime framing.  
Go hard or go home — that's the place for complaining.



R S J

In a circle gathered, stamping  
Sensation into frostbit feet,  
Dragging on our cigarettes  
& waiting for the foreman.

Around us looms a timber maze,  
High latticeworks of framing;  
Four-by-two all molten gold  
In the early morning sun.

We have to place a girder  
Of steel so cold  
It stings our fingers already numb.

A tattered plan is unfolded,  
Examined & cursed.  
Then delays  
As extra hands are fetched  
To fit the chain —  
We strain as one  
While condensated clouds  
Of breath unravel,  
Spin & break  
Across our reddened faces.

We each wear so many jerseys  
We can barely bend our arms  
To guide the spindled crane-boom  
Swinging high above our heads;  
The girder glinting cold, unearthly,  
Delicate in the sun.



## Yeah — Right Mate



I skip on through the site gate — late.  
My workmates take the piss;  
The usual thing: a ‘fuck off’ grin  
My stock response — but then  
I see the big boss standing there!  
He checks his watch and sends a glare  
Across to where I bite my lip,  
Considering my options ...

Having read *The Art of War*  
I know offense is best,  
So I march at him till standing  
Toe to toe & jab his chest.  
Then I whisper to him (wavering,  
Suggesting I might lose it),  
‘Don’t fuck with me fat boy —  
I’ve got an excuse  
And I’m not afraid to use it.’

## Sleepers

*After seeing an SS officer's cap on display  
behind a café counter*

oh babe  
just imagine  
the things that you could do  
Death's Head insignia  
on your brow  
the things that you could do  
hey girl  
go get another beer  
bring it back  
sit over there  
while i think about obedience  
to power  
you can use  
and don't roll your eyes  
you fuckin whore  
or i'll use a bit on you  
yeah  
that's right  
you look at the floor  
coz tonight i'm coming round  
and when i'm done  
i'll light a smoke  
stare at the ceiling  
and dream  
about guns  
leather  
heeled boots  
and what it's like to be really feared  
and all the things  
yeah  
all the things  
i'd really like to do



## At the Bar

At the bar in conversation  
With a girl whose skin is dark.  
Our speech is littered with laughter.  
Her eyes are wide, locked on mine;  
Her smile is broad and generous.  
I am handsome, charming,  
Born to seduce —  
We mirror one another.

At the bar in argument  
With a girl whose skin is fair.  
Our speech is punctured and profane.  
Her eyes are narrow, locked on mine;  
Her scowl is tight and measured.  
I am ugly, crass,  
Born to repel —  
We mirror one another.

At the bar in mediation  
With my pale, sagging self.  
My mind is full of jagged shame.  
My dark eyes stare, their vision blurred;  
My mouth is dry and open.  
I am faceless, defenceless,  
Born to endure —  
I mirror my delusions.



## And Man Begat Cocaine

Now gravity, depravity,  
Now insolence and kisses —  
(Have the demons done their lipstick?)  
Do you still believe that bliss is

A lightening, a brightening,  
A song forever singing —  
(Have the angels tied their wings on?)  
Could you learn to love the stinging

Of weariness, contrariness,  
Of luck and retribution —  
(Mr God? You're on in five).  
Good coke is one solution.

By Candlelight in His Kitchen...

*For Simon Williamson*

short life  
happy death  
toss a coin  
& what the fuck  
schizophrenic  
photogenic  
had the drugs  
but not the luck

*life is incidental  
but death is fundamental*

poems penned  
pictures painted  
nicotine  
another beer  
hypertension  
revolution  
naenae cowboy  
what's to fear?

*life is incidental  
but death is fundamental*

lucid morning  
shepherd's warning  
saw an apple  
had to taste  
hope it's better  
best regards man  
had to hurry  
what a waste

*death is incidental  
but life is fundamental*



## Requiem for a Rodent

We say 'Live and let live', but it only applies  
To creatures of equal or greater size;  
If you're smaller than us, or nibble our bread,  
We'll snap a steel bar on the back of your head.



Tom

*Israel 1991*

Who is that man?  
I know him  
I see him  
I smell him —  
He is the Special Man.

I know him in Frankfurt.  
I tell you  
I see him  
In Frankfurt —  
He is the Special Man.

You.  
Yes you.  
Who are you?  
I know you.  
Are you ... are you  
The Special Man?

It is you!  
It is you!  
I know you!  
I see you!  
I smell you!  
You are the Special Man!

I know you in Frankfurt.  
I see you in Frankfurt.  
I smell you —  
You are the Special Man.





V

The Ballad of One-Hand Joe





My precious grandson, soon a man,  
I see you look upon my hand  
And wonder where this hand did go  
And how a stump could come to grow?  
Then listen here, young blood of mine,  
To the tangled web I'll now unwind;  
Within its weavings lessons dwell —  
I urge you learn these lessons well!

To set in time the tale you'll hear  
We first subtract some forty years,  
When I was young and walked alone  
With every bridge and barn a home.  
I worked for food and wandered free  
Across New Zealand, hill to sea.  
I lived for love and loving laughter  
Never thought of life hereafter.

It was in a Taranaki town  
Where I had set my rucksack down  
And walked into the local pub  
In hope of scrounging up some grub.  
Outside was hot, inside was full;  
Some local lads were playing pool.  
One bloke looks up from taking aim;  
I give a wink and say 'A game?'

I lost the first game straight and flat,  
The second too, and after that  
This bloke he looks me up and down  
Says 'Now, mate — have you got a crown?'  
'I might' I say, 'What's it to you?'  
He says 'Care to make it two?'  
Two to one's fair odds to me.'  
I say 'Why not make it three?'

\*

I took the break and six shots in  
That bastard looked as sick as sin.  
It wasn't smart, not smart at all;  
I should've let him pot a ball.  
Instead I did him eight balls straight,  
Grabbed the money off his mate,  
Then laughed and said a bit too loud  
'A beer barkeep — and make it proud!'

The barman stared like he was blind  
As footsteps came in close behind.  
I said 'Now mate, about that beer —'  
'We don't think much of hustlers here.'  
A silence fell. The barman winked.  
I turned around and nearly blinked;  
Four blokes stood there, cues in mitts.  
In hope I offered 'Double or quits?'

Well looking back I could have talked  
Some bullshit path of bluff to walk —  
But I'd seen too many small-town men  
Kick blokes to shit and back again ...  
So I let go a wild swing  
That caught one bastard on the chin  
And sent him sprawling for the floor  
As I bolted hard on out the door.

I hit the street and ran like hell  
Was up my arse as someone yelled  
'He's heading for the River Road!'  
I jumped a fence and never slowed  
While scrambling through the gorse and scrub  
With car doors slamming down the pub —  
By the time they'd got their engines on  
I'd hit the bush and I was gone.

\*

I knew the road was out of bounds  
As well as any nearby towns.  
I knew that local gossip spread  
Like piss across a double bed.  
I wandered blithely through the bush  
And pondered pool that comes to push.  
I whistled loud, with no remorse  
(Except for going through that gorse).

Why worry when this gorgeous land  
Had all I needed close at hand?  
Beneath the trees and speckled sun  
I felt that God and I were one.  
What use is fear? Why dwell on death?  
Our lives are but a single breath —  
And then I saw her, standing there,  
A ribbon tied into her hair ...

She stood alone beside a well  
Before a house nearby a hill  
Not far from which a river ran;  
I said 'Now are you mouse or man?'  
And brushed the brambles from my hair,  
Emerging from my forest lair  
To walk towards her, breathing fast,  
Until her eyes met mine at last.

Unseen lightning! Silent thunder  
Crackled as we gazed in wonder  
Into each others eyes in awe  
That we had never met before!  
Oh grandson ... how can I say  
What God had brought to bear that day  
When words were time we couldn't waste  
Between the touch we both could taste!

I approached her, full of yearning,  
To see she too was sweetly burning.  
Our foreheads met, I closed my eyes  
And brushed a hand along her thigh.  
Her tremble beckoned me to hold her,  
I lay an arm across her shoulder  
And walked with her as though asleep  
To where the river willows weeped ...

I kissed her there beneath the shade.  
Our warm tongues met as one and made  
A charge that coursed my very veins  
And caused my piece to throb in pain;  
It rose and roared and cried 'Release!' —  
I fumbled at my bucklepiece  
And eased her head down low to slip  
My manhood to her moistened lip ...

Oh what joy! What slippery bliss!  
What quaking knees before her kiss!  
Her darting tongue and nimble teeth  
Made me gasp in disbelief ...  
Until, a bit too keen to please,  
I had to take her head and cease  
Her sweet intent — while bringing joy  
She'd bitten hard upon my boy.

She turned around so I could find  
The sweetspot near her sweet behind;  
Hands on her hips, I entered slow  
And felt her honey start to flow,  
Her bucking hips pressed to my groin  
As we in primal love were joined.  
I kissed her back and squeezed her breasts  
And closed my eyes in happiness ...

\*

But then, as my eruption neared,  
I heard a sound I'd learned to fear;  
The quiet 'click' I knew too well —  
As grave as any tolling bell!  
I turned & saw with bitter dread  
A shotgun levelled at my head;  
The master of the house had come  
And caught us carnal in the sun!

His thin lips wore a vicious smirk,  
His wild eyes they rolled berserk;  
All time stood still, the moment vexed,  
Only God could know what next —  
His finger twitched, I cried out 'Christ!'  
And pulled free as he fired twice.  
The first shot scuffed the river sand;  
The second shot took off my hand.

I screamed and screaming hit the water,  
Going deep, expecting slaughter.  
Pain ripped each and every nerve  
As I kicked harder to preserve  
My quickly shrunk offending part;  
My lungs were bursting and my heart  
Was pounding as about to give —  
'God,' I gurgled, 'let me live!'

I surfaced somewhere further down  
To stagger onto solid ground  
And wincing, tear my shirt away  
To tie the tightest tourniquet  
One hand and gritted teeth could tie;  
I dared not whimper, moan, or cry  
In case the madman wasn't done  
But stalking still with loaded gun.

Ah well then — what more to say?  
From there I stumbled night and day  
Until, in mercy, a marae  
Took me in not asking why.  
I fell to fever, dreaming dreams  
Of bloodied rivers, frightened screams.  
Two weeks later I came to —  
My days of travel truly through.

What of my Taranaki queen?  
I wouldn't know. I've never been  
On back to Taranaki since  
(The name alone will make me wince).  
But for all that I've no regrets  
And know she too will not forget  
The day I saw her standing there,  
A ribbon tied into her hair ...

So boy, what lessons can be taken  
From this tale of love forsaken?

First, don't hustle small town blokes,  
Know when to stand and when to run,  
Watch out for where you aim your jokes,  
Beware of farmers bearing guns.  
In love, know looks say more than words  
(Yet watch for teeth that chew too hard).  
Hear how God speaks through the birds  
Who sing of life, his rich charade.

But most of all, attentive boy,  
Heed this I tell you now;  
Wherever you go and whatever you do  
Never get caught fucking a cow.





## Headstone

Here lies  
Scott Ian Kendrick  
Who from earth  
To earth evolved.  
All his life  
Sought indeterminacy —  
But nothing was resolved.