

*Anna Rugis*

**the poetry of the future**

it'll all be like mine

but not for long

then people will get into  
elaborate hand gestures instead  
and there'll be no applause because  
then that will mean something else

*Louis Johnson*

## **To a Science-Fiction Writer**

Strange how those in your field have become so uniform, now, in a bleak view of the future. What happened to perfectibility? What became of great-grandfather's dream of progress – the race aspiring always towards improvement, perhaps becoming fulfilled? It was this festered for you, failed, showed the sickness – Man, and not the machine. But then, the hopeful ancestor's sights were blurred by braided nobility and the cavalry charge blinding him to the ultimate use of the engine. He had not known of the Marne or the Somme, the millions rotting in trenches, gasping against the poison gas. Not known of harvests rusting or dumped in the midst of famine; not known of the wheels and gears unleashing the greatest terrors ever on civilised Europe. Your lot is aware that under every bomb is a kind of perfection – machine-turned steel that mirrors the hand and satisfies touch quite impersonally. But beauty stops there. In your apple, man is the maggot who has not learned to live with abstraction any more than the ancestor with his dream. Efficiency is fire-power and obsolescence, and in your dream of the future – which could be clean and good – it becomes more clearly established, the human is the component that must be replaced.

30/6/70

*A.R.D. Fairburn*

**2000 A.D.**

The normal population

Has been evacuated from the South Island, which has been given  
over to the tourist industry for purposes of hunting, shooting,  
boozing, mountaineering, fishing and fornication.

Rugby football having been discarded as much too tame,  
Fighting with spring-knives has become the national game,  
Carried on by a small class of specially-bred gladiators,  
The rest of the public being bubble-gum-blowing spectators.

Votes for cows was carried some years ago by a show of feet;  
Totalitarian democracy is now complete,  
And the present Prime Minister, known to everyone as Jackie,  
Is a ten-year-old steer from Taranaki.

His authority, and that of Bullamy's, is only nominal, all power being  
vested (along with the right of self-perpetuation)  
In GENERAL OECUMENICAL DEVELOPMENT (INC.), a  
world with headquarters in Monte Carlo and branches through-  
out the Creation.

A complete monopoly of Radio, Television, News and Information  
Services, Education and Entertainment, including six selected  
sub-varieties of religious practice  
Is operated on behalf of G.O.D. (INC.) by the New Zealand Broad-  
serving Cactus,  
Which is situated on the Desert Road, plumb in the middle  
Of the North Island, where the major administrative fiddle  
Of the nation is conducted  
In an ant-hill suitably constructed.

Poets and artists are heavily subsidised by the State, on strict condition that their work shall be totally incomprehensible,  
Because that which is incomprehensible cannot possibly be subversive, a working assumption that is eminently sensible.  
The defence of the country is in the hands of G.O.D. (Inc.) and (for decorative effect) a standing army of 100,000 marching girls ('Don't shoot until you see the whites  
Of their eyes,' counsels the Ministry of Tourism), along with (not to be out-done) 50,000 marching bodgies in gents' Hawaiian floral shirtings and shocking-pink tights.

Now therefore, although everything worth buying has become progressively scarcer and dearer,  
Lift up your voices in joyous celebration of the Second Millennium of the Christian Era.

*Janet Charman*

**in your dreams**

Transit passengers  
who wish to refrain  
from inhaling

may simply press the icon  
you see below you  
on your left screen now

apply the mask  
that falls from the bulkhead  
directly above

If you are  
disembarking  
inhale

a spray  
from  
the kete

as the language ministry  
officials  
pass among you

and you will notice  
a slight change  
in cabin pressure

which is the effect of  
crossing  
the language barrier

Ladies and Gentlemen  
Girls and Boys,  
thank you for flying Air Aotearoa

*Bill Sewell*

## **Utopia**

nowhere is there  
to be found such health  
as in the city of the mind:

marble gleaming white  
under a gentle sun  
and men & women  
in freshly laundered robes  
walk up & down conversing

cooling refreshments are offered  
from well-situated stalls  
(courteously & without charge)  
respect and not subservience  
sways the nods & smiles –

not a rag to be seen  
not a smear of excrement  
on the paving:

all this projected from the mind  
onto faraway places & faraway times  
while here & now the world  
wobbles on its axis:

the bickering the jostling  
and the passing of coins  
one system soiling after another  
no salve yet concocted  
to remedy these boils –

or disease beyond disease  
spreading out of the mind  
to a living relic who  
meets a lesser breed of men  
conversation monitored  
by a vigilant bureaucracy  
hoodlums roaming the streets  
to prey upon the feeble  
or everyone just too happy  
to give a damn about anything

(an 18th century adventurer  
found more to admire in horses):

nowhere is there  
any health and the boils  
keep on erupting.

*Alistair Paterson*

**Time traveller**

Somewhere  
you're writing, putting words together  
but because I can't see you doing it  
I have to visualise, guess  
make inventions, imagine as  
in the behaviour of blue penguins  
what's happening to you  
that you're hidden by water...  
or you're riding a bicycle where  
afternoon is trees & the sun –  
summer is endless...

You inhabit  
a distant, an imaginary country  
you live on high hills far from the sea  
you're a time traveller  
moving through the dust of centuries –  
who travels like that because  
it's the way you see yourself  
or because someone's imagined you there  
in front of the Parthenon  
a thousand years on –  
at the sea's edge watching the sun...

You're writing  
(uncomfortably) at a kitchen table  
or you're kneeling by a stream  
looking into the water  
you're working in a library  
(to the sound of bells, a flight of music)  
you're using the telephone  
or as in a painting by Chagall, moving  
through the powers  
– the impossible, unbelievable powers –  
of the mind...

And suddenly I recognise  
it's a mystery:  
the fall of leaves in autumn  
clouds drifting across the sky  
light across a footpath, a roadway  
that you're a long way off  
& driving away from me –  
driving along a highway towards  
something, somewhere neither of us  
has ever heard of  
or is likely to arrive at...



*David Gregory*

## **Einstein's Theory Simply Explained**

When I returned  
I went to see myself,  
still working on the motor of the thing.  
We had a pleasant chat,  
so startling.  
We talked of time, Einstein and you.  
Then I went out,  
denounced the project  
and bought the weapon.  
Knowing how he sleeps,  
I shall kill him in the night,  
so he will not have you  
again.