

Editorial:

Greetings, and welcome to the seventy-fourth issue of *Takahē*, a celebration of our multicultural New Zealand. Let us know what you think of it. Tell us your views on having future themed issues, on our recent layout changes, or any other thoughts you have about writing, reading, arts or cultural studies. We would like to see *Takahē* become a forum for debate about important issues facing writing and the arts in this country and are eagerly awaiting your letters. *Takahē* is a magazine for readers, writers and artists. It is satisfying to be able to feature stories, poetry and artwork by some of our best New Zealand writers (in this issue, K-T Thompson and David Eggleton) and artists (Liyen Chong). Not only do they make a great read, but their works stand as a model and beacon to developing writers and artists.



I want to take the opportunity to speak to all writers who put themselves on the line by submitting to *Takahē* – not only those whose work is accepted for publication, but, even more importantly, those whose work is turned down. In submitting work, a writer exposes his or her inner core. Rejection, then, can be experienced as a rejection of the self as a person and as a writer, rather than of the work only, and may be devastating. For many, with time, the skin thickens, and periodic acceptance increases resilience. Constructive feedback may help a writer accept the return of yet another self-addressed envelope (or email equivalent) with a philosophical shrug or a desire to revise.

Publication is a competitive process, so even good stories and poetry may not find a place. This has become an issue with our more spacious layout. The cost of better presentation and more comprehensive showcasing of our contributors has been room for fewer stories and poems. The selection is, in the end, the subjective choice of the editor, who has to balance the themes of the works in a particular issue, the frequency with which any writer appears, and support new and emerging writers while maintaining a high standard of work. We want *Takahē* to be a magazine people want to read and one to which people wish to contribute.

The publication of *Takahē* is made possible largely by the generosity of Creative New Zealand for the purposes of supporting the development of New Zealand writers and writing. In keeping with this, one task for the Fiction Editor is to offer constructive feedback to New Zealand writers about submissions that are, as yet, unready for publication – in the eyes of this editor. Generally, I find writers most appreciative of this, saying how difficult it is to get feedback. Some revise the work in the light of comments and resubmit; some of these revised stories appear in a subsequent issue. Experienced writers are used to working with an editor and usually appreciate care and thoroughness; if they disagree with a comment, it will be discussed and resolved. Overall I have received only four hostile responses in four-and-a-half years, the most succinct being – *up yours*.

It is the responsibility of the editor to prepare accepted stories for publication, applying an agreed house-style to text. Of course, there are exceptions, as when the unique style in which the story has been written needs to be preserved. While no story will be rejected solely because of its punctuation, spelling, grammar or layout, writers should realise that a lack of attention to these is distracting and possibly irritating and does not serve their work well. I would encourage asking a friend to proof-read before sending it away.

Please check the *Takahē* website at <http://www.takabe.org.nz> for detailed submission guidelines. My pet grumbles: *please* do not leave a line between paragraphs but indent the new paragraph; indent paragraphs by inserting the top arrow at the left end of the top toolbar; *never* press 'Enter' at the end of a line unless it is the end of a paragraph; and make only one space between sentences. Writers who follow these requests make me smile!

Karen Zelas

Letters to the Editors:

Comments and questions on literary or arts issues are welcome.