



When I think of the deep south I think of snow, mountains and dusk-held beaches. This is a land of rugged beauty and relative isolation, perfect for poetry. This is the space from which Sue Wootton writes in "Ideas Above My Station". It is a place where Sarah Paterson wanders: "when we walk through it we make less noise," a place of comfort and familiarity, but with the potential for exploration, a concept which Christopher Woods captures brilliantly in his photographs. A place which Carolyn McCurdie describes beautifully as "the dreaming walls of the mind". There is a wide variety of writing in *Deep South 08*, and the propensity for writing in these southern lands is evident in the wealth of submissions to this year's issue. The depth and diversity of local, and New Zealand writing, never ceases to amaze me.

However, if I am to be perfectly honest, the first thing I actually think of upon hearing the words "deep south" is the kiwi ice cream-brand. The increasing power of commercialisation and globalisation is an inescapable part of *Deep South*, being an online journal which is read and receives submissions from around the world. As such, whilst there is a wealth of strong local writing in *Deep South*, this issue also showcases writing from outside Otago. In 2008, *Deep South* includes writing from expatriate Kiwis, such as Vaughan Rapatahana, Jennifer Compton, John Dennison, and Bart DiFiore, as well as work from writers based in Nigeria (Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale), Bangladesh (Sofiul Azam), and Puerto Rico (Sergio Oritz).

In line with tradition, *Deep South 08* is proud to showcase work from students of the University of Otago. This year these include Poppy Haynes, Anna Kelly, Sriya Kumarasinghe, Cy Elza Mathews, Sarah Paterson, and Hayden Williams. We also include writing from the 2008 Robert Burns Fellow, Sue Wootton. A personal favourite from the local submissions is Ruth Arnison's "Smokescreen," whose last verse immediately jumped off the page at the end of a day's reading. Other Otago writers featured here include Carolyn McCurdie, Martha Morseth, Edna Weedon and John Hale; and it's wonderful to also be able to feature writers from elsewhere in New Zealand, such as Gary Langford, Elizabeth Smither, Sandra Arnold and Iain Britton.

A friend once said to me, "Poetry can't change the world." Of course he was a politics student, but I took him seriously enough to scribble out an angry and (for me, anyway) a rather gratifying poetic response. This is what poetry is all about. It might not change the world, but it can make a subtle impact on the individual, be it the reader or writer, and that's all it can ever set out to do. All of the work featured in this year's issue was selected because it made an impact on me. It was very difficult to whittle the entries down, but in the end I had to go with the writing that provided some sort of spark for me, a moment where I could connect with the writer's thoughts and emotions. Whether it is the sense of fluttering remorse brought to life in Poppy Haynes' "Guilt," or an expression of the joy of writing, such as that evident in Sriya Kumarasinghe's "Solitary Evening," the content in *Deep South 08* was selected according to its ability to draw a connection across the space between

writer and reader. Consequently, despite the long nights of editing this year's issue, above all, the deep south will always remind me of solid, honest, down-to-earth writing.

Of course there are a few people to thank: Cy Elza Mathews for helping with reading submissions and getting the issue online, Marie-Claire Brehaut for her artwork, and of course all of the people who submitted to *Deep South 08*. It has been an honour, a pleasure, and a very hard task to select writing for this year's issue. I hope you enjoy *Deep South 08* as much as I have enjoyed putting it together.

Rhys Brookbanks

