On March 23, 2021, much of global trade came to a halt. The cargo vessel Ever Given wedged in the Suez Canal. The ship blocked the canal for six whole days; normally fifty ships pass through it each day. And they are big ships, because most—the Ever Given among them—contain containers: the boxcar-shaped objects that can hold almost anything and that can be transported anywhere on a ship or a truck or a train. The blockage brought home how much the modern world depends on containers, which have streamlined, standardized, supersized, and accelerated global trade since the 1960s. Containers and their “cargotexture” “flesh out...the profound structural changes [of] the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s” across the modern world, as Craig Martin writes about them in Shipping Container. Defenders emphasize their utility in getting people, especially in rich countries, things that they might want or need. Other observers emphasize their destructive consequences, for unions, for sailors, for workers, and for seafloors.

The first true container ship made its first trip in 1956; containers caught on in a big way a decade later. Marc Levinson follows earlier writers in tracing the container to Malcolm (born Malcolm) McLean, who owned a North Carolina trucking company in the early 1950s. According to Levinson, “the equivalent of 300 million 20-foot containers [cross] the world’s oceans each year.” Many travel farther via lakes and roads and rail: “a single container which could travel from truck to train to boat to destination”—in John Lanchester’s phrase, “made to a uniform scale”—has become “the definitive example of modern capitalism.”

I do not want to defend the containers’ dominance. Nor would I argue that we can or should get rid of them right away, any more than I want to defend—or to abolish, immediately, by main force—money or air travel or automobiles. Instead, I want to do what other critics
have done, in part, for airplanes and money and automobiles: to show how these world-transforming innovations found their reflections in and changed the ideas available for modern poets and poems. Poets writing in English—especially those outside the United States—have made modern shipping containers into distinctively present-day metaphors. Those metaphors, along with the containers’ concrete and visible uses, add up to an argument about lyric poems: how they work, what they do, and how they give some of us portable spaces in which to imagine our own changing lives. They pose questions about the meanings of form, and about how technology may restrict us—or let us imagine ourselves to be free.

The most important thing about a shipping container for an economist might be its efficiency and its scale. But the most important thing about it for an architect or an urban planner or a visual artist or a literary writer might be its versatility: it lends itself, almost uniquely among modern structures, to international reuse. The Boston Globe reports that in New England “old shipping containers are being customized” into food stalls and truck farms in order “to take advantage of their ‘cool’ factor.” The German scholar Alexander Klose has photographed shipping containers repurposed as schools and first-aid centers. They make fine temporary housing for Australian disaster victims, and inadequate British council flats. The former governor of Arizona failed to make them into a border wall. The art critic Sarah Hirsch has studied Mexican American vendors who live in containers and a collective that turns the containers into installation art. For her the container remains distinctively adaptable and distinctively international: it “comes to evoke. . .what many critics call the post-West—a place defined not by locality but by globalization’s flows.”

For the apotheosis of shipping container remaking and reuse, we can look to Aotearoa New Zealand. In central Auckland, near the docks, a shipping container serves as a children’s playhouse and free library. One side, propped open, serves as a porch, giving shade. Retail space a few blocks away has restrooms, shops, and offices in multicolored containers stacked four high. One holds toilets; another a bicycle pump. Wellington’s waterfront pedestrian mall has a
shipping-container sauna and an annual festival of performance art in its own “iconic shipping containers,” as the festival planners put it.

Wellington wanted them. Christchurch needed them. The second largest city in Aotearoa New Zealand, Christchurch was practically leveled by earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. Six years later (when I made a visit), the city remained full of open space where demolished buildings once stood, half-built replacements, and derelict, cracked, or unsafe structures, including its famous cathedral. It also exhibited marvelous tactics for rebuilding. There was the Re:START mall, several blocks of retail, casual dining, and even banking made entirely from containers, stacked, opened out, or subdivided. Outside the Re:START mall stood the Food Container Gourmet Hub, a double-wide container with a skylight, and the self-descriptive Coffee Container. Other containers made improvised retaining walls and antierosion barriers, stacked two deep, to shore up a crumbling hill. Five years later much of the container-based effort in downtown Christchurch has gone by the wayside, cleared away for more permanent edifices, though containers elsewhere, as makeshifts or permanent structures, remain.

Containers can move almost anything around the world. They can seem interchangeable if we look only at their external forms and never at what’s inside. Once we open them up, their contents bespeak varied uses, varied aesthetics, along with a local or national customization. We can assemble, disassemble, resituate, and repurpose them, altering the outside—their shapes, their labels—for the sake of what’s inside. The four sentences just before this one could describe shipping containers, but they could also describe the work of lyric poems, whose recognizable, replicable forms move sensibilities, personae, imagined subjects around the globe, as well as through time.

Contemporary poets respond directly to the container industry. Amanda Nadelberg’s eleven-page associative poem “Matson” takes its name from the Bay Area shipping company (in Levinson’s telling, the Pepsi to McLean’s Coke). The same poem takes its stack-like form, as Nadelberg has explained, from Nadelberg’s Bay Area commute: “I noticed as the train went past the Port of Oakland these beautiful
arrangements of shipping containers, and they appeared to me as a concrete poem in space.” Andres Cerpa’s book-length elegy *The Vault* compares a shipping container, an animal cage, and a bare room in which the poet considers his father’s death:

The room walked away
the way a wolf gets its sea legs
in a shipping container.
Everything not had
then had.

The “room” contains, and lets the poet interpret, his own disorientation, the way that a body contains a restless soul. Containers may represent people as well as representing the emotions, ideas, or memories that people hold. The lawyer and political gadfly Seth Abramson entitles a whimsical poem “Why I Decided to Become a Shipping Container”:

if you want to live inside me,
good insulation and ventilation is a must.

The real bonus to a shipping container
is the new green phrase *adaptive reuse*.
Our trade deficit with the rest of the world
is causing containers like me
to pile up.

Other poets take figures of reuse more seriously. Laurin Macios—well positioned to see how poetry circulates (she works at the Poetry Society of America)—has a prose poem called “Now You, Too, Can Live in Your Very Own Shipping Container.” In it, “everything has been canned, so to speak.” Macios continues,

Every commodity has stacked inside the primary colored container, stacked upon container, upon container. All I can think about (that’s a lie) is unpacking when they dock. All I can think of (see?) is our monstrous scale. There is hardly a simile for it.

So big we live inside pieces of it. So big we can’t step back, our fingers grazing our chins.
Containers stand for poems and for stories and for refuge in B. K. Fischer’s “novella-in-verse” Ceive, but also for the worldwide economic systems that we may need refuge from. In Fischer’s story, a “massive red hull of a container ship” serves as a new ark, carrying its limited crew of families to refuge on a flooded near-future Earth: the “wind and watertight” objects that once held “12 Euro pallets or 400 flat-screens or 200 mattresses” now shelter the “67 souls on board.” The protagonist’s ship, once a “post-Panamax” participant in the global economy, has become something like a floating sonnet sequence, a set of identically shaped containers, each one with an individual “soul.” Once the ark lands, when “the dove doesn’t come back,” “the containers will be moved to a hillside. . . . Windows will be cut. Closed-cell soy foam insulation, and, eventually windmills. . . . They are nearly indestructible, he says, resistant to mold, termites, fire.” The promise of lyric—a recognizable container for otherwise private, individual souls—becomes (in the words of the ship’s captain) also utopian, a promise that someday we will recognize each other: the structures that hold us will no longer hide or confine.

Outside the United States containers in poems proliferate, standing at once for shelter and for travel, for poetic form and for a potentially destructive modernity. The Singaporean poet Mok Zining appropriates the slogan “adaptive reuse,” the heart of container-based architecture, in a found poem about Singapore’s official denials of precolonial history. Another Singaporean poet, Lune Loh, sets the containers on Singapore’s modern horizons against the unhomely, unknowable “myth/legends set in sea-mist” of Singapore’s past: Loh evokes

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historical astigmatism
oil-refinery sabotage
Juron island arsons
in a fog
container ships
new merchant ships
arm-tentacles still lie in wait
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in shadows
in manuscripts lost at sea.

And the Canadian poet Kate Hall, in her poem “The Shipping Container,” likens the container to a love poem, ineffective in the way that all lyric is “ineffective”: it does not literally make the absent beloved present, nor remedy unrequited erotic love, but circulates signs of absence in a system that bears its own ironic compensations. Hall’s poem begins:

There must be a method of transport
because there are regulations about the movement
of dangerous goods. You made me
a photocopy. I’ve started worrying about getting
the proper transportation certificate
which requires the inspector’s signature,
which requires believing there is
an inspector with the authority to okay me.

You can find more containers per poem—as per acre—in Aotearoa New Zealand. Here are the last lines of “malady” by Hinemoana Baker (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa, Te Āti Awa):

My mother remembers the rash
that raged across her back and the fleshy heels of her palms
It vanished the day she said those words, under her breath,

while stacking kindling in the shipping container
we used for a woodshed. We left two weeks later.
My father is all for aloe vera and manuka honey

and us coming up for a break. I pulverize an old
carrot in the screaming juicer. You get a ten-dollar
haircut. The sun comes out like a fucking miracle.

The shipping container used as a garden shed (a common practice in parts of New Zealand) matches the juicer, also repurposed or reused as a means of expression, fit for a private scream. Another poet of Aotearoa New Zealand, Kate Camp, made a meditation on shipping containers the title sonnet for her 2017 volume *The Internet of Things*:

I love the aesthetic of working ports
rust and containers
the way unwieldy ships move across the water
like buildings trained in deportment.

We need to accept that the world
is more intelligent than we are.
Like leaves on a tree we are something amazing
that behaves in predictable ways.
“Like leaves on a tree,” we are parts of a system: we, and our poems, circulate, with our similar shapes, and we might (or might not) learn a kind of humility once we see ourselves inside a larger system, we who “always . . . wish for the wrong thing.” Camp’s ingenuous approach to language, her apparent humility—as with other Aotearoa New Zealand poets of her generation—becomes a potentially national characteristic (New Zealand poets eschew prophecy and arrogance), and a sign that we can trust her: she invites us in.

The Auckland poet Michele Leggott situates shipping containers in a more complicated national landscape. She remembers, or reships, the story she heard from another New Zealand poet, David Eggleton, about his night contemplating “container port cranes”:
when I asked Dave Eggleton about Matariki
he stayed up all night on the mountain Takarunga
measuring the luminosity of the city lights       listening
to the song of the container port cranes      he knew
what to do     I lie on my back against the lip of the crater
to gaze up like an anti-gravity bungee jumper
at the star-trek of spaceship Earth.

“Spaceship Earth” is itself a repurposed container. So is the poem
(which also contains Eggleton’s story), and so is Auckland, since the
center city and some of its suburbs sit within the cones of extinct vol-
canoes; Takarunga (also called Mount Victoria) is a hill with a view in
the harborside suburb of Devonport.
“These too,” Leggott writes, “are part of the navigation.” And navigation, as the New Zealand poet and critic Anna Jackson emphasizes, has been “central to Māori identity and to Oceanic identity more broadly” since before the arrival of Europeans, as well as central in another, obvious way to European arrivals. Jackson’s recent study of poetry and poetics in Aotearoa and elsewhere holds up as exemplary a stanza from Tayi Tibble’s (Ngāti Pouro, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui) “Identity Politics,” about global “shipping,” personal reuse, and finding one’s own way:

I buy a Mana Party T-shirt from AliExpress.
$9.99 free shipping via standard post. . .
I wear it as a dress with thigh-high vinyl boots
and fishnets. I post a picture to Instagram.
Am I navigating correctly? Tell me,
which stars were my ancestors looking at?

Like Hall in Canada, Leggott, Camp, Baker, and Tibble are well-known in their nation, though American readers have yet to find them: Leggott and Eggleton have served as Aotearoa New Zealand poets laureate. I mention their fame to show that I am not, or not merely, cherry-picking and Googling for mention of shipping containers anywhere: poets who see, in shipping containers, versions of their own literary projects are also poets central to literary work in their own nations now.

To be sure, poets likened international cargo to poems before the container era. C. P. Cavafy’s prose composition “The Ships” treats breakbulk (“loose,” noncontainerized) goods as an allegory for a poem’s own trip “from Imagination to the Blank Page”: “let us be pleased when the ships enter the harbor. . . .With vigilance and great care the number of broken and discarded goods can be reduced,” though even so “some of the merchandise gets through in mislabeled boxes that say one thing on the outside and contain something else.” John Masefield’s once-famous “Cargoes” contrasted the glamorous tropical cargo of “Nineveh and distant Ophir” with the drab industrial freight of British modern life; Paul Muldoon
made “Cargoes” a point of reference, or a running joke, in his volume *Meeting the British*, with its motifs of failed empire, emigration, and miscommunication.

Yet contemporary shipping containers may do more to help us think about poems now than Cavafy’s, or Masefield’s, breakbulk metaphors can. Containers on container ships in the container system, containers as repurposed and reused, are stackable, rearrangeable rectangles with interiority; sometimes that interiority can be accessed, and sometimes it cannot be known. The same can be said (I quote the critic Sandra Bermann) about “the sonnet, with its brief, closed form and its intricate patterns [that] might be said to emphasize, even to epitomize, the repetitive qualities at work to some extent in every lyric poem.”

The sonnet began in Sicily and traveled from Moscow to Durban to Dunedin; it began as a vehicle for love poems and became a way to tell stories and comment on politics and much else; and it stands out, in European literary history, as one of the earliest lyric forms meant to be written down, preserved, and read elsewhere, rather than recited or sung. Sonnets, too, move between systems, keeping their contents intact, and they move between nations, among venues (from anthology to book to screen to diary, say, and back again), in a process analogous to containers’ “intermodal, door to door delivery” (to quote Martin again). Containers, like sonnets or quatrains, come from one site but do not stay put; they were invented in one place to be uniquely portable and travel to others. They come in sets or sequences or stacks, not always but paradigmatically. And they are, for better or worse, both obviously human made and inevitably mysterious: Kathryn Schulz, who has studied containers lost at sea, concludes that “for an object that is fundamentally a box, designed to keep things inside it, the container is a remarkable lesson in the uncontainable nature of modern life.”

The notion of lyric as traveling container—of poems and feelings and ideas of persons within them—reflects back on other, more
ominous containers in turn. In Monica Youn’s prose poem “Study of Two Figures (Pasiphaë / Sado)” both of the titular figures “are contained”: the figures—one Greek and mythic, one Korean and historical—became famous for their problematic desires, bestial, murderous, adulterous. “The male figure waits in the container for death to come”—the king, his father, has locked him in a rice chest—while “the female figure waits in the container,” Daedalus’s hollow mechanical cow, “for the generation of a life,” the life that will be the minotaur. Because Pasiphaë comes from Colchis, in Anatolia, both she and Sado are what speakers of modern English call Asian. And, Youn continues,

The rice chest and the hollow cow are not the only containers in this poem...
Asianness is a container in this poem.
Race is a container in this poem.
Each of these containers contains desire and its satisfaction.
Each of these containers contains discomfort and deterrence.
Each of these containers contains a hot button, a taboo.
The tourist and the artist can enter each of these containers.
The tourist and the artist can touch the hot button and walk away.

Containers such as the rice chest and the cow and the category of race and the poem itself and the form in a work of art do not simply set boundaries to the desires or the personae they represent. They allow desires and their representations to move through the outer world safely, while the people—the Asians—inside may die. The analogy to predominantly Asian—often, Filipino—cargo-ship crews needs no further emphasis here.

The idea that forms are repurposed containers has itself become the basis for a punning exercise: in 2016 the editors of the Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review asked early-career poets to construct sonnets around one of five words—“silence,” “water,” “a walk,” “frames,” and “container.” Consider Hannah Notess’s partly found poem “Sonnet: Overflow”: “Can I add more containers within those / containers? I must be doing something / wrong. Can I make the container grow?”
Then consider “Cup-Stacking at the School Talent Show,” by Maria Hummel:

For every mumbled song, we mothers clapped, faking joy—until that boy claimed the stage’s glow, his fingers lifting, setting, slipping, slap to the table, red plastic stacks and rows blooming and collapsing like epochs in the hands of time. *He lives for this*, his mom to me above the roar, eyes locked to her enormous camera.

There is nothing going on in the sport or pastime of cup stacking except the manipulation of containers; there is no higher meaning
Is formal mastery in poetry equivalent to cup stacking? To the manipulation of empty containers? To the emptiness of exchange value or global trade? Shipping containers are also potentially containers for emptiness, in several ways. You can empty them out before you move them around; they may represent, and carry, exchange value, transported and accounted for without reference to what’s inside. In this way they shadow Angela Leighton’s important argument in On Form: for Leighton, attention to form first, and to the aesthetic above all, always comes close to nihilism, since form without content by definition means nothing. Leighton finds traces of this argument haunting secular or nominalist creators from Lucretius to Wallace Stevens: “to acknowledge the ‘nothing’ at the heart of the literary,” Leighton speculates, “is a way of starting to ask what the work knows.”

Nihilism, of course, can feel dangerous: consider the naïve celebrants in Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Armadillo,” who send up empty, fiery containers without remembering that what goes up must come down. We are not far away, in this world of potentially interchangeable, potentially empty, formally perfect containers, from a perspective in which the forms that seem to preserve voices make them inaudible, in which signs destroy what they seem to mean, a world where, to quote Robert Hass’s famous demurral, “a word is elegy to what it signifies.”

We can get out of that world if we remember that shipping containers, like words, like literary genres and poetic forms, can be reopened, retooled, and reused: as Frank Bidart puts it, “We fill preexisting forms and by filling them we change them and we are changed.” Again, the same can be said of shipping containers—even Craig Martin, who sees in them “the representative object of capitalism,” considers how reuse can bring them a “human scale.” Aotearoa New Zealand, again, has shown how contemporary containers may get insistently, resourcefully reused. New Zealand also shows contemporary clichés and Internet-era nonliterary language reused—commercial, contemporary, international, and indeed kitschy forms filled and changed to create a distinctive persona, in the poetry of, say, Hera
Lindsay Bird. Bird—at the end of the 2010s, New Zealand’s most celebrated, and certainly its most popular, young poet—makes fun of herself as she makes fun of readers’ demands that poetry do something absolutely new:

What’s the point of saying new things? . . .

What is there to say about the world that hasn’t already been?

More to the point

Who gives a shit?

Still there are better things to be than original

So maybe I can say jazz apothecary

Or ham pantyliner

But it gives me no pleasure

To mean so little

And get so far away with it

Bird’s poet does not discover feelings, nor does she invent forms, ex nihilo, but remakes, discovers new uses for, what she first finds already in circulation.

Going even further than I have, Wai Chee Dimock writes that all literary “genres have only an on-demand spatial occupancy. They can be brought forth or sent back as the user chooses, switched on or off, scaled up or down. . . . Stackability, switchability, and scalability are the key attributes of genre when it is seen as virtual.” Stackability, switchability (or intermodality), and scale: she could be describing containers. And, in a sense, she is. Shipping containers can stand, too, for what Jahan Ramazani calls “traveling poetry”: their “mnemonic structure” (the aspects of form and sound that make them memorable, that other poets can copy in their own poems) enables their influence across time and space, as well as their “imaginative enactment of geographic movement.” Ramazani’s own test case is the ghazal, a form itself composed of separable, container-like parts, whose international travels have taken it from medieval Persia to Turkey, Germany, South Asia, and the United States.
We can set poems as containers—as shipping containers—beside a sadder, older, and more visible analogy for lyric poems as constraints: the prison cell. Terrance Hayes extrapolated on the idea that poetic forms are containers like prisons in the quatrains of his poem “Model Prison Model”:

Everybody is excited
By freedom. I was reminded of the theory
That says the body is a prison wherein the mind
Resides when I installed the small industrial locks

You see bolting the prison’s minuscule doorway.

Hayes has in mind the real prisons where black men are disproportionately incarcerated, the ones where, he writes, “My parents and first cousin have worked / Decades as prison guards.” But he also suggests the “dungeon” of Andrew Marvell’s “Dialogue Between the Soul and Body”:

O who shall, from this dungeon, raise
A soul enslav’d so many ways?
With bolts of bones, that fetter’d stands
In feet, and manacled in hands;
Here blinded with an eye, and there
Deaf with the drumming of an ear.

Poems might be prisons made of words, and language itself (as Wordsworth suggests) a “prison-house” for the soul. Following Wordsworth but reversing his politics, Andrea Brady has likened the interpretive systems by which we learn to read lyric poetry to the carceral systems that confine bodies in the service of the state. “Ornamented bondage is still bondage,” Brady concludes, “and nothing but revolution—not poetry alone—will cast it off.” Poems are cells, shackles, means of confinement and isolation, devoted to individuals over communities, reinforcing an unjust order, an empire of whiteness, “translat[ing] . . . compulsory bondage into a voluntary situation.” Brady’s idea that lyric forms and lyric inheritance are
carceral, like prisons, takes up earlier—and less critical—ideas about lyric and prisons, not only Wordsworth’s but John Stuart Mill’s, for whom a lyric poem is “the lament of a prisoner in a solitary cell.” The critic or poet on this model must tear down the walls and spring the atomized, capitalized, confined subject into collective freedom from individualism’s jail.

Such critique might instead be depriving poets, and readers, of safety or travel or home. It’s one thing to write (as Brady sometimes does) about individual poets, from Thomas Wyatt to Etheridge Knight and Dwayne Betts, who write from personal experience of literal incarceration. It is another to suggest that prison cells are more like lyric poems than other kinds of containment are like poems. I have been arguing that the adaptable, international, reusable, customizable—and yet, always, implicated—shipping container makes a better analogy than the prison for the contemporary lyric poem, its traveling fiction of voice, its version of (to quote Hayes) “wind in a box.” Reuse allows writers and readers, and anyone else involved with the fictions of voice, to rework, redecorate, and restack these forms that we already (like it or not) use and see.

In this sense the lyric poem as shipping container also resembles that other, more recent, literary genre fan fiction, whose creators and readers have made the term “shipping” mean something else altogether. To “ship” two (or more) characters is to tell one’s own story about their noncanonical, unauthorized romantic or sexual connection, and it too is a kind of benign, repeatable, and potentially very personal reappropriation. “Do you ever read so hard into a text it feels like you’re the one / writing it?” asks another young Singaporean poet, Andrew Kirkrose Devadason. His claim about, in effect, adaptive reuse shows what a reused fictive container can do. It makes sense, too, that the reshipping of lyric containers, the analogy between literal shipping containers and lyric poems as containers of feeling or selfhood, seems to have come to more prominence among poets from outside the United States, in literary cultures more attentive to the ways in which English itself might be an import, one available for repurposing
but impossible to avoid. Poets writing outside the United States, and outside Britain, and outside global cultural centers, receive forms and conventions as something already used in one way, and now available for others. Aotearoa New Zealand seems especially appropriate here, because the history of the modern nation has also depended on navigation and shipping; among its eight largest population centers, seven now include container ports.

Containers present the culpability and the excess of modern life; they present symptoms, as poems may too, but like poems, and like poetic forms, once they start traveling they can also exemplify ingenuity, personality, shelter, and reuse. Carceral spaces are hard to repurpose, though it’s been done (some are now hotels). Shipping containers, on the other hand, have standard outward forms, but they can hold and protect and make available an uncountable variety of persons and things. Once on land, they may be evacuated, redecorated, translated (brought across boundaries), personalized, and remade. They may be oppressive, liberating, convenient, remote, closed, open, public, private, or domestic. And—like modern poetry—if you don’t enjoy it, you can just leave.

To see the analogy between poems and shipping containers, between poets’ reuse, repurposing, of language and inherited form and Christchurch builders, residents, and designers’ reuse of shipping containers, is to see how poets might turn language itself (as the builders turned the container) from a scalable, prescriptive technology to one whose making and use we can call holistic, fit “for a unique situation” with “the individual worker in control.” I take the divide between holistic and prescriptive from the Canadian metallurgist and philosopher Ursula Franklin’s *The Real World of Technology*. Containers on trucks and trains and ships are paradigmatically scalable, fit for planning and control; shipping containers used as playgrounds or libraries, or even saunas, are not. They may even be what Franklin calls “redemptive technology,” ways to undo the harm done by overproduction and prescription. In the same way language is (among many other things) part of a system of social control, one that
moves containers and prisoners and balloons; language in poems, perhaps, is not, or aspires not to be: it becomes holistic as it becomes lyric and gets reused.

Looking at shipping containers this way accentuates the aspects of lyric poetry that seem to persist over time, without ignoring the aspects that have to be new. It lets us think simultaneously about form and about what form cannot encompass or explain. It gives us a figure for circulation, for reuse, for the dependence of one system on another, for the way that aesthetics can emerge from practicality. And it gives us, not least, a way to acknowledge the fragile, overstressed, perhaps nearly moribund, system—not the components but the system—that makes possible our society, and the poetry that goes with it, across national boundaries, in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the United States, and on many other shores.