Poetry

The top verse of 2020

by NICHOLAS REID

MEZZALUNA: SELECTED POEMS
by Michele Leggott (AUP)
Gleaned from her nine published collections and charting the poet’s development from experimentalism to a more confessional style.

THE SAVAGE COLONISER BOOK
by Tusiata Avia (VUP)
Lively, provocative and confronting. Mad as hell about colonialism and racism, but also sometimes funny as hell.

ENDURING LOVE: COLLECTED POEMS
by Robert McLean (Cold Hub Press)
Selections old and new from New Zealand’s most underrated poet, unashamedly modernist in style and essential reading.

THE LIFERS
by Michael Steven (Otago University Press)
Skilled in many types of verse, Steven gives a dark view of New Zealand, realistic but not pessimistic.

HOW TO BE OLD
by Rachel McAlpine (Cuba Press)
The octogenarian poet won’t go down without a fight and charts old age in verse both bouncy and ironic.

FAR-FLUNG
by Rhian Gallagher (AUP)
Philosophy injected seamlessly into landscape poetry and then a brilliant evocation of old Dunedin and its psychiatric hospital.

STAR TRAILS
by Alexandra Fraser (Steele Roberts)
One of the very few poets who understand science. She mines personal experience while making astronomy sing.

ESCAPE PATH LIGHTING
by John Newton (VUP)
A novel in verse by a literary scholar, rollicking yarn of hipsters, alternative-lifestyler and poets in conflict.

NOUNS, VERBS, ETC
by Fiona Farrell (OUP)
An impressive summation of a poet who can make ancient woes relevant to the present age.

FANCY DANCING
by Bernadette Hall (VUP)
New and selected poems from a seasoned observer of southern locales. A highlight is the new sequence of blank-verse sonnets.