

The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize 2015

# UNDERNEATH

## **IPSI :: CCCR**

The International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) is part of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. IPSI conducts research related to poetry, and publishes and promulgates the outcomes of this research internationally. The Institute also publishes poetry and interviews with poets, as well as related material, from around the world. Publication of such material takes place in IPSI's online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* and through other publishing vehicles, such as *Axon Elements*. IPSI's goals include working – collaboratively, where possible – for the appreciation and understanding of poetry, poetic language and the cultural and social significance of poetry. The institute also organises symposia, seminars, readings and other poetry-related activities and events.

The Centre for Creative and Cultural Research (CCCR) is IPSI's umbrella organisation and brings together staff, adjuncts, research students and visiting fellows who work on key challenges within the cultural sector and creative field. A central feature of its research concerns the effects of digitisation and globalisation on cultural producers, whether individuals, communities or organisations.

### **Navigating this ebook**

*This is an interactive PDF: clicking on poems in the contents will take you to the poem's page; clicking on the poet's name at the end of the poem will take you to their biographical note; their names in the biographical note will take you back to their poems; and clicking on the page numbers throughout the book will bring you back to the contents page. All weblinks are live at the time of publication.*

*Edited by  
Niloofer Fanaiyan &  
Owen Bullock*



The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize 2015

# UNDERNEATH

First published in 2015 by  
Axon Elements

Axon Elements is an imprint of the  
International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI)  
Centre for Creative and Cultural Research  
Faculty of Arts and Design  
University of Canberra  
Act 2601 Australia

This publication is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

© the authors of the individual poems contained in this volume, for their poems  
© the publisher, for the publication concept, layout and design

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Title:                   Underneath: the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's  
                              International Poetry Prize 2015 /  
                              Owen Bullock and Niloofar Fanaian (editors)

ISBN:                   978-1-74088-427-3 (e-book)

Subjects:             University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize  
                              Poetry--Collections  
                              Poetry--21st century.

Other Authors/Contributors:

Bullock, Owen, 1967– editor,  
Niloofar Fanaian, 1981– editor.

Dewey Number:     A821.408

Prize administration: Shane Strange, Owen Bullock and Katie Hayne

Publication editors: Owen Bullock and Niloofar Fanaian

Publication design and layout: Caren Florance

Cover image: Under the Dome by zeitfaenger.at <https://flic.kr/p/uZn3cP>  
reproduced under Creative Commons attribution licence 2.0

Publication available in digital form through  
[www.canberra.edu.au/vcpoetryprize](http://www.canberra.edu.au/vcpoetryprize)

## CONTENTS

Stephen Parker AO	Vice-Chancellor's Foreword . . . . .	7
Elizabeth Smither	Judge's report . . . . .	8
<b>1st Prize</b>		
Elisabeth Murawski	Iconic photo: Lee Miller in Munich, April, 1945 . . .	11
<b>Runner-up</b>		
Lisa Brockwell	Waiting on Imran Khan . . . . .	13
<b>Shortlist</b>		
Mara Adamitz Scrupe	About Baltimore . . . . .	15
Jonathan Lenn	Like but when it ain't . . . . .	16
Anthony Lawrence	Whooping Cough . . . . .	18
Jane Adair	Echogenic. . . . .	20
<b>Longlist</b>		
Shari Kocher	Goat's cheese with rosemary and honey on toast on a Sunday morning . . . . .	22
David Hitchcock	Willowware still life. . . . .	23
Lisa Stonestreet	Perfections. . . . .	24
Susan Elmslie	Glenn Gould's chair. . . . .	25
Ron Heard	Walled garden. . . . .	26
Peter J Wells	Walking in the footsteps of WG Sebald. . . . .	27
Sarah Day	Wooden horse . . . . .	28
Nadia Geeves	Missing. . . . .	30
Christopher Konrad	When we will reach Iscander . . . . .	32
Christopher Breach	The bones nestled within . . . . .	34
Chloe Wilson	Griswold, on his deathbed. . . . .	36
Desmond Kon	Poe's Catalina in another life: a Noh poem. . . . .	38
Jonathan Tel	The bus station of false names. . . . .	40
Adam Battestilli	Tornado watch during soap opera at midday in Spring . . . . .	42
Rohan Naidu	Indian Summer . . . . .	44
Eileen Chong	The photograph in Australia . . . . .	45
Steve Gunther-Murphy	The Korean Grandfather. . . . .	46
Dave Drayton	Councillors relocate the withering . . . . .	47
A Frances Johnson	Soar: string that holds the sky . . . . .	48
Richard Mauén	James and James. . . . .	49
Jason Gray	Listening to glass . . . . .	50
Perry Janes	Shooter . . . . .	52
Ann-Marie Blanchard	Oceanic Baptism. . . . .	53
John Carey	Navigation . . . . .	54
Mran-Maree Laing	Blood and bone . . . . .	56
Sarah Rice	Trampolining . . . . .	58

Basia Piechocinska	I've practiced you into existence. . . . .	59
Shane McCauley	Manji the old man mad with painting . . . . .	60
Claudia Daventry	Yes . . . . .	62
Kristen Lang	After mowing the paddock. . . . .	63
Libby Hart	She charts the geography of longing . . . . .	64
Wes Lee	On the road's shoulder at Reikorangi . . . . .	66
Wes Lee	Tears in the rain . . . all those moments will be gone . . . . .	67
Lachlan Brown	Suspended belief . . . . .	68
Kristen Roberts	Central to Katoomba . . . . .	70
Carolyn Supinka	Painting in Thiruvanamallai. . . . .	71
Rachael Mead	Quiet pieces of the world. . . . .	72
Meg Mooney	Driving along Gorge Road. . . . .	74
Anthony Lawrence	The deep . . . . .	76
Mara Adamitz Scrupe	Ode to Audubon. . . . .	78
Sue Wootton	The yield . . . . .	79
Leni Shilton	If I speak from under the earth . . . . .	80
Hugh Dunkerley	Crab hunting at Menai . . . . .	81
BR Dionysius	Eel-tailed catfish. . . . .	82
Kristen Lang	The horse. . . . .	83
Desmond Kon	Seated between Kensho and numinosity: a sestina. . . . .	84
Cynthia Hughes	Madrona music . . . . .	86
Mark Tredinnick	Up . . . . .	87
Nathan Shepherdson	The poem drinks its own lips . . . . .	88
Carolina Wilson	Under the under . . . . .	90

**Biographies**

Judges	. . . . .	93
Poets	. . . . .	94
Editors	. . . . .	99

## VICE-CHANCELLOR'S FOREWORD

In this second year of the Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, we have revisited the question of what poetry can accomplish, and why as human beings we continue to turn to this form of writing. In a world that is captivated by digital and visual media, why does poetry matter still, to many writers and readers?

William Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,' or former US poet laureate Billy Collins announcing that 'poetry tells the story of the human heart' point to the individual satisfactions it affords. But poetry also extends beyond the individual or community, exploring deeper and richer connections with the natural world. Poet John Burnside, for example, writes that poetry 'opens us up to wonder' and to 're-engaging with a world we take too much for granted,' and the work of many of his contemporaries draws attention to the beauty and fragility of the natural environment.

Given this openness to the self and the world, the name of this year's Prize Anthology, *Underneath*, may seem counter-intuitive. Underneath is, after all, a word that evokes concealment rather than openness – and it does it twice over: the word comes down to us from the Old English *underneopan*, which is a combination of *under* and *below*. Such doubling seems to insist on the presence of the unseen or the hidden, and thus draws our attention to possibilities that have not yet been recognised. Many of the poems presented here – poems selected by the judges as works that have something significant to say – use variants of 'underneath'. Judge Elizabeth Smither notes in her report that 'the best poems may come when the inner world resurrects a deep almost forgotten memory.' Poems in this prize anthology evoke the hidden, gesturing toward things that have been tucked away, but not entirely forgotten.

Elizabeth Smither was our international judge, the one who took the responsibility to select the winning, second-placed and shortlisted poems from a longlist of 56. Longlist judges were Subhash Jaireth, Judy Johnson and Alvin Pang, who whittled down over 1,100 poems to a workable selection. The majority of the submissions originated from Australia or the USA, but poems came from right across the globe: including Brazil and Britain, Canada and Columbia, Papua New Guinea and Poland, Senegal and Slovenia, and many other nations. The result is the evocation and polished set of poems presented in *Underneath*.

What is evident in the breadth and quality of the entries, in the works selected for this volume, and in the commitment and enthusiasm of the entrants, administrators and judges, is the vitality and richness of poetry in the world today.

I would like to thank my colleague Distinguished Professor Jen Webb for her continuing leadership in creative writing at the University and specifically for helping me to establish this important prize; and the members of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research who provide invaluable support to this project.

## JUDGE'S REPORT

I have learned some amazing things about Australian poetry. That a subject may be small, a plant or a creature, but acquire, through the surrounding landscape, an amazing sweep. I often found myself thinking of Van Gogh's 'Starry Night'. There were an amazing number of bees suggesting pollination across vast spaces. Some of the most affecting voices were tentative and daring in equal parts, edging towards the unsayable and the space that opens out when you get there. There was a particular tenderness, a leaving of a place open for further evidence. When someone made up their mind or defended themselves it was bold.

I can say straightaway that judging poetry is agonising. It's like wearing a white coat and a stethoscope and walking down a hospital corridor, pretending to be a doctor. It's having paper with headings labelled: 'Like'; 'Like Slightly Less but still Like'; 'Like but not as much as Like Slightly Less.' And if any – for all 56 had already been sifted by three distinguished judges and deserving inclusion in this anthology – were rashly consigned to the 'Possibly No But Maybe This is Wrong' pile they had to be taken out again and re-examined by the bogus doctor looking for a pulse.

I have a preference for a poem that goes on after the writing and reading is done, landing its protagonist in a place far removed from its starting point. A poem that travels as it comes into being towards a location the poet is trying to find; a mystery, which while being elucidated with the utmost clarity, still ends in mystery. A poem that uses all of Judith Wright's 'Five Senses' –

*Now my five senses  
gather into a meaning  
all acts, all presences;  
and as a lily gathers  
the elements together,  
in me this dark and shining,  
that stillness and that moving.*

How exhilarating to see those five senses at work and running through the lines of a poem.

Something I have found to be true: the best poems may come when the inner world resurrects a deep almost forgotten memory and allies it to something in front of our eyes. As Heraclitus says: 'Deep equals true.'

### **1st Prize – 'Iconic photo: Lee Miller in Munich, April 1945'**

The memory in this poem is a photo, a risky photo and a daring one. The daring in the poem is in the unvarnished telling, the placement of words as the small nude statue is placed, the photograph of Hitler. The details are clear and lovely and blunt: 'washcloth to her shoulder' and the reader catches the motion. The plea (perhaps universal to poets and poetry): I IMPLORE YOU TO BELIEVE THIS IS TRUE. The control is remarkable and so is the boldness, as if Lee Miller has flung

off her clothes and her unspeakable boots and got into the poem just as she got into the bath.

### **Runner-up – ‘Waiting on Imran Khan’**

What a marvellous poem this is. The eighteen-year-old waitress and the pantherish Imran Khan. Words tumble through the stanzas like overs but the waitress stays at the crease and we know she will survive the ‘manicured disgust’ of the Lion of Lahore. Will Imran Khan survive so well? I doubt it and nor does he deserve to. A poem that catches emotion on the wing as the waitress goes on serving the preening cricketers and conducting a dialogue with herself.

### **Shortlisted Poems**

*‘About Baltimore’*: The fullness of this poem: language, images, verve, human inconsistency, is immensely appealing. ‘As if the whole damn city its mess and sordid’ is at the table, being worked over. How dare it possess ‘charm’. ‘Never mind. Move on’. Come at it from a different angle. The honesty seems stunning. There are breaks for coffee and pudding and re-grouping. How can we come to a conclusion about a city like Baltimore? Or the other subject: language?

*‘Like but when it ain’t’*: A poem that has a lovely drifting ruminating quality and a tenderness in it like the paintings of Russell Drysdale. No one gets ‘t-boned’, everyone gets home safely, and the reader is left with the thought: ‘tryin’a get a hold on the clear sharp feelin/pure even’ that is not the preserve of ‘the real great people’ (see Imran Khan) but anyone who can appreciate just being alive (i.e. livin/an death ain’t close’). The images, the shifting back and forth of emotion, are surrounded by space and the poem ends like the close of day, in consolation and calm.

*‘Whooping Cough’*: It’s an extravagant and horrid illness that suits this wild winding through complications, undetected poisons, constellations, scattered saliva, the lungs’ wet machinery, misdiagnosis, efforts to stay calm amid hackings. The whole poem is immensely rich and skilled, almost over-balancing at times with images caught between spasms. ‘Man-flu’ is a brilliant deflection and earths the whole thing like an anchor tossed down from a hot air balloon. The instructions for paracetamol bring it to a bathetic stop.

*‘Echogenic’*: Attention is first grabbed by the word ‘pretty’ and then by the sparing but lively images: ‘flapping egret wings’ or the translated science: ‘My sounds, he means, are beautifully seen’. The loveliest turning though comes with the emergence of the worker with the hardhat and the imagined tenderness of his mother when he was in his crib. This is what we like about the poet: an ability to be distracted that enriches the poem and then the return to the echocardiogram, a little more explanation, then beauty and passion.

1ST PRIZE

**ICONIC PHOTO: LEE MILLER IN MUNICH,  
APRIL, 1945**

On a table beside his tub a small statue  
of a kneeling woman, nude, right arm  
draped over her head. Was it always  
on display, or has it been transported  
for effect? Like the photograph of Hitler  
propped on the tub's edge. A picture  
within a picture of Miller in the water,  
washcloth to her shoulder as Scherman clicks,  
records a face that betrays no disgust  
her body's touching what Hitler's body touched.  
Muddy boots on the floor. Clothing  
loosely tossed on a backless chair  
suggests she acted on impulse, driven  
by images from Dachau: mouths agape,  
staring eyes locked on air. Cables  
*Vogue*: I IMPLORE YOU TO BELIEVE THIS IS TRUE.  
Shocking, what she bore witness to, where  
her boots have been. The tub's  
enormous, more like a hard white sarcophagus,  
its porcelain and chrome ordinary  
as sin, as Eichmann.

RUNNER-UP

## WAITING ON IMRAN KHAN

I knew they were trouble the moment they walked in.  
I was eighteen, bookish, I'd not yet learned  
to build a public face. I was laid open like an oyster  
on a salted plate. The uniform was no help,  
nylon trousers cut into my soft waist and thighs,  
standard issue, there was no bigger size. Summer – the dozy  
lunch time shift. Office workers, pensioner couples  
sharing before the cool waterhole of the cinema.  
Then, eight or nine men all preening, careening,  
igniting against each other. Who was the roughest,  
who had the biggest, who was alpha,  
and who was his bitch. With my greeting (guinea pig  
tentative, I kick myself now), I became the pitch  
for a practice hit; a boy's own way to rejig  
the middle order of the Pakistani cricket team.  
I'd never admired Imran Khan as a cricketer –  
too cool and vain – I preferred flashy and passionate  
like Dennis Lillee, or stately and dignified  
like Clive Lloyd, but even so, it should have been  
a thrill. I'd been following the Test series,  
a fan since Dad and I sat on The Hill.  
For a young man they might have been jovial,  
but when I seated them they broke into a dirty laugh,  
staring hard at parts of me. I delivered their tray of Pepsi,  
my hands shaking so the glasses sang like bells;  
not one of them took pity. Imran Khan sat  
at the centre. He said something I did not understand  
and some of them hooted, one snarled, their eyes  
were hot monsters, some swearing softly,  
gesturing at me. I met his eye for a long moment  
and saw carefully manicured disgust  
at the humiliation I was heaping upon myself  
by being a young woman, by walking the floor  
in my awful uniform, my flat, black lace-up shoes. Yes,  
I was walking the floor: earning my own money, slowly  
forming the dense quartz of my opinions, polished and patient.

# SHORTLIST

## ABOUT BALTIMORE

Cross table pitch and bellow      sway verse reel  
and span.      Amidst      laird and bred the wan  
the various      orthography/morphology miscellany  
of      English.      Starting in on.      In on:      *America*  
*the whole*      *of it.*      Two chairs down      dangling  
the phrase      drifts across/around at table      as though  
the whole of it      *America, I mean*      can be worked  
out over coffee      and pudding      and the last      of the good  
Bordeaux.      The whole      of it.      As dark and      reckless  
in its manifold      curses and distinctions      as all  
the indicted      denizens of hell's cellar      combined.

*The scald:*      Appalachian

for what's      left of land      when all the trees  
get took.      Scraped plain.      When animals  
flee dens      burrows      lairs.      When birds  
*flush* and don't return.      *Scalded* as in  
start over. Brace up. Reinforce.      *Again* –

*about*      *Baltimore.*

As if the whole      damn city      its mess and sordid  
its mob and holy fucked-up      its rectitude and whitewash  
and cruelty and      *charm*      its burned-out  
blocks might be      rehabilitated      tacitly      at  
table wounded      healed      scarred  
tore up healed      scarred again.      Again.      *About*  
*Baltimore.*      The city.      As riot. As march  
maybe.      Or perhaps peacefully      as in  
rally.      Or consummated      –      like bought  
sex      –      in cold      fury.      *Whatever.*

*Never mind.*      Move on.      *About*

*Baltimore.*      Politely      politic.      Try again.      *About*  
*Baltimore.*      Our Baltimore. Everybody's Baltimore.  
As if the whole      –      as if the whole can be summed  
up averting our eyes      simply not looking      going it  
blind.

## LIKE BUT WHEN IT AIN'T

Don't remember much before them two came together  
sein that red knowin that we ain't slowed none  
jus clover in the air driftin an a wasp  
though I ain't sure about that –

Opens up an gets real quiet time does closin on the line  
thoughts come clear an escalate fast  
'he musta seen it' 'he's drivin like he ain't seen it' 'he ain't seen it'  
'I don't wanna embarrass him none' 'if I'm gonna it better be now'  
real calm like I say 'light's red' an point at it strange  
to hear my voice so calm hadn't decided to speak either jus came out

Well he slams the brakes already bein over the line an all  
an we snap pretty hard stop bang in the middle of the intersection  
bump back an forth a few times  
waitin for somethin to happen

Two harleys cross on by the second slowin  
turnin  
expression hidden in white whiskers  
wonder if he saw hisself in chalk before the wind took it up

Well we ain't been t-boned so we back up real matter'a fact like  
like parkin an the driver says 'thank you sir I didn't see it so low to the road  
they should put it on a pole' 'yeah an it's wide too' I say  
'well I thank you' he says again an we wait for the green  
we're goin shootin see  
an his daughter in the back ain't said nuthin

Can't use his gun in the end steel-tipped bullets ain't safe for the range  
ricochets  
an he ain't puttin none'a their bullets in his so we shoot one'a theirs  
ain't bad

Well he drops me home afterward  
I try not to be real obvious like lookin at the road  
we pass some kid playin naked in the street  
they park an go back to see where his mamma's at  
well she done come out an hit'im  
playin in the street like that

Back home I get a beer sit on the porch an get to thinkin  
playin it over  
tryin'a get a hold on the clear sharp feelin  
pure even

I'm still on that porch come dark  
real quiet in them orange lights  
an this leaf come scrapin down the road all dry an raspy  
an I'm thinkin  
maybe it ain't jus somethin to watch an listen to  
but a tear in the night to reach into –

I bet the real great people can do that  
take somethin real normal an be real pure about seein it  
like life flashin before their eyes when it ain't  
imagine that  
livin  
an death ain't close.

## WHOOPING COUGH

Now that *sleep* is another word for obsolescence,  
    insomnia an unposted back road that can lead  
to cracked ribs, vertebral artery dissection  
    or a plethora of other complications,  
you might as well explore the dark, and cough  
    your way to a better understanding of the sky  
and its inner workings. And between fits  
    of urgent hacking, once common at a time  
when undetectable poisons were the preferred  
    methodology for trimming a troublesome  
lineage or marriage, you look up to find a lung-  
    shaped constellation, so congested it appears  
near collapse. On the horizon, suspended  
    low over the sea like an old-style copper  
diving helmet, its face-plate covered with lesions,  
    a full moon drags the tide through its stages  
and you feel the water levels in your upper  
    respiratory tract rise and fall. It's not until  
you've paced and measured the length of another  
    blacked-out night, replete with the dead stars  
of saliva you scatter, and intakes of breath like the call  
    of a pheasant coucal, that you surrender  
to a range of ineffectual drugs and poor attempts  
    at meditation. You try to stay calm, and discern  
the high altitude, silent crossing of an airliner  
    from a space station's blinking passage of light.  
Returning to earth, you find the branches  
    of dying trees like a sketch of bronchioles.  
This sets the wet machinery of your lungs in motion  
    and you wonder if the natural world  
and your percussive response to it might be linked.  
    This leads quickly to the phenomenon  
of sounds heard in the magnetosphere  
    which, according to someone who'd been told  
by someone who'd heard it from a second cousin  
    of one of the astronauts, are like a cross  
between a pneumatic wheeze and grackles  
    going out of their collective heads, at dusk.

And that's where you find yourself, tracking language  
for the way the sky shuffles down through  
its gradations in colour. Signing off on the day,  
you begin another night of celestial inquiry,  
pausing to curse the doctor for her misdiagnosis,  
which saw you leave the surgery with a few  
consolatory words about 'man-flu'. She was also  
at pains to ask if you were aware that, despite  
its efficacy being rendered useless, extraterrestrially,  
paracetamol should always be used judiciously.

## ECHOGENIC

The technician murmurs *pretty*. He's talking  
to the monitor, the black and white  
glow on a screen, my heart,

the size of a small bird's nest. I watch it  
contract, relax.

I'm transfixed by the mitral valve  
its flapping egret wings. When he inches  
the wand over a rib and under a breast,  
it becomes a pair of pale hands clapping

*Well done – good heart! Pretty heart!*

It looks the way a schoolgirl sounds  
when she laughs, all rippling delight.  
*You, he says, are echogenic.*

My sounds, he means, are beautifully seen.  
On a window seat in the cardiac ward,

I wait. Outside, a worker emerges  
from a manhole. First, the hardhat, then elbows,  
now the face that lifts to the light.

I want to know how his mother pictured him grown,  
and what she imagined  
when she stood by his crib and studied the down  
on his arms. It's not all black and white,

this echocardiogram. The machine also makes colors  
that signal blood flow: orange for up  
the ventricle, blue for down. I watch them glow and explode,  
like campfire logs crashing,

flaring: systole and diastole, manhole,  
sky, this too is beauty. This is how passion looks  
with the sound turned down.

# LOONGLIST

**GOAT'S CHEESE WITH ROSEMARY  
AND HONEY ON TOAST ON A  
SUNDAY MORNING**

*After Gaston Bachelard's The Psychoanalysis of Fire (1964)*

*For Andi*

Fire having made us, heat becomes us,  
hands that milked the goat and bee,  
the bee that milked the flower, equally,  
your hands last night, and this morning,  
churning, setting to rise and spread  
this yeast in me the fire alights  
along the rosemary sprig: to savour  
the passing of hands through love  
is what we swallow in this space  
coming together and apart – fire,  
the food of medieval thought, our  
exhalations feeding comets, yes,  
our breath the stuff of stars. Be careful  
with those gum leaves, so near  
the kindling box: just like the classic  
laurel, brushed, so too my heart when  
shaken, sparks, and 'that which has been  
licked by fire has a different taste' fragile  
as this earthly grace which burns the sun  
behind your head and turns the little blue  
flowers red 'as do the bones of lions.'

## WILLOWWARE STILL LIFE

The three men will never reach the other side of the bridge.  
The man in the boat will never come to shore.  
The two birds will never mate.

Avocado, green in its darker skin –  
half the fruit, but the seed is gone.  
In its place a hole cups the air.  
The skin holds the edible part –  
buttery, tasting of plant.

Cantaloupe, orange flesh without its skin,  
pieces scooped out of the skin  
with a teaspoon.  
But there is no tea.  
The spoon is not there.

Potato, a not quite white,  
cut in pieces and boiled,  
still wears its skin.  
Steam rises,  
taking away its warmth.

Butter, yellow, melts where it touches the potato,  
slips down to pool on –  
the three men on the bridge,  
the man in the boat,  
the birds in the air.

None of them notice,  
caught in the China pattern.

## PERFECTIONS

Those little plastic number puzzles  
given out at gradeschool parties:  
slide this tile over here, and –

eventually you'd have made  
a clearing. A way  
to move through the world:

each ridged edge hooked  
under the next, catch that lagged  
at the nudge,

one step closer  
to yes. Get the thing  
spinning, joy

of click-click getting there,  
getting it down right.

Down right:

perfect-heart i. Down right:  
cartwheel on the lawn –  
roundoff, Roundup,

emerald sheen. Knife-blade  
crease, designer jeans.  
Line and spoke,

black and white, scrape of chalk  
in a long straight line. Slide  
right, down right,

never fall. Keep one space open  
so you can move at all,  
at all.

## GLENN GOULD'S CHAIR

*With five lines hacked from How to Design a Chair (Design Museum/Conran Octopus, 2010)*

The  
chair  
is  
a  
sug-  
gestive  
form.

Even  
un-

occupied, it recalls the human frame,  
a back, a seat, and legs, sometimes arms.

To sit down (sink in?) is to stake a claim.

The curule seat. Womb. Whatever it does,  
it must support the body without breaking.

First rule: support is dictated by use;

Glenn Gould's hacked bridge chair kept him just fourteen  
inches off the floor, its cushion worn through  
until there was only a wooden slat

to balance his rear on. So how do you  
design a chair as perfect as that?

Take saw, piano wire, duct tape, and bolts.

Keep humming until you run out of notes.

## WALLED GARDEN

pea plants in square beds  
labelled in czech and german  
we make out

*smooth*                      *wrinkled*  
*tall*                      *short*  
*white flowers*              *purple flowers*

everything is overgrown  
we sit among axial    terminal beds  
and weed

sharp memory of a melbourne childhood  
as i touch a nettle  
but we keep pulling weeds  
from the gravelly soil

*his work was badly treated*  
you say  
*de vries rediscovered his rules of inheritance*  
*and wanting fame*  
*tried not to acknowledge him*  
*fisher    who should have known better*  
*said his results were too good*  
*invented elaborate ways he must have cheated*  
*how could an obscure friar*  
*in a backward province do such work*

how could an ambitious statistician  
understand patience

i think of his serenity  
his focus

how he made a meditation  
of pollination  
tending his plants  
keeping careful records  
and the slow way  
nature's secrets  
opened to him

as i make a meditation  
of weeding  
gregor  
mendel's  
garden

## WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WG SEBALD

In the 'dog days of nineteen ninety two' you  
    'set off to walk the county of Suffolk.'

When I read your account pages flew out, till none were bound.  
    This seemed important; my new copy grew fragile too.

I read of your death in a square of antipodean news print,  
    which did not fit, as your prose never used

short paragraphs when long ones were needed.

    Another poor fit, a car accident ending the life of a walker

who sprinkled his accounts with black and white pictures  
    as strange as the narratives that spoke in the voice

of the disappeared, the deranged,  
    of horror too enormous for words;

perhaps it was the weight of your shadow  
    that made you write the world reduced?

You took a photograph of the row of two-storey  
    terrace houses on Shingle Street,

with your back to the sea; the buildings squeezed  
    beside stony beach and vast East Anglian sky.

These homes standing alone, survivors of empires past  
    at Shingle Street, where a health spa

once catered to the old and new  
    from across the North Sea;

in memorandum, soft shadows cast by moon and star,  
    night falling fast.

I remember one blue sky day, taking the waters  
    off Shingle Street, now a solitary place

with enough room for a summer afternoon  
    and voices, now faint.

## WOODEN HORSE

on your crude wooden sled,  
you were once – a broom,  
a length of rope,  
a handful of off-cuts, two screws  
and eight three inch nails.  
You are not quite symmetrical –  
one rocker pine, one hardwood,  
and your plank torso is bevelled  
more on the left than the right.  
Your hard round eye has been drilled  
right through your plank face;  
from above, this gives you a bright  
dark vacancy. To a child  
this might lend perspicacity  
(squatting and peering,  
I can see the evening ocean  
through your clear gaze);  
the same bit bore the hole  
for the dowel handle that impales  
your jaw; your profile is not equine,  
more Border Leicester.  
Your crimped rope tail and mane  
have been mere tufts of stubble  
like nibbled wallaby grass  
since you first came our way.  
Your broom legs are so straight,  
slender as a racehorse's;  
I forgot to say  
that there is some pathos  
about your routered mouth,  
and its odd slope of forbearance.  
Your broom neck leans forward  
towards the future. I suspect  
you never boasted a coat of paint;  
nowadays you are so weathered  
you might be made of driftwood –  
a horse of the sea.

Your balance is exact,  
the elipse of each crude arc  
rocker knows to baulk  
just before the tipping point.  
Earless, eyeless yet not blind,  
bereft of mane and tail,  
you are steadfast, gazing  
through that vacant eye  
to east and west,  
seeing not, in your long life,  
that children grow old,  
but how, from each tide,  
rolls the continuum of each wave.

## MISSING

I carry nations in my bones, fit whole cities in my belly, carry towers in my spine,  
and yet I have been exiled from my home.

Tell me how can you go home when home is the jaw of a burning corpse?

I endure the looks, the stares, the whispers,

*'Go home, go home, go home.'*

But home is the smell of scorched rubble.

It is a young girl forced to break herself open for whatever man willing to watch  
her burn.

It is a young boy forced to wield a gun taught apathy and despair.

It is a lover's hands on your windpipe.

This city is a desecrated cemetery and I am a fading ghost.

I can no longer walk here without men with machete hearts and shot gun eyes  
hungry for a taste.

Buildings with steel spines arched towards heaven, an empty shell, bodies set  
afire on blazing pyres.

Hair like twisted vines, back arched, mouth a gaping cavern.

I offered my daughter to a man,

Prayed that he'd treat her like holy relic.

Amidst spiralling roots, I restrained her writhing chest to my caged ribs, as  
ancient crones anointed her body.

I pressed my daughter into the belly of a shark.

Spat her out and waved her off,

Now my daughter gives birth to foreign cities,

Doctors click their cavernous tongues over her bloated belly,

As she weaves jagged lines across paper thin lungs,

And did you know that my mother died thousands of miles from here?

I'd have to cross vast oceans just to offer her home.

I spent nights searching for parts of my father's body,

I did not return the same,

And now I am a ghost town, full of creaking doors, and love that never comes to  
stay.

Oh, I am burning continents onto my fingertips.  
I am sealing memories on my eyelids.  
My veins are ancient rivers bursting with holy tradition.  
There is a world embedded in the void of my collarbones,  
Oceans run down the blades of my shoulders,  
My body is a map of all the things left behind.  
I dare you,  
Come touch and lose yourself in every crevice, in the arch of my spine, the tilt of  
my lips, the hollow of my throat.  
And did you know yesterday I told my lover I was so sick of this nomad heart?  
Sat on his cold linoleum floor and begged forgiveness,  
This is not the taste of home,  
I'll put my bruised fist through glass.  
I like the way blood washes us clean.

## WHEN WE WILL REACH ISCANDER

Find me saviour-earth Iscander  
when I walk over these raining acid skies  
under rolling hills I will find you  
there are not many heroes left but allow me one last phone call to my lawyer

The reflection of eyes looking back at me  
tell me it is I watching the movie *Space Battleship Yamato*  
but warp-mind insists those distant-looking eyes looking back at me  
belong to Captain Kodai

*Amigos para Siempre* is playing somewhere and  
Carreras can be my hero any day  
To whom shall I then in my need            when good is all and we are not

I was not always Kaido San        Once upon a time  
it was Melbourne today, Perth yesterday – my father was Iranian or Austrian  
I was once an apprentice carpenter

or next year a chef in Graz  
How do I know Disneyland can deliver me  
or Water World or any world

Find me Iscander – I will find you  
save me from this Ozone world, this warming-climate charm  
Kodai San

melting ice-caps        colding deserts        drying dirt  
replenish me        renew my species  
teach my children as my father taught me

What? All manner of manly cancer-death but perhaps love too

How must I act        what must one do  
love is a fireplace, the Master says  
and the deserts must be fed            cars, planes laden like IEDs

obesity succinctly reported and end-days duly noted  
do not fob me off        What must I do, tell me  
as the weather harbours in at Kettering  
Perhaps this conversation could be better had in a Palestinian refugee camp  
or alongside the fires of Lebanon

as I was strolling down Spring Street or Lewisham Avenue  
it does not matter

How is it one should act        the falling sour-water asks  
the ground beneath my feet gives way to more questions  
than I can place on the head of a pin where all the angels gather  
hoary breath under the snowy cap of Mt Wellington  
for then my children will be thankful  
please pass on my regards to Captain Kodai, to all the crew of the good  
    ship Yamato

Show me the handbook        pass me the rules  
when we will reach Iscander

## THE BONES NESTLED WITHIN

1.

The constable sat askance in the saddle  
& worried at the ragged end of a twig  
with the broken nail of his right thumb,  
watching the path they had harried along  
to see what ghost or devil would appear,  
a spirit he first saw writhing in the pyre:  
barely glimpsed; there & not;  
a vision he quickly dismissed as foolishness,  
because, of course, it could not be.  
Yet here he was, glancing over his shoulder  
every chance he got, searching for the glimmer.

2.

In a fog, & slowly climbing out of it,  
they had come upon the clearing in the half-light of dawn,  
& found a motley collection of lean-tos  
centred around a burgeoning fire;  
& crept forward with their guns in their hands,  
calling loudly for the blacks to kneel;  
giving them the chance to come in quietly,  
but, of course, they would not listen. For when  
he ordered them to drop their weapons, they scattered  
every which way, some running straight towards them,  
so they had no choice but to open fire.

3.

He checked his revolver was still loaded  
for the third time since leaving the clearing –  
still smouldering, but otherwise without trace  
of bone or body amongst the bracken,  
nor shells, or footprints suspended in ash –  
& tried to convince himself he cared no more  
about the killings than if they'd been cattle  
in the yards; no more a crime than cutting  
the heads off stalks of grain; yet he did not dare  
look at the native tracker, for his face was a mask:  
like death, with skin wrapped tight around.

4.

With the rough & blackened fingers of his shaking right hand,  
the constable had managed to roll a cigarette,  
& watched as the smoke drifted slowly heavenward,  
only to disperse & disappear.

& when they had left the clearing behind,  
they left nothing but a charred circle of ash,  
that covered the ground so wholly  
that each time their horses lifted a hoof,  
they left a blood-red gash; an uncomfortable  
reminder of what lay in wait at the  
torrefied homestead, & the bones nestled within.

## GRISWOLD, ON HIS DEATHBED

*Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815–1857), critic and anthologist, is now best known for being the rival of Edgar Allan Poe. On Griswold's death, a portrait of Poe was found among the scant possessions in his room.*

Poe would have had a picnic with this –  
his nemesis, clammy in a gown and nightcap,  
frowning, bedridden – the tubercles  
spreading out, leisurely  
as a field of lily of the valley  
in his lungs – logs popping in the fire –  
the room stifling – the nurses,  
soft-shoed, wordless, folding napkins  
over bedpans, and whisking them away – a clock  
ticking down the minutes in the corridor –  
a chime rupturing the silence – the sporadic caw  
of birds who, having no more urgent business,  
were content to witness Griswold's imminent  
demise – he'd had his victories, after all –  
Poe was longsince deceased, moldering  
ignominiously beneath a heap of mossy clods –  
and Griswold's obituary – in which Poe  
was cartoonish, always being scooped out  
of gutters, or gnawing gloomily on his cheeks,  
or stumbling through the foggy city, muttering  
to the multitude of demons with whom  
he was chummy – this account – Griswold  
signed it *Ludwig* – it proved quite a hit –  
and yet – in Griswold's chamber, a reminder –  
it was bereft of decoration – except for a scant few  
portraits – his own – and the poet whose hand  
he never won – and Poe, his rival, the asymmetric  
face, its genealogy of lunacy, the crazed hair  
and fussy moustache, the lopsided stare,  
the cravat in an erratic knot – so rarely  
are they commemorated, enemies, that his presence  
in the room seems strange, and yet  
Griswold almost certainly lavished his attentions  
more on Poe than any wife or paramour  
or casual bed-warmer – the final scene  
is a composition for his ghoulish ex-friend –  
it's an offering, a gift – the sound of laboured  
breathing, the sealed windows, the insistent heat –

the portraits, shimmering, their unblinking eyes  
fixed on the feverish patient – the wavering  
flames – the walls, shrinking – and Griswold,  
unable even to shift his weight, listening –  
for the clock, for the pendulum slicing air  
with its momentum – Griswold waiting for the rush  
of its passing, waiting for it to stop.

**POE'S CATALINA IN ANOTHER LIFE:  
A NOH POEM**

*'Nothing. Or rather, I was just thinking something very odd.  
I had a feeling that if you and I were to part now, in a hundred years . . .  
probably less than a hundred years, we would meet again.'*  
– Yukio Mishima<sup>1</sup>

Mother said she would've rewritten the eight words,  
legibly, scripted as if for posterity on her own epitaph:  
'Longsuffering fact: early death was never an option.'

She removed her glasses, halved the red Calabria onions  
with a cleaver – one clean, crisp stroke. Then dropped  
a sweet onion and three scallions on the cutting board.

The onion rolling off, as if to quickly hide. Or run away.  
Into the ginger basket, mosaic floor of starfish patterns.  
The garlic, small and single cloves, left whole. Unpeeled.

These she smashed with the broad side. Swift, thick thud.  
Then popped two pieces into her mouth. To suck on.  
There was no bread on the table. Only crust and crumbs.

Clung to her mackerel tabby by its unusually thick coat.  
The other housecat was a mixed feral, had the sad eyes  
of a Persian. But blue like a Siamese, intense like Nansen.

Nansen, the Belgica's ship cat. The Antarctic its home  
and burial ground. Columbarium too, the aurora lights  
spreading across the sky like an ice sheet. Orange rain.

There was a new red in Gorky's *Agony*, a raw crimson.  
The russet deepening into a Bulgarian rose, a larger storm.  
In the eye of it, like us in Galway, outside our patisserie.

Even here, Mother organized her day in minutiae.  
According to tradition, our iemoto was part-Japanese.  
We had Portuguese in us too, and Dutch and Korean.

And from Mother's side, Khmer, English, and Burmese.  
This was not a gross sentimentality but rather, memory.  
An openness of spirit – something of an enduring gift.

Our Nansen liked to jump off the roof, and lay on his side.  
As if he died, just as quickly as he fell, plush on all fours.  
As if he needed to rehearse his own dying, and waking.

Mother called him Konstantin, not straight from Chekhov.  
But from Philip Roth's *The Humbling*, its final scene  
where Simon Axler left his confession. Its eight words.

I wanted my childhood to last. Beyond its middle years.  
Even into platitude, just so the work of the imagined  
would endure, hold out like the radio's morning songs.

Beyond Mother's hangover, her shot glass from the war.  
Used as a sake cup. Beyond the tokkuri in warm water.  
Filled with anything. Gin, soju, vodka. Even fruit brandy.

The red in Gorky's *Agony* grew bolder, orb of the sun.  
Heavy, large like our lacquer table, as Nansen appeared.  
Wet fur, cold. Mother lifting him, to sleep by her side.

<sup>1</sup> *The epigraph is a line of dialogue excerpted from the Noh play, Sotoba Komachi, written by Yukio Mishima.*

## THE BUS STATION OF FALSE NAMES

Even the gauchos aren't gauchos any more  
except when they're drunk. Rest of the time,  
they're boviculture associates who, sure, ride  
on horseback and lasso things. I'm thinking of  
getting the cattle and gauchos on the same page.  
Let's talk about beef, compadritos. Let's talk  
to the knife smiling sidelong from eagle  
to feedlot. Fur softens the face. This is  
women we're talking about. Remember *women*?  
Like cows only not. Lovelier. Steers write sonnets.  
O Sun & Mud! O imaginary girlfriend named something  
like Melanoma! We are tiny as a spermatozoon  
on the ovum of the world. Remember when  
you cut off the balls? There's a poem in that.

\*

Here in the bus station of false names  
the gaucho sits and trembles his bad ball.  
Women settle like birds on a wire. He murmurs  
his line – something about heaven? an angel? . . .  
where she's fallen from? . . . The tour guide leads  
his followers to the house where the mass-murderer lived,  
quite openly. And a volcano in a neighboring country is  
an 'invasion of extraterrestrials.' You're at risk  
without face-masks, protective eyewear; you never  
wanted that ash on your skin. The monitor  
cannot be relied upon, the amp'd summons  
too loud to hear. When the rest stand,  
stand; they're going where you're going;  
shuffle after them into the yard.

\*

The bus station smells of insecticide.  
I am speaking on my nose's behalf.  
The leaf-cutter ants go their way, and I  
dainty, mine, in my private dimension.  
Dressage to save an ant's life! Does this gaucho  
deserve beatification, or what? In the ant's book

they reckon I'm eternal. Seriously, folks, smell  
my shoes. The insoles are corpses. Ask  
any mutt. Wasn't it Gaucho who declared  
he wouldn't join the club that would have him  
as a member? Wind, whistle  
my mount home. Ant, teach me  
what the dog's been refusing to wag; maybe  
one green leaf is proof; maybe.

## TORNADO WATCH DURING SOAP OPERA AT MIDDAY IN SPRING

The sodden earth  
Beyond the screen  
Is still, quiet,  
Save for the odd chirp  
Slipping from a worried bird  
Or droplet dripping down  
From the tip of a thin, trembling  
Branch, black with wetness.  
Nobody move.

The serious beauties in the box,  
Preoccupied, glare at one another,  
Pleading or slashing with the eyes  
While the brutal god-column  
Weighs descending.

Tyler, Tyler, why?  
We thought that you were dead.  
When Jessica discovered the lie,  
No amount of tears,  
Delivered even intravenously,  
Could've kept that car  
Apart from the waiting riverbed.

From beyond the trees, a rumbling,  
Perhaps imagined, though likely real.

When she left her brood to be with him,  
He turned into a shrinking yacht,  
Dwindling down to a little black dot,  
And disappeared into the sun  
With someone else  
Inside of him.

The sky has turned to nauseous lead;  
The trees can hardly hold it up.  
All the little houses are trying to be good.  
Cicadas, having ceased to wail,  
Have absorbed themselves in prayer.

The power goes out.  
Valerie vanishes.  
In the stillness outside,  
The fist above the crushing sky  
Calmly cracks its knuckles,  
Mulling.

## INDIAN SUMMER

backyard stadium day/night cricket  
slipper boundary wall/chalk wicket  
Saurav Sachin Rahul Laxman  
(brother neighbour sister cousin)  
airborne missile windshield danger  
falling rocket injured stranger  
broken window screamer aunty  
helter skelter players scanty  
hasty dialling mummy hotline  
safety harbour watchful feline  
scooby papad dal-rice lunching  
grandma chasing second helping  
four-foot athletes sunstroke braving  
second innings icecream craving  
lengthy shadows umpire mummy  
final whistle embrace tummy  
sweaty clinging towel saree  
temple journey clutching rupee  
bribing goddess filing motion  
yearlong summer ideal notion  
bedtime ghostcheck kisses plenty  
awoke six-foot overnight twenty

## THE PHOTOGRAPH IN AUSTRALIA

*'Perhaps the plum will flourish  
on this soil, like the white plum  
in our yard, and transplanted. . .'*

– *'Plum Blossom or Quong Tart at the QVB'*, Boey Kim Cheng

So many dead people at the art gallery –  
all the faces in the photographs: dead,  
dead. Sepia, black-and-white, silver gelatin,  
albumen, platinum: dead, dead.

I sit on a bench and try to breathe.  
I am alive, and this is my breath.  
In Goulburn, they struck gold:  
the Chinese miner posed and captured.

A Southern face, sorrowful and distant,  
eyes dark and distrustful. In another print,  
a blurry shape of a man with a pole across  
his shoulders, a basket dangling from either end.

What did he carry? Where had he come from?  
Where was he going? Questions fall like wet leaves.

## THE KOREAN GRANDFATHER

Rinsed by the wind the moon  
stands straight-backed on the barley stalks.  
The farmer sits within his pipe  
at the dark edge of his field  
one hand cold with earth.

The moonlight is caught high  
in the pine trees  
and packed between the spaces in the barley.

From the pine grove the wind comes  
like a white owl  
and sweeps the tide of grass  
around the farmer's knees.

His eyes linger on the barley husks.

He moves his pipe aside  
and smoke  
walking resurrected from his mouth  
rises around his mud-caked roof.

## COUNCILLORS RELOCATE THE WITHERING

councillors relocate the withering southern  
display the

forego otherworldly vertebrates areolas  
maturity of thighs and

generous polaroids  
create absent joy

signify the birth  
of sameness and sexuality  
under this corrugated roof  
frisked by whooping cough

in early  
childhood

a comedian mortifies  
systems of the brow  
a thousand kings  
provide ancestral commentary

was that today?  
the day that was

high generalist maliciousness  
niece  
a lowly genius or secluded

the non-determinate sibling  
advertises cars and glory

court dates  
notoriously remodelled

seems that dockside we are fireproof  
humidity  
in ferocious

but what about here  
seclusion couches counted

once  
remembered

every singer wedged maternally in markets  
all your names replaced by numbers  
with the arrival of the walking stick  
the malformed femur grandstands  
counterrevolution

## SOAR: STRING THAT HOLDS THE SKY

The bird dips and soars, unseasonally.  
No string holds it, no small boy mechanism.  
It has unobstructed views of the spring terrain,  
of North Waziristan – rock spattered with the bitter  
greens that grow in this part of the world.  
These are added to a stew of goat,  
the leaves wrap staples of whey curd.  
The bird is not in the business of ethnic food porn,  
winged poetries, canons of flight.  
It is interested in sky segmentation, target and discharge;  
guided towards movements, shadows,  
shapes that cannot be caged or catalogued.  
Of vegetables, a grandmother who has known  
her seasons of soaring and stillness knows a great deal.  
Midwifery is her profession, okra her speciality.  
She steps confidently into the field of summer  
with her grandchildren, 67 years of experience  
under her belt. The crop is abundant, reason to celebrate.  
The sky is blue, birds soar. Momina, Momina Bibi!

Her son Rafiq, a school teacher, her first pearl, and her two  
pearlers, grandchildren Zubair and Nabila,  
testify at an American congressional hearing.  
The concierge at the hotel insists on ironing  
their collars, their papers. The granddaughter  
steps to the microphone and says:  
*I heard the dum dum noise. This was not a bird.*  
She insists. *Birds are smarter than that.*  
The grandson says: *I prefer cloudy days when the drones don't fly.*  
*When the sky brightens and becomes blue . . .*  
He points to his sister's drawing: a house, a field,  
two birds, three figures, the great mountain rising up.  
The son says: *In Urdu we have a saying:*  
*aik lari main pro kay rakhna*  
(the string that holds the pearls together).  
The string is broken. The mountain holds  
a confusion of song.

*Rafiq ur Rehman, a Pakistani primary school teacher who appeared on Capitol Hill with his children, Zubair, 13, and Nabila, 9, described his mother, Momina Bibi, as the 'string that held our family together'. His two children, gathering okra with their grandmother the day she was killed, were injured in the attack that took place on 24 October, 2012. Their harrowing accounts marked the first time Congress had ever heard from civilian victims of an alleged US drone strike.*

## **JAMES AND JAMES**

James and James, inseparable  
stalk about, sleep  
on a bare mattress  
wake, on a bare mattress

walk by the window  
smoke, talk by the window  
talk the same talk,  
stalk about, stalk after  
James, after James

through the wall I can hear  
James and James  
talk, sleep, and the silence

sleep through the morning  
wake, open a vein  
of Fruitylexia, goon, James

is at the door,  
offers me goon, stalks  
by the window,  
smokes, and talks

spirits, James and James  
were narrow-bodied  
Kooris, boys

James and James  
were marred on a bare  
mattress, James and  
James were marred  
in a church, by a man

## LISTENING TO GLASS

Strange voicings sang a melody at the end  
Of the street – *Sleepers Wake!* – a Parisian's hand

Ran lightly over goblet lips and played  
A sound like one I'd heard at Easter, made

By handbells, but the glasses breathed below  
Each sound, the streak of his touch a glance of snow.

He blew the glass himself for certain tones,  
Shaping them in a fire. How he tunes

A ball of molten glass to anything  
And phrases Bach cantata or simple song

Left like a ghost to be plucked out of the air  
And memory stuns me. I'd heard glass before:

One night at dinner, my high school girlfriend's father  
Played a note, tracing his wetted finger

Around the rim of her mother Kathy's crystal.  
The index he would use to fire the pistol

In two months time, his body icing dead  
At the foot of his own father's grave, a bed

Of new year snow. If the gun's report  
Felled icicles, I'd hoped they spiked his heart –

Indignant, though he wasn't even mine  
To feel abandoned by. I was no one

Worthy to damn him however vexed I felt.  
Unhappy in our skins, our ghosts want out.

It wouldn't be long until I grabbed a knife  
And considered stitching myself a new French cuff.

I thought he was a coward, but might have followed.  
I think the unforgiving will not be harrowed.

Karen and I once came to Paris, dazed  
By jet lag and Notre Dame. Its rose window blazed

Silently to the stone. All of that glass  
Could melt into an orchestra and surpass

Cathedral bells for serenading heaven.  
A breath, the street musician's waves enliven  
From reverie to Slavonic dance. The rise  
A chromatic flourish, then, at least, a pause.  
I can't recall the note Ken played that night  
Or say if resolution would make it right.  
But I keep listening for a place where  
The glass vibrations still hum in the air.

## SHOOTER

*Halloween, 2012. Detroit, Michigan.*

There are things I don't know,  
can't know, and maybe don't want to,  
including what a man's teeth look like  
through a rifle's magnifying scope. Tonight,  
a frightened anchor on the radio reports  
*a gunman stalking Interstate 96 firing  
into backseats, windshields, drivers  
behaving erratically, causing pile-ups.*  
I'm sick of God and his potholes, the many  
small mouths opening relentlessly beneath.  
Tonight, a costumed boy with ketchup-  
colored wounds pressed in his gut will ring  
my doorbell, hands held out, expecting  
something sweet. The truth: all I want  
is to sit on the living room couch  
with my mother, my father, and not  
imagine them as ghosts. To hold  
the teacup handle of my lover's wrist  
and not to feel for fractures. O eye  
on the highway, muzzled median, bullet  
meant for my seat – I, too, have sought  
to slow the snaking blur that passes  
every afternoon. To cradle something  
cold against my chest and feel  
the judder as it kicks from my grasp, away.  
When I think of you, I imagine just barely  
escaping. Your index finger leads  
my car's bald tyres. Maybe this is love: not  
pulling the trigger. Maybe no one will ever  
know me so completely. Tonight, all I have  
is enough to feel grateful for: my parents  
in their bodies, my lover in hers. A parade  
of costumed children bravely trying on  
their deaths. The boy at my door  
smiling, those teeth –

## OCEANIC BAPTISM

do you know there is a song playing in my head and the fullness of each strum  
fills my mouth till I can't swallow

breathlessness has a beauty

**black tar|horse|harry|homebake|scag**

harry rode his horse  
back and I baked home  
baked itchininess  
hello to the swallow  
tapping at the window  
swallow fucking swallow  
*she's not breathing*

Blue is the colour of lips, finger  
nails, not water. Water is only blue  
because it reflects the colour of the sky      The deeper The water The bluer The

**Oceania has a higher than average drug mortality rate.**

**Nearly four Australians die every day from overdose.**

**If you have additional data which may improve  
the material presented here, please send:**

into the shadows	slumberous
my soul	buoyant
she	baptise
the oceania of my mortality	bless
the limp	body

**International Overdose Awareness Day  
Picnic fundraiser. Bring a basket of food.  
Wear white to symbolise the forgiveness  
you offer to your loved one,  
with us or with us in our hearts.**

come with me i'll row to the breech disarm hostility welcome vulnerability  
*Poppy, move, Poppy* Jesus it's big these changing seasons me the childbride my  
ribs my strength alone heaven my lemon world mePoppy mePoppy i am not  
small my heart not wrong welcome.home.daughter.

## NAVIGATION

A blind woman is being taught to use a cane  
by a carer taught to conjure up total darkness  
and translate it into imagined geometry.

She's newly blind perhaps through illness or mishap  
or having crossed a line from partial sight  
to the status of object, mere displacement of air.

Is the street completely unfamiliar or newly so,  
turned into a slalom course of jostle and shinbark,  
or a field of unknown depth that needs sounding?

For a sighted person, it is like trying to remember  
a child's unnameable world of unknowing.  
You can shut your eyes in a parody of empathy

knowing you can open them on what was there before  
and feel ashamed of taking for granted  
a fragile, fallible thing, so easily tricked

by a magician's patter and business. You look  
at the buildings opposite, a forest of shapes:  
torches, wafer-biscuits, giant cell-phones,

all standing on end, with a gap in the middle,  
half-obsured, that has to be guessed at:  
a crater hollowed out by a meteorite, more

predictably, an excavation for underground  
parking, a grassed space, a squat old building  
saved and cocooned in new surroundings.

You have a context to guess from. For the blind,  
the visual context is zero, data from the other  
senses, but otherwise, all gap and conjecture.

Out of the corner of your eye that is spreading,  
your optometrist warns, slowly and inexorably  
towards the other corner, are the blurred shapes

of the carer and the blind woman who have edged  
their way to a point between you and your bus-stop.  
You skirt around them, aiming a nod and a smile  
at the carer, then, inexplicably, at the blind woman,  
as if a smile could send vibrations through the air,  
perceptible to a sixth sense called in to replace  
the one lost, or perhaps just a wasted gesture  
of fellow-feeling, drifting off into the dark  
for the pure relief and pleasure of the giver.

## BLOOD AND BONE

When she was three and understood exactly  
that the cosmos radiated out from her  
plump, snug, milky body  
like a merciless wheel with her as its turning hub,  
my daughter drew me as a black outline, speckled  
with blood and bone. As if that's what  
I was: blood and bone, a heart spilling  
a pulsating red love threading  
my body, binding me  
for her, as if my sinews and tendons hadn't  
already stretched and slackened  
from her ceaseless pull, scattering my limbs.  
With a face that smiled all the time,  
the crescent of my mouth rising  
over the red horizon of my blood,  
as if my mouth hadn't been yanked  
from its natural orbit, as if I didn't sob  
in the midst of carefully spooning white yoghurt into the black hole  
of her mouth, the way a priestess must spill her own spirit  
to feed the soul of her suckling god.  
And my bones, long, strong and white, unrelated  
to my actual skeleton, as if a kind of purity  
supported this labour, a rare kind of steel my daughter's body mined  
deep within my body, as if love riveted this steel  
like a secret plate within the breaking crust of me,  
pushed my broken legs as I pushed her,  
held my shattered arms as I held her  
gave me the strength to swing the rising sun of her laughter  
higher and higher. Up towards her siblings,  
burning stars whose luminous plasma of need  
melts everything they touch until it loses  
the form it once had, the way I have lost  
the form of my self,  
become unpolluted substance;  
a once neat-breasted woman who leapt  
into the swollen, molten river of life.  
In the centre of me my daughter drew  
a vast space, as if she could see I too had once been  
a swirling, astonishing, bright coloured nebula  
seeded with longing. And as I stared at her

drawing, I felt only comfort:  
my devoured selfhood  
my denuded soul  
my excoriated elements, slick with her saliva  
my hard, indissoluble  
blood-red love and bone-white surrender.

## TRAMPOLINING

It was more that the air sucked me up  
drew me like a giant breath  
as if the sky were bellows  
not the power of my knees and feet at all  
pushing against the black netting  
and springing lithe into the live nothing  
I didn't feel it at all  
the push and bend  
recoil release  
no effort of foot-fall at all  
as daylight also fell  
fell away and behind  
and the blackness below me  
grew out around me  
in an enlarging embrace  
I was weather-creator  
wind-chaser  
cloud-racer  
bringer-on of dusk  
and night falling  
falling away  
and every down fuelled my up  
and brought about my down  
in an easy to and fro  
a pendulum a battery  
some exercise in Newtonian physics  
My body all motion  
all pounce  
all downbeat  
a conductor and baton both  
waving music into air  
with flailing arms and flying  
I was the universe  
breathing in and out  
and later in bed  
in the same pyjamas  
my face still red  
and my heart  
keeping its *scherzo* metronome  
eyes now closed  
my body still reeled  
in the stars.

## I'VE PRACTICED YOU INTO EXISTENCE

I've practiced you into existence,  
Little by little each day.  
My habits are now coexistent  
With memories of you and your way.

The way you cut your sentences,  
A pattern in my speech.  
The way you sometimes took my hand,  
A gesture as I reach.

When others leave, you come alive.  
Your presence is then clear.  
You move from stomach, chest, to throat,  
And end up in a tear.

## MANJI THE OLD MAN MAD WITH PAINTING

Even a thousand views of the ocean  
are not enough to inundate the heart.  
In each glance light splinters through  
foam each glance sends a new wave  
hurtling against the rocks and even  
mighty Fuji sits subdued on the horizon.

At seventy I am just beginning to understand  
how wind ripples the downy feathers  
how salt dries on silver scale of fish  
how uppermost branches of pine  
grow from green into black how the cricket  
sings lullabies to the rising moon . . .

and at age of one hundred or  
one hundred and ten how many more  
hows I will know as the moist earth  
paints itself in me as I feel  
a flock of clouds forming behind my eyes  
as I feel the beating of a thousand  
insect lives clanging of temple bells  
become the flung grey stone that  
creases the forest pond as (yes!)  
I feel the bamboo growing within me  
as I am the connection between  
farmer and the bull he takes to market  
the fisherman and his straining rod  
the hawk and the sun in which it hides.

So seventy years of apprenticeship  
worth it after all worth it to  
become this maker this designer  
this discerner of patterns in  
the crazy skein of things this  
frail man in his tattered bag of skin  
besotted by it all (humorous glint  
of robin's eye stealth of badger  
bee dancing on his own chrysanthemum  
throne smoke drifting in the night  
swooping waterfalls painting the day  
the stepping horse wearing socks of snow).

Drunk with sober elation sketching  
each shade and hue and shadow  
each elusive piece of this breathing hub  
this pulsing creation.

## YES

I will marry you, monument,  
with your stepped gables. And you,  
dark green canal, all *gracht*,  
you grave to rusty wheels. I will  
ride over your *stoep* and marry you, brown café,  
in a blast of warm *speculaas*  
and my new name, in chairs, will spill  
across the cobbles.

I will find my newlywed eyes  
by squeaking holes with a fingertip  
in smoke-yellow panes while they knock  
the top off a *witbier* with a bang  
and a golden spatula. I will, I will;  
be split by the spit in your sawdust,  
I will. I will marry you, my leaky boat  
with cracked shellac on your clinkers  
tarnished rowlocks and a stolen motor,  
half-sunk as you are in riverslime  
– I'll bring you back to surface.

One by one, I will marry all of you, slim poplars  
who rustle your white leaves at me as I pass.  
I will marry you, seconds, ticking away in my spokes,  
and the same day commit adultery with this sky  
made of rolled cornflowers. I will marry  
you, Dom *klokkentoren* and all your many bells  
who spike the air with wind-up arpeggios  
in dollhouse clangs from across these fields, and

I will marry this whiff of fresh manure, twice, three times over  
and the grass: yes,  
the wet grass  
where I let go my handlebars,  
at this moment,  
where you plant  
your kiss

## AFTER MOWING THE Paddock

My neighbour's sons are running in the summer rain  
with just their shoes on, sweeping their jelly-bean bodies  
through the crisp-cut stubble.  
Through the house, I call to my husband  
and we step onto the verandah as if we have just come out  
to enjoy the rain – how warm it is, how in the sun it glistens.  
Through the shrubs and trees of our garden,  
we see the boys' small figures dart like beams  
their father guides with his fingers. He is also in the field  
and appears to be working, pulling bracken  
from the barbed wire of his fence.

Something young in us  
unfolds from where it has hunched  
in the margins of our bodies. And we do not run  
and our chests and our backs are covered, but I slide  
at least my arms into the rain, and my feet, bare  
on the wooden deck, pretend to sting with the crush of stems,  
pinpricks of yellow rain making it real.  
The sky seeps into us with the quiet force of its shimmer.  
And we lean into a ripple of time we didn't have,  
the sun catching the cry, one boy to the other: 'Don't  
let it kiss you!' Their shoes slapping the ground.

We nudge each other's hands, the touch a rain-  
coloured flower. He smiles, curls a finger round my own.  
And we stutter back inside, returning to whatever it was  
we had given the day to before the sun's rain and the boys'  
summer romping pulled us to that flimsy place where  
nothing is to be done but breathe – breathe, though one may hold  
before letting go; slivers of the moment in our bodies.  
We fold the sound of their feet inside our own.  
And the bright-sharp drops rest in our palms. And somewhere  
we are running in yellow fields with the light  
spilling round us – the gleaming rain kissing us  
on the tops of our skulls.

## **SHE CHARTS THE GEOGRAPHY OF LONGING**

Rain.  
The rain at sea.  
The word, *rapture*.  
Moonrise.  
Starlit.  
*Blue-smoking darkness*.  
Its cargo of mysteries.  
Phantasm and sprite.

This lonesome apartment.  
This night-long sleepwalk.  
How we wake in separate rooms.

This haunt of hinterland.  
This homesickness.  
This thudding.  
Its roaring, rushing sound.  
The texture of his hair.  
Of hand on heart.  
An echo of satellite song.  
Of siren speech.

This unbroken code.  
This all-or-nothing.  
Our thoughts at half-mast.

Of when to settle.  
Of when to quit.  
Of overworld and underworld.  
Field and fallow.  
Dog-bark.  
Bee-hum.  
Slow work.  
Each wing-made murmur.

A host of sparrows in the bushes.  
A qualm infusing this dark hour.  
A holy well, its heft of coins.

Misfortune instead of miracle.  
Lost instead of left.  
Weight of unspoken words.  
Of windborne memory.  
Spirit-wild.  
Soul-storm.  
Ardent holler.  
Our bodies break too readily.

*Notes: This poem's title is taken from 'A woman of the fields (revisit)' by Peter Fallon (Strong, my love, The Gallery Press, Loughcrew, 2014). 'Blue-smoking darkness' is from 'Bavarian gentians' by DH Lawrence.*

## **ON THE ROAD'S SHOULDER AT REIKORANGI**

We went looking for a valley – a house  
with smoke rising from a chimney.  
We sat in the car watching smoke  
disappear into a blue sky, and we imagined ourselves there  
in the kitchen – you snapping beans  
into a colander, and I stoking the fire.  
Both of us have chopped wood.  
Both of us have had similar times in our lives  
where we lived in such a house.  
Separately we lived, over time and distance  
with other loves.

## TEARS IN THE RAIN. . . ALL THOSE MOMENTS WILL BE GONE

*After Rutger Hauer*

This rain between us. This daily toast  
and tea, this night whisper, this same greeting,  
these oblique sounds in the shower,  
these carriages of comfort,  
  
these tracks with the third rail –  
you know we really will be gone.  
I look up at you higher always,  
your back against the pillow,  
  
your blue/grey eyes swimming down –  
you know this really will be gone.  
And it does not seem factual  
this warmth of your chest, my ear has searched out  
  
for over fifteen years – you really will be gone.  
The birds will be there, the sparrows  
in the cabbage tree outside the window.  
The nights we watch them nesting,  
  
the nights we watch their little lives  
rejoicing. And you draw the curtain long after dusk  
and we think of them out there quiet  
while we are batted and softly blared  
  
by the TV. And I wonder if they see us  
slightly propped, nestled ourselves  
and bathed – the warm manikins in the bed  
each night in the same positions,  
  
bending and folding, lying so still and warm  
and watching versions of ourselves  
on a screen that makes no sense to them  
trilling with their little hearts and our hearts,  
  
and I turn to you remembering the falling rain  
and a dove released at the top of a building,  
the blond actor and all his memories  
released with him, *tears in the rain* . . .  
  
and I marvel, we really will be gone.

## SUSPENDED BELIEF

*'What emerges from urban pixelation is the greyest  
of mysteries, furtive glance down an original sidestreet.'*  
– James Stuart, 'Guangdong Sidewalk'

(vision in a Guangzhou wet market)  
Discontinuous schedule:  
your skeuomorphic watch relics itself,  
winds back nothing  
weaponises everything.  
Live chickens calling from cages  
like a chorus in a tragedy.  
Your great grandmother's cleaver wiped clean  
after cutting a neck in her apartment kitchen.

(curriculum vitae)  
Banyan trees with limbs  
crosshatching whole apartment blocks,  
the sky's sketched edges  
rapidly darkening,  
and a day already  
performance reviewing itself,  
with birds retrospectively true  
just perching there in point form.

(spring meditation on Du Fu's autumn meditation number eight)  
Two immortal companions share a Mercedes  
as evening approaches Shanghai.  
And when their vehicle passes Yuyuan gardens  
shadows float over rebuilt walls  
causing vendors to look up with concern.  
Surely you sense these two even now, don't you,  
when the lights on Weihai Road flicker?  
Stay calm. Predict a surplus. Everything is gain.

(Deutero-systematic perception)  
At a traffic crossing  
in the French concession  
a peripheral injunction arrives,  
spirit-whispered like the oral law.  
But you can only half-hear it  
over the world's constant notifications,  
those angel-servants delivering winds  
when trucks flash past.

(incarnate suburb)  
The quarried stone body of the city  
is not your body, for the paths  
of Beijing's citizens are beyond  
tracing out. You remember  
being younger, learning about China  
from a returned church missionary,  
copying his measured facts onto a piece of white  
cardboard, reading the country back into yourself.

## CENTRAL TO KATOOMBA

On the train you trace the city's scars,  
seams stitched tight in grey.  
Nothing gleams beneath the particle-waste  
of high density living,  
not the inbound track or station facades,  
or the rain-scribed windows  
that reflect your constraint.

Past the heart of the city  
there's colour in graffiti on the overpasses,  
underpasses, gaudy flowers beyond the gates  
of a graveyard lost to grass,  
trackside vines that rear and spill  
like inland waves but there's still restraint,  
a desperation in this claiming of space.

Even towards the mountains' base,  
where borders spread like ageing waists,  
people remain bound by structure  
so wait for the train to throw its shoulder to the climb  
and for the bush to assert its stake:  
gum leaves will glint in the lowering sun  
as bracken unfurls its fiddleheads beneath them.  
This is the just the start of your escape;  
when land exhausts its pursuit of sky,  
when valleys articulate your relative height  
and the convictions of the escarpments steal your breath  
you'll realise the scale of your release.

## PAINTING IN THIRUVANAMALLAI

The trees here lift  
in long strokes, faded blues and browns.  
Everything rising.

I wish I knew the names  
of the birds. You are never so curious  
about this smaller life around us.

You ignore the world  
so I have to learn it for you.  
That's how we reconcile. In America we took walks

long past midnight, when  
common ivy and pine  
seemed alien, creeping botanicals in my periphery.

The streetlights were muzzy  
yellow beacons, the road  
a series of dots we connected, waiting for an image to emerge.

Here, I spot a crocus  
and am relieved – a familiar shape.  
It bridges my Easter Sundays with this day, a wet India of red clay

Shifting palms.  
I wish I knew  
the names of the birds. A man uses a rock  
to hammer other rocks  
into the earth,  
folding it back into itself, a pleated terrain.

Life arranges itself  
and anybody who says otherwise.  
Pebbles are lifting. Trees lifting. I can only describe it as the feeling of waking  
and seeing light  
and knowing it is the dawn.  
It is that kind of light  
that can only mean the dawn.

## QUIET PIECES OF THE WORLD

*Walking the Overland Track, Tasmania*

I

We set out, climbing towards the tight lid of clouds,  
our whole week hanging from our collarbones.  
This land casts at our feet its indifference to time,  
unfurling like an old carpet, ragged and enormous.  
We are superimposed here, stepping into an epic,  
trees glowing in wet light, the sky flat as an ironed sheet.  
Everything is so magnificent it feels ridiculous, like words  
in the mouth of Dorothy Parker. This is beauty beyond  
necessity, the way it usually is, but on its own terms,  
the golden mean redundant and symmetry just a neat idea.

For seven days we will walk, each carrying our own burden  
of what we think we need, our sweat and aching joints.  
We tread the silvered vertebrae of the track  
one foot after the other, learning the bleakness  
of repetition. The sky drops on our heads,  
fog enfolding us in silence and cold. Ahead,  
I watch my lover's shape dissolve then reappear  
fiercer than ever, like love over time. I draw endurance  
from my aquifer and keep on through this weather  
that has nowhere better to be, striding among  
these clouds that cap the world, my hair netting sky.

II

The light falls wildly over everything  
and I can't decide if we're pilgrims or vagrants.  
Newly attuned to the tension of my body's wires,  
shy tendons and muscles introduce themselves  
and I'm sure I've discovered a new species of thirst.

I walk weighted under a stranger's BMI,  
hips and knees moaning with compression.  
So pilgrimage feels right, this desire to kneel,  
to buckle under the weight of suburban sin  
we've lugged with us into the wild.

But what is our sacrifice? The further we walk  
the beautiful machines of our bodies rub away  
their rust and as our feet roll the earth  
beneath them, step by step, the load eases  
on our minds and the spaces between our bones.

We are not asking for redemption. This is no  
forty-day plan with a devil and a mountaintop.  
This is just pure desire for quiet pieces of the world,  
to touch something ancient and leave  
only wonder and the barest fingerprint.

What seemed necessary is sloughing away,  
like the growth of tree rings in swift reverse. Now,  
needing no more than what the curve of our ribs can hold  
we make camp, vagrant pilgrims settled in our skins  
as the dark falls wildly over everything.

## DRIVING ALONG GORGE ROAD

our car huddles  
between rock wall and river –  
the one I grew up beside  
down on the plains

we wind around sharp bends  
I see my young face  
pressed to the window  
a dry country girl  
thrilled with the flowing creek  
trees leaning over

here it is like the England of my story books  
tangled European ashes  
sprout the bright green  
of a 50s childhood  
onion weed with snowdrop flowers  
covers TVs, fridges, other rubbish –  
my old father's last drive here  
added a boot-load of rocks

up and up  
now the river is far below  
twists through monuments of rock  
dabbed with the soft greens of gums and native pines  
that didn't appear in my books

we pass precipitous Corkscrew Road  
which dad somehow braved in our FJ  
and Paracombe where we had family picnics –  
like R & R from the struggles of life –  
in a clearing next to a creek full of brambles  
a weedy tennis court –  
after collecting buckets of blackberries  
along a narrow road lined with families picking

at the top of the range  
the river is almost back in England again  
curving sedately through grassy hills  
scattered with big old gums  
refugees from the past

we're looking for a place to stop –  
the climax of those childhood drives  
with everyone pointing out their preferred spots –  
as we pull on to a side road  
scramble over a barbed wire fence  
carry our picnic to a grandfather gum  
next to water splashing over low rocks  
it's hard to know what time or story I'm in

## THE DEEP

Crossing the bar from river to open ocean  
had become a metaphor we'd devised  
for separation, for moving on, so we learned  
to navigate by intuition, finding ourselves  
together and alone beyond sight of land,  
where distance and direction are defined  
by closure, where distinctions can be made  
between the photic and abyssal zones,  
the layers of light and dark so profound,  
our faith in the healing nature of extremes  
was restored as we set out to fathom, from  
behind the pressure-withstanding glass  
of the bathysphere imagination pilots out  
to gleam below the Gulf Stream's  
running boards, the depth of field  
where the world record for a dive, under-  
taken on one breath, was broken then reset  
when the diver died of a hemorrhage,  
having seen the portal of her entry-wound  
begin to close, and surfaced too fast, trying  
to reopen it, and knowing this we continued  
to where creatures, seeding bioluminescence,  
were not enough to keep us from the signal  
stations of remorse, the way-points of grief,  
to where a marker buoy, like a watercolour  
moon tethered loosely on a line, was tending  
to its reflection like a woman with her face  
in her hands, and as two stars in the Jewel  
Box cluster slipped their moorings, we said  
things the wind ripped away until, drifting  
between a cormorant rookery like a grand-  
stand tiered with crosses and a fata morgana  
that burned the horizon down, we considered  
a cautionary stay of exclusion, but when  
you leave what you've known and held fast to  
for years, routine makes a charcoal rubbing

from desire and hurt, so we removed  
our clothes and looked down through  
implications of blue, getting ready for entry,  
knowing we were about to lose one colour  
of the spectrum every ten metres, then  
we slipped away without a word or gesture  
for goodbye, a dying sun like live coals  
inside a fire opal, past fish like flying crystal  
from a breaking chandelier, our rings  
throwing sparks, our optical colour-wheels  
depleted as we neared fatal levels  
in our oxygen, to surface under a sky  
blowing over like ash, like a signatory on  
love's testament and will, made permanent  
and formal where acceptance moves  
apace with a migrant shelving of the sea.

## ODE TO AUDUBON

One African elephant every twenty  
minutes cleaves her ebbing consciousness  
to space and time tusks and slaughter and  
trophies: carved statuettes  
from a son's or a daughter's mangled  
face. Her dying thoughts push forward and away  
from beginnings to reminiscences  
spread out drying bleached in the sun.  
Grass and languorous sweep across plains in the sky. Some sleep  
on the wing hearing nothing each  
eye devoted to one-half a brain. Blasted some  
suddenly drop to shore:  
bodies gutted stuffed stitched posed: stick  
wire and glue for the naturalist's art.  
Shake out your Black Hills gold. Hold my scallop skull  
in your hands kiss *the empty*  
the nasal bridge the hollows of my eyes rub the bone bulge  
back of my head between the meat  
of your palms. Wrap the rest of me in the Indian blanket the one  
on which you were conceived. With the curved bones  
of my thighs my tibia my fibula the largest  
fillets of my body fashion a cross. Above me  
twist socket ends into silted soil. The wind's  
come up for winter. The grass is  
bowed and gone.

## THE YIELD

Despite the silver label braceletting  
that slender limb, that's no Belle de Boskoop.  
It's come out different, come out all itself,  
whatever itself is, proud to bear  
boughs freighted, not with yellow apples, blushed,  
but with fine stripes of russet, lemon, lime.  
Tart and crisp, delicious. Mystifying.  
But not the first surprise it's sprung on me.  
The first surprise was simply that it lived,  
that dehydrated sapling, just a stick,  
uprooted from a silt-fed infancy,  
rejected from re-designated soil.  
I heeled it in and watered it, more from  
courtesy than hope. Then I forgot it.

Earth rolled us slowly out of darkness. Buds  
swelled. A cloud of blossom flared. Soon bees  
zizzed back and forth, danced loop-de-loops. It had  
pulled through, albeit crooked, not ideal.  
Inadequately staked, it had developed  
a lean, the whole tree on an angle,  
as if surrendering in deference  
to persistent pressure, as if leaned upon,  
giving in or giving up to what prevails,  
what pushes, presses – louder, stronger, most  
insistently. Forced to a stiffened warp,  
its thwarted stoop sad manifesto  
for survival: appeasement, resignation,  
a growing into being out of whack.

Or see the tree withstanding: letting go  
to put out arms, become a fruitful crux,  
unshackled by the piece of tin that calls  
it Belle. It's come out in commitment to  
the quest for light, and this has shaped it, fired  
it upwards; this has driven down the roots  
to grasp the unfamiliar clay. Criss-crossed  
constantly by stars and worms, so bonded  
to this place and bending to it, as ice  
melts in its season, streams away. It's ridden  
home by riding its own pliant power.  
It's found its truest way to skew. And now  
the triumph of this quietly blazing show.  
It yields and from the yield all flows.

## IF I SPEAK FROM UNDER THE EARTH

I speak from under the earth, the desert a red beast over me. History is layers of time on my voice; broken sand, dust air and cloud blur. The sky pushes into me until the life I had before this moment dries up, gone on hot wind. I remember when I didn't know the desert was owned; spoken for. I was young then – earnest. Travellers still stumble over, and in, call it empty, choose not to see beings in every rock, every hill. *Can you see it?* The shape of the mountains there – they say it's the ancestors walking, making the stories. I know now that the people are sick – see that crying country! I hear them call. Cattle trample the waterhole – edges falling in and the camels afraid to reach their long necks to green water. *Listen!* The birds are silent at the rockhole, the dingo, thin like a hopeful shadow, presses soft steps on the ground, its body yellow as sand. The air waits; rising smoke folds in a white line from the creek bed. I wait also, my day follows the passing clouds; the sun. The shape of my body lying in the sand makes valleys for the colonies of ants. Mica specks shine on my skin, this is the moment I love, the desert is warm on me; the day slow, I sleep. When I wake, the cold creeps through the sand from ground water deep below. The night a black blanket I can't find the edge of, the dingoes call loneliness in the dark, they cry like they are hurting and I shiver knowing people die here. The mopoke calls late and distant from across the hills. *Can you feel it?* I must speak from under the earth to be heard, with a voice no longer mine. The desert is its own animal, alone and desperate. *Enough* it snarls, barely glancing at me as it performs its night ritual. The stars save me, their distant glowing buzz a thick light like white paint splitting the sky. My night dreams wander, here I see the stories, the land maps that roll across the country, and it is a comfort.

*From the verse novel Journey to Piltadi – the story of Bertha Strehlow's survival and endurance in the desert.*

## CRAB HUNTING AT MENAI

You're fascinated, watch as I lower  
the line with its lump of snot-coloured  
limpet into the white-wine water  
swirling around the dock

until it settles on the bottom  
and the line goes slack. Here,  
among the swaying weeds  
and the shifting grains of sand

is what we've come for, though  
you can only imagine it from pictures  
and those tiny translucent  
scuttlers we've seen on the beach

hurrying from rock to rock.  
I pull in the bait and it bumps  
across the sand, stirring  
up grains, small bronze fish

darting out of the weeds to tug  
at the meat for a second and disappear.  
Then, as the limpet begins to climb  
the dock's side, all caverns

and seaworn stone, something  
pulls hard on the line, a grasp  
that will not let go, and I  
haul up a small brown tank,

its feathery mouthparts moving,  
its tiny eyes peeking out from  
under all that armour, one  
freckled, overgrown claw

grimly hanging on to the shrivelled  
remains, and you run, only stopping  
to look back when I lower  
the flailing monster into a bucket

where it struggles to climb up  
the sheer plastic, its awful  
prehistoric graspings rocking  
the whole thing from side to side.

## EEL-TAILED CATFISH

*For Mitchell Michael*

The catfish is a slimy basilisk that evolution has stitched together from fragments of eel & cat.

Its stone-age arrow shaped tail is laced with spiny curtains as if a spectacle is always about to open.

Its fine bones are kitten's claws retracted into its belly or fingernail clippings found in a bread roll.

The catfish is not aware that it swims in water, like we don't rate the experience of walking through air.

Thumbnail-sized eyes opaque as an unpolished lens glow orange in torchlight. They don't love full moons.

The two sets of night lights make them cautious, their bulbous black bodies lie tethered as mines to their fear.

The catfish swims against charged particles that fizz along its flanks like sherbet erupting on a wet tongue.

Water tries to dampen its movement. It has no scales to hamper water's momentum across its eely skin.

The catfish understands that the river's soft current is the lining of a birth canal, and just as strong-muscled.

Its eyes should really be on the end of its chin whiskers like a snail's; its eight barbels feel around with electricity.

The beach berry seeds that drop in the water are black as the eye-stalks of crayfish and are eaten mistakenly.

They've learnt to react to riverbank erosion. So humans throw in dirt: where there's a fallen tree, there's worms.

They stash themselves under the river's rooty embankment in their shadow-skins; bodies that don't want to be found.

In flood they'll try to push up creeks to the mountain's heart to release their eggs. In this way their young will wash down.

At night the catfish scramble at the water's edge; the periscope feelers of crayfish submerge with their vessel as they're eaten.

There are many catfish that have never felt a human's electrically charged heart; we touch them & our fingers snap with static's kiss.

## THE HORSE

How the angels are not ourselves.  
We dress them of course. We change  
the angle of their wings, the whiteness  
of their frocks, but whether they move in us  
or refuse to move . . .  
It is possible they are here  
and we do not notice. There is a horse  
in the field beside our house. The light is low  
and our palms, when we walk to meet her,  
when we touch her, hover on the amber lustre  
of her shoulders. She sways under the warmth of us,  
her large eyes sifting through the mesh  
of the day – our shadows, our footfalls, the small  
breeze, the temperature,  
the closeness of darkness . . .  
In the space of us, in the space  
around us, in the movement we make,  
each moment of it new, we are hopeful, amid  
the much that is familiar. Are they here? The presence  
or absence of angels – how their songs  
dissipate in the slanting gaze of our hunt and we cannot  
guess what we would know of them.  
The horse pushes the softness of her nose  
into our hips and hands  
for the carrot we cannot offer and did not  
think to bring to her, then moves away. Her eyes  
barely return to us and the breeze  
roughens on our cheeks, on our necks . . .  
We believe,  
we want to believe  
in the slight, mystical arrival  
of their wings, the light  
broadening in our skins, even now  
there is no-one  
to refuse to say if it is we  
they have come for.

## SEATED BETWEEN KENSHO AND NUMINOSITY: A SESTINA

*'Comes then the soul into the unmixed light of God.'*

– Meister Eckhart

Dear Silence, this waiting is no less a longing, a deep craving to rid oneself of want and need, how to look past the hours and days, as I read Plotinus and Boehme into the calligraphy, and conversely, jaku metsu, ego erased like light at the onset of night, Symeon's omowanu as elusive, as we walk this hall, this text of meditation rendering itself the object of meditation, bowl of milk like old memory, attended to like the body, each movement vivid, a framed white,

Narcissus finding Echo in his reflection, or a lover's gaze panning the white, sensations and distractions noticed, then given space and a name, each a self inhabited and pronounced, as concrete a koan, an oyster or vanilla orchid, like this foam mandala, maple leaf patterned on thick soup, leek and split pea, and how it disappears to say it is sand, that it should be made to dissolve, like this moment, how I feel feet first, flesh on teak and oak, air well of morning light

as if lit from within, away from rain and thatched house, a Dharmapada light, of desire distilled into a translucent quaver, then nothingness, sheen of white as grounded a solidity, broad plateau of bulrush, heather and water reed, this roof of eyes half-closed, shuttling outer world, forgotten yet present, the self like Qu Yuan in a Hittite chariot, its wheels removed, Ezekiel at the helm, and two Hekhalot mystics through each recitation in clusters, a figural Enoch like

the visions of Hildegard and Mechtild, thin clink of pictures, rough grain like Jan van Ruusbroec's penmanship, each Flemish phrase a boxed psalm, backlit by one verse after another, of the divine and its ineffability, unknowable and yet reached in the inner chambers of the soul, sudden flight, of tongues white as shifting tides, soft waves adrift, ankles and calves like iron shafts, myself but a shell of skin, yet material, hips, thighs, pelvis, stomach, open chest, this

muscling in to let me breathe, slow, deep between detachment and atopy, this love beyond transcendence, Liebesmystik discovering its own smallness like one more Rhineland savant tracing a forefinger across stone and paper, himself stripped of knowledge, clean of gnosis and satori, brow and lips turning white, ashen but warm, his back straight, tailbone riveted, the seat of tarmac, sunlight on stark face, ruminations as ephemeral, as imageless, as formless, as pure and

empty a Deus nudus, as if everything was but nothingness, yet all things and the many pristine somethings reduced to apatheia, Evagrius' own desert, this tranquil island like a reprieve and gateway, to emanate puritas cordis, white zendo blinding, how there was no stage or proscenium, no showcase love like music to bring our story home, its better moments shaped into votive lights, how 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God,' how the true self is negated yet raised beyond and over, abyss and bridge, contemplation, a self no more distinct than this sanzen, an epiphany, its fire and air no more white than the vast country of like minds, peace descending, this room a tour of light.

## MADRONA MUSIC

Before wine and bread became  
    blood and bone, wrung from the fields,  
a language carved into stone,  
wind carried the teachings,  
    birds telescoping the movements  
of tribes to others down-valley,  
sung along dry terrain, the world unmade  
    and remade by sun and rain,  
day bleeding into night into morning.  
Before dreaming became a code,  
    and laws formed in the ritual  
of survival, a map of a map  
of the human animal, and music  
    became a sort of cunning  
skirling through treetops like smoke,  
a boy bent a madrona stick  
    into a bow  
and sang his stories to the fire.



## THE POEM DRINKS ITS OWN LIPS

4,4/3,7,4,2,5,2,5,6,6,4,3,4,5,3,5/7,4,5,4,5,10, 2,3,5,4,6,3,3,5,10,2,4,8,4  
/5,2,3,4,8,4,3,5,9/4,4/2,3,3,4,2,4,1,5,2,9,2,7,4,9,10,2,1,5,2,4,4,6,11,5,  
4,6,5,2,8,3,6,2,7,6,3,2,7,2,4,6,5,3,3,8,6,4,4,4,4,7,3,5,5,2,4,5,4/4,5,2,4,3  
,7,2,2,5,4,2,7,5,3,2,2,8,4,2,7,4,1/7/4,6,3,3,9,2,3,5,7,4,5,2,2,8,4,4,3/7/  
2,4,4,4,5/3,3

next/time

our fingers will be bound  
in black muslin  
making sure  
the pins avoid the nails

cuticle cups  
grown over blank expression  
in our flesh pink enough  
not yet fully penetrated  
by each separate moon

touch is the last disciple  
from the first sensation

this/time

we can put them up  
like a flock of blackbirds  
in blister pack formation  
unfollowed by a light  
is each bird caught  
cent/imetres a/part  
from either perch  
or breeding box  
unable to provide  
either egg or charity  
as each object waits  
for the oversize thumbs  
that will push them  
through the outer shell  
of this inner wall

this image ←  
is just one example  
of an early form of  
writing where tar  
in an upturned head  
is stirred with a

(feather)

true memory  
has its birthdate  
at its death  
forgets what birth is  
to remember what life  
was

↕

nothing  
in this room with wings  
can fly

## UNDER THE UNDER

She says  
look under the under,  
pin your blood  
    to white sheets  
on the clothesline behind a house  
    like sails  
filled with storm clouds –  
The under the under  
    of memory  
holding time still  
    like a mountain lake  
sun on water,  
    breaking silver,  
a simple stone and the ripples  
    it causes  
    and how  
it makes us want to fall –  
but the stone has to sink, and  
the lake returns to bronze water,  
and the man who writes tales  
    of retrieving beauty  
carves wood –  
It's pliability that matters,  
    he says  
    the grain, the softness  
like flesh  
    because  
it has to hold the hinges in place,  
    it has to bend      like truth

# BIOGRAPHIES



## JUDGES

### Longlist Judges

**Subhash Jaireth** was born in India. He spent nine years in Moscow and moved to Canberra in 1986. He has published poetry, fiction and nonfiction in Hindi, Russian and English, including three collections of poetry: *Yashodhara: Six Seasons Without You* (2003), *Unfinished Poems for Your Violin* (1996), and *Golee Lagne Se Pahle* (1994). His book *To Silence: Three Autobiographies* was published in 2011. Two plays adapted from the book were performed at Canberra's Street Theatre in 2012. His novel *After Love* was released in October, 2012.

**Judy Johnson** has published four poetry collections and a verse novel. Her poetry has won the Victorian Premier's Award, the Wesley Michel Wright Prize twice and been shortlisted in the West Australian Premier's Award. Individual poems have won major prizes including the Josephine Ulrick and Val Vallis Poetry Prizes. She has been a judge of the Newcastle Poetry Prize and the Kenneth Slessor NSW Premier's Award.

**Alvin Pang** is a poet, writer, editor and anthologist who has featured in major festivals and publications in Asia, Australia, Europe and America. His writing has been translated into over fifteen languages. A Board Member of the International Poetry Studies Institute and a 2002 Fellow of the Iowa International Writing Program, he also directs The Literary Centre (Singapore), a non-profit intercultural initiative. Named Singapore's Young Artist of the Year for Literature in 2005, he received the Singapore Youth Award for Arts and Culture in 2007. His recent publications include *Tumasik: Contemporary Writing from Singapore; Over there: poems from Singapore and Australia* (co-edited with John Kinsella), and *When the Barbarians Arrive*.

### Head Judge

**Elizabeth Smither** was the 2001–2003 Te Mata Poet Laureate. In 2004 she was awarded an honorary DLitt from the University of Auckland for her contribution to literature and made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit. She received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry in 2008.

'In Smither's poems, the simplest details can be trapdoors to eternity – to "take in life" can be a promise or a threat.'

– *Hugh Roberts, University of California Irvine.*

## POETS

**Jane Adair** (also published as Jane Wampler) lives and works in Colorado. Her poems, nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize and awarded the Poets & Writers magazine Writer's Exchange Award, have appeared in a number of journals including *The Missouri Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Atlanta Review* and *Hanging Loose*.

**Adam Battestilli** lives in the woods outside Detroit. He collects books obsessively, and has a newfound love of birdwatching. He's been reading and writing all his life, and he will, he says, be reading and writing for the rest of it.

**Ann-Marie Blanchard** is originally from Lakesland, NSW. She currently lives in the United States where she is studying her PhD in Fiction at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In 2015, she won the William Harrold Poetry Prize, and in 2014 was awarded 2nd place in the Katherine Susannah Prichard Award for Short Fiction.

**Christopher Breach** was the winner of the Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Awards in 2011 for his novella *The Pink Lloyd!*, and was a finalist in 2014 for the ACU Prize for Literature: 'The Language of Compassion'. He lives in rural Victoria with his wife and two children.

**Lisa Brockwell** lives near Byron Bay with her husband and son. She has been shortlisted for the Newcastle, the Australian Catholic University, and the Montreal International poetry prizes and highly commended in the Bridport Prize. Her first collection, *Earth Girls*, will be published by Pitt Street Poetry in 2016.

**Lachlan Brown** lectures in English and Creative Writing at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. His first book of poetry, *Limited Cities*, was published by Giramondo in 2012 and was highly commended for the Dame Mary Gilmore Award. He is currently working on a manuscript about his Chinese/Australian heritage.

**John Carey** is an ex-teacher of French and Latin and a former part-time actor. The latest of his four collections is *One Lip Smacking* (Picaro Press, 2013).

**Eileen Chong** is a Sydney poet. Her first collection, *Burning Rice*, was shortlisted for the Anne Elder Award 2012, the Australian Arts in Asia Awards 2013 and the Australian Prime Minister's Literary Awards 2013. Her second collection, *Peony*, was published in 2014 by Pitt Street Poetry. Her website is [www.eileenchong.com.au](http://www.eileenchong.com.au)

**Claudia Daventry** has lived and worked in various European cities and moved from Amsterdam to St Andrews where she is now doing a PhD on poetic translation. Recent awards include the Bridport Prize, a Philip Larkin Award and inaugural Ruskin Prize.

**Sarah Day**'s most recent book is *Tempo* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013); it was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and won the University of Melbourne Wesley Michelle Wright Prize. She lives in Hobart where she teaches Year 12 Creative Writing. Her poems have been widely anthologized in Australia and overseas.

**BR Dionysius** was founding Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival. He is the author of four poetry collections, *Fatherlands* (Five Islands Press, 2000), *Bacchanalia* (Interactive Press, 2002), *Bowra* (Whitmore Press, 2013) and *Weranga* (Walleah Press, 2013). He won the 2009 Max Harris Poetry Award and was joint winner of the 2011 Whitmore Press Manuscript Prize.

**Dave Drayton** is the author of *Poetic Pentagons* (Spacecraft Press), *Threnodials* (Prism) and other works. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Technology Sydney, founding member of the Atterton Academy, sauna enthusiast, and 2014 recipient of the Blake Prize for Poetry.

**Hugh Dunkerley** lives in Brighton in the UK, with his wife and young son. His first full length poetry collection, *Hare* (Cinnamon Press), came out in 2010. He is currently working on a new collection about fatherhood. He teaches English and Creative Writing at The University of Chichester.

**Susan Elmslie** lives in Montreal. Her collection, *I, Nadja, and Other Poems* (Brick, 2006), won the A.M. Klein Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the McAuslan, the Pat Lowther, and ReLit awards. Her poems have appeared in journals, anthologies, and in a prize-winning chapbook. She's been a Hawthornden Poetry Fellow.

**Nadia Geeves** was born in Kigali, Rwanda in 1996 to an Australian father and Somali mother. She grew up in Nairobi, Kenya before moving to Australia in 2007. She has completed Year 12, and is planning to study Creative Writing in Adelaide next year.

**Jason Gray** is the author of *Photographing Eden* (Ohio UP, 2009), winner of the Hollis Summers Prize, and two chapbooks. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and elsewhere. He co-edits the online journal, *Unsplendid*.

**Steve Gunther-Murphy** has written poetry since he was twelve years old, inspired by an Irish teacher who introduced him to the world of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman and others. He taught middle school students in a rural village in Korea. His only poetry training, he writes, was a class in Hawaii given by Phyllis Thompson.

**Libby Hart** is the author of *Fresh News from the Arctic* (Anne Elder Award winner and shortlisted for the Mary Gilmore Prize), *This Floating World* (shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and The Age Book of the Year Awards), and *Wild* (shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards).

**Ron Heard** enjoys life in Brisbane among the heat, rain and roof possums. He cares for an adult disabled son and edits *The Mozzie*, an independent poetry magazine that publishes over 400 poems a year. His most recent publication is a verse novel, *The Shadow of Troy*.

**David Hitchcock** was born and raised in upstate New York. For many years he cared for first his dad then his mom, who died in January. Winoing truths from life, he strives to be, in his mom's phrase, 'a rebel for radiance.'

**Cynthia Hughes** is a poet, musician and educator from Vermont. Her poems have been published in literary journals and anthologies in the US and Canada and have received recognition in poetry awards in the US, Ireland, Australia and Canada. She is working on a first collection.

**Perry Janes** is a writer, filmmaker, and Pushcart Prize recipient whose work has appeared in both print and online magazines. In 2013 his short film *Zug* received a silver medal in the AMPAS 40th Annual Student Academy Awards. Originally from metro-Detroit, MI, he currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

**A Frances Johnson** has published two poetry collections, *The Pallbearer's Garden* (Whitmore Press, 2008) and *The Wind-up Birdman of Moorabool Street* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2012), which received the 2012 Michel Wesley Wright Prize. She was awarded the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize, 2015.

**Shari Kocher** is a poet, writer and independent scholar whose work has been widely published in literary journals in Australia and internationally. Her first book, *The Non-Sequitur of Snow*, is forthcoming with Puncher & Wattmann. She is currently working on a critical monograph and her third poetry collection.

**Desmond Kon** is the author of an epistolary novel, a hybrid work, and four poetry collections. Poetry editor at Kitaab.org, he has also edited more than fifteen books and co-produced three audio books. An interdisciplinary artist, Desmond helms Squirrel Line Press as its founding editor.

**Christopher Konrad** is a Western Australian writer and has poems and short stories published in many journals and online. He has received many awards for his writing and his recent book *Letters to Mark* was published by Regime Books in 2014.

**Mran-Maree Laing** is a Sydney poet, essayist and fiction writer. She has published in *Meanjin*, *Cordite*, *PAN magazine* and other journals. She was awarded the 2014 Mick Dark Flagship Fellowship.

**Kristen Lang** published *Let Me Show You a Ripple* in 2008. Her second collection describes place as inherent to who we are and is yet to be published. She lives in Tasmania and was this year shortlisted for the ACU Literature Prize and longlisted for the Rialto Nature Poetry Competition.

**Anthony Lawrence's** most recent book, *Signal Flare* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013), was shortlisted for the 2014 Queensland Literary Awards. He teaches Creative Writing and Writing Poetry at Griffith University, Gold Coast. He is the 2015 recipient of the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal.

**Wes Lee** lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Her chapbook *Cowboy Genes* was published by Grist Books at the University of Huddersfield in 2014. She was the 2010 recipient of The BNZ Katherine Mansfield Literary Award. Most recently she was selected as a finalist in the Troubadour Poetry Prize 2014 in London.

**Jonathan Lenn** worked as a criminal lawyer and is now studying. He is married with a daughter.

**Richard Mauern** is a Wiradjuri Australian. He's lived and worked at various jobs in a couple of towns around regional New South Wales. He is currently in the United States of America working and studying for an MFA.

**Shane McCauley** has had eight books of poetry published, most recently *Trickster* (Walleah Press, 2015). He has won the Poetry Australia and Max Harris Poetry Awards, among others. He is a freelance editor and conducts a fortnightly poetry class for the OOTA Writers' group at the Fremantle Arts Centre.

**Rachael Mead** is a South Australian poet and writer. She is the author of two collections of poetry, *Sliding Down the Belly of the World* (Wakefield Press, 2012) and *The Sixth Creek* (Picaro Press, 2013).

**Meg Mooney's** third book of poetry, *Being Martha's Friend*, was published by Ginninderra Press in 2015. Her other books are *The Gap* (Picaro Press, 2010) and *For the dry country: writing and drawings from the Centre*, a collaboration with artist Sally Mumford (Ptilotus Press, 2005).

**Elisabeth Murawski** is the author of *Zorba's Daughter*, which won the May Swenson Poetry Award, *Moon and Mercury*, and two chapbooks. She was the Hawthornden Fellow in 2008. Born and raised in Chicago, Sandburg's 'city of the big shoulders,' she has lived in the Washington, DC area for too many years to tell.

**Rohan Naidu** is a junior at Yale-NUS College, Singapore. After eighteen monsoons in India, the liberal arts lured Rohan away to the equator where he studies Relativity along with Relativism. He has always loved cats, hated sad endings and wished for every day to be a rainy day.

**Basia Piechocinska** is a private poet, currently residing in Brazil, who only shares selected parts of her poetic work when inspiration strikes. She has previously published non-fiction writings in diverse areas such as physics, personal growth, and health.

**Sarah Rice** won the inaugural Ron Pretty Poetry Award, the 2014 Bruce Dawe, co-won the 2011 Gwen Harwood, and was shortlisted in the 2013 Montreal, and Tom Howard Poetry Prizes. Publications include *Those Who Travel* (Ampersand Duck, 2010), *Global Poetry Anthology*, *Award Winning Australian Writing*, *Best Australian Poetry*, *Island*, *Southerly*, *Australian Poetry Journal*.

**Kristen Roberts** is a writer and student from Footscray in Melbourne. Her poetry has been published in a variety of journals and anthologies such as *Quadrant*, *Award Winning Australian Writing* and *Australian Love Poems*. Her pamphlet collection, *The Held and The Lost*, was published by the Emma Press in 2014.

**Mara Adamitz Scrupe** is an award-winning poet and visual artist. Her poetry has been published and anthologized in numerous literary journals and shortlisted for prizes in the US, UK, and Ireland. Her first poetry collection *BEAST* won the 2014 Stevens Manuscript Prize awarded annually by the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (USA).

**Nathan Shepherdson** is the author of five books of poetry. He has won a number of awards including the Josephine Ulrick Prize, the Newcastle Poetry Prize and the Thomas Shapcott Prize.

**Leni Shilton** lives in Central Australia where she has worked as a creative writing lecturer, a prison educator and a bush nurse. Her poetry is published in journals and anthologies throughout Australia, and internationally, most recently in *Communion*, *Plumwood Mountain*, *Axon: Creative Explorations*, *Cooladah* and *Art Monthly*.

**Lisa Stonestreet's** *The Greenhouse*, winner of the Frost Place Prize, was published by Bull City Press in 2014; *Tulips, Water, Ash*, was awarded the 2009 Morse Poetry Prize. Her poems have recently appeared in *Rhino*, *Zyzyva*, *The Collagist*, *Blackbird*, and *Kenyon Review*. Her website is [www.lisagluskinstonestreet.com](http://www.lisagluskinstonestreet.com)

**Carolyn Supinka** is a writer, visual artist, and co-editor of *VIATOR* magazine, based in Washington, DC. From 2013-14 she was a Fulbright-Nehru scholar in Pondicherry, India. Her work has been published in *Poet Lore*, *Fjords Review* and *Bodega*, among others. In 2013 she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

**Jonathan Tel** is a poet and fiction writer. He has recently been writing fiction set in China and poetry set in Berlin and Buenos Aires. His poem 'Ber Lin' was shortlisted for the National Poetry Competition (UK) 2015. His story, 'The Shoe King of Shanghai' was shortlisted for the Sunday Times EFG Award 2014.

**Mark Tredinnick**, winner of the Montreal Poetry Prize (2011) and the Cardiff Poetry Prize (2012), is the author of *The Blue Plateau*, *Fire Diary*, and eleven other acclaimed works of poetry and prose. He lives in the highlands southwest of Sydney, and runs writing programs at the University of Sydney and at writers' centres in Australia and the US.

**Peter J Wells** has, for almost three decades, earned his living as an engineer, often preparing technical documents. Of late, he has spent his spare time reading and writing poetry, having caught the bug while studying creative writing at the University of Newcastle. His poems have been published in local anthologies.

**Carolina Wilson** is a Chilean poet and translator who has been writing for about 15 years. She spent her early life in Europe and now resides in Pittsburgh, and partly in Santiago. Her poems appeared in *The Exchange* and will be published in *Voices from the Attic* this year.

**Chloe Wilson** is the author of *The Mermaid Problem*. She has been awarded the John Marsden Prize for Young Australian Writers, the (Melbourne) Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Award for Poetry, the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize, and the Arts Queensland Val Vallis Award. She lives in Melbourne.

**Sue Wootton** is a widely-published poet and fiction writer who lives in Dunedin, New Zealand. Her most recent publication is *Out of Shape* (Ampersand Duck, 2014). She was placed second in the 2013 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine and was the winner of the 2015 Caselberg Trust International Poetry Prize. Her website is [suewootton.com](http://suewootton.com)

### **Editors' Biographies**

**Owen Bullock's** most recent publications are *tracer* (Ampersand Duck, 2015), *breakfast with epiphanies* (Oceanbooks, NZ, 2012) and *sometimes the sky isn't big enough* (Steele Roberts, NZ, 2010). He is a former editor of Poetry NZ and Kokako, and edited *Dazzled – The University of Canberra's Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize*, 2014. He is a PhD Candidate at the University of Canberra.

**Niloofar Fanaiyan's** research interests include poetry, narrative theory, dream psychology, translation studies, and identity studies. She is a PhD Candidate at the University of Canberra.

