

DAZZLED

The University of Canberra

Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize

2014



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Edited by Owen Bullock

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* (<http://www.axonjournal.com.au/>) 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 volume

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 (if they provided one); 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.



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FOREWORD

Poetry is an ancient mode of writing that has endured throughout history and across numerous and diverse cultures. It endures because some of what it expresses could not have been said in any other way. Many people reach for poetry in times of heightened emotion and crisis: at moments of love or loss; at beginnings, and during endings. Its medium is the language we use every day, but poets use that language with great complexity, allowing intense and elusive experiences to be identified and expressed.

Poetry is a form that has almost certainly been part of human communities since people developed complex language, and it speaks in satisfyingly condensed and complex ways about human experience. What's more, poems show how language and culture are understood in every society throughout history. Many of Sappho's poems, despite their particular language and idioms, could have been written and published today. Pindar's poetry, on the other hand, provides fascinating insights into the erudite subtleties of ancient Greek heroic culture. Poetry is sometimes puzzling and obscure, but it reminds us that a nuanced complexity belongs to all periods of human history, and that poetry enshrines important forms of knowledge.

Though poetry accommodates deep understandings, its focus is not so much on doing as on being and showing. Perhaps because it is about possibility rather than commodity, it may seem less central to our lives than, say, designing a bridge, or writing software. Certainly poets have relatively few opportunities to sell their expertise: writing poetry makes no one wealthy, in economic terms at least. But occasionally an institution recognises the value of this form of writing, and seeks to support it, to encourage its production, and to provide rewards for its practitioners.

The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's Poetry Prize celebrates the enduring significance of poetry to cultures everywhere in the world, and its ongoing and often seminal importance to world literatures. It marks the University's commitment to creativity and imagination in all that it does, and builds on the work of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research (CCCR) and the International Poetry

Studies Institute (IPSI), both part of the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra, in identifying poetry as a highly resilient and sophisticated human activity.

2014 was the first year in which we offered the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, and despite its novelty, word certainly circulated across the poetry community. Over 1,000 poems were submitted, and while most were written by Australian-based poets, submissions were also received from each continent, and from across the region, including Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

The judging process involved three highly regarded Australian poets who took responsibility for the initial longlisting of entries. Judith Beveridge, Brook Emery and Jennifer Harrison read the 1,050 submissions independently, and came up with a remarkably diverse group of longlisted poems of outstanding quality. These 58 poems were sent to the international judge, Philip Gross, who selected the winning poem, the second-placed poem, and an additional four shortlisted works. The care and commitment shown by all four judges, as well as their attention and sensitivity to form, style, technique and image, are reflected in the excellent collection of poems in *Dazzled*.

I highly commend this publication to all poetry lovers, and to everyone who enjoys the creative connections made by writers and artists. This volume is a celebration of the creative spirit that is so important to university life, and cultural life more broadly, everywhere in the world.

Stephen Parker AO
Vice-Chancellor
University of Canberra

JUDGE'S REPORT

To say that poetry competitions exist to choose the best is too simple. I saw fine poems that made me want to read them in the context of that poet's wider work, yet didn't quite have that standalone quality that this specialised genre of the single poem competition demands. The whole longlist consisted of poems deserving of a serious close reading, and by the time I arrived at a shortlist the pieces were becoming so individual that comparison was chalk and cheese. (Isn't the mark of developing quality in a poem that it becomes more entirely and only like itself?) The range of their difference was striking. There was maybe a smaller proportion of poems using formal rhyme schemes and strict patterns than you might meet in a British competition, but everything I've given serious consideration here was working with a dynamic and considered relationship between its content and its form. Look at the two prizewinners to see how differently that could play out in practice. There has never been a wider range of styles and voices available for poets than today; if there's any bias in my choice I would own up to a preference for showcasing that variety.

1st Prize – 'Dazzled'

Readers are rightly wary of poems about poetry, but this is irresistible: a generous and subtle celebration of the way a poem can infiltrate itself, coming to fruition slowly, among the swarming details of a life observed with appetite. What it affirms (and embodies, in so doing) is almost unnamable, the quality we call 'voice', which resides less in the content than in breath, its flow and form. This poem pushes those features to a risky edge, in deep-breathed single-line stanzas that seem to fall off the page almost arbitrarily, yet land still running at a never-quite expected next thought.

Runner-up – 'What big plans you have'

All strict poetic form is play, however serious the game, and this deftly played sestina shows just what a sly blend of tones and voices can speak through its apparent rigours. With its fluid handling of its sentences and line breaks, I sometimes forgot I was reading an obsessive form, while at the same time feeling its web of nicely nuanced repetitions tighten round me. This is at the same time a touching though not sentimental poem about old age, bereavement and memory, a look at environmental priorities and a gentle teasing of conventional stories about innocence and the wild.

SHORTLISTED POEMS

'Blackout'

This quietly disciplined poem enacts a movement that flows from one simple action to the next, the scene unremarkable except that its awareness opens out and out, and returns to itself in a changed perspective.

'A Jakobian'

Stepping off from a thought that could feel like whimsy, this poem slips the reader into a serious engagement with memory, nostalgia, progress and time passing. In the process it returns us to our senses.

'Anima ex machina'

There are as many shifts of tones played out here as in Shakespearean drama – from high to low, witty to heartfelt, dignifying what may be a stray news item in the guise of wry pastiche.

'Soundings'

The freedom of a poetic sequence is to move around its subject in several viewpoints – in this case, historical, literary, scientific and linguistic – letting them coexist, yet implying that there could be more.

Philip Gross

Ist PRIZE

Dazzled

For
Joy Katz

A song swelled, caught the wind like a sail, billowing.

I was learning the cold again: brisk, penetrating. Winter's breath. I breathed it in and out, felt it on my nose, my cheeks, seeping through my gloves. Walking along Forbes

and South Dallas to your house little clouds of breath drifted and dispersed. I checked myself, wary of unseen ice. Hard packed snow crunched underfoot. Slushy ice filled

the intersections, treacherous. How beautiful the cemetery: headstones, graves, mausoleums all pristine under their white coverlets, sleeping, trees' quiet in their white

skeletons, everything at peace in the bridal white of the day. I sidestepped a snow plough heaping snow off the pavement skirting the cemetery, hefted my daypack, a bag

of bagels. In the warmth of your home I found it in a stray glance, read it twice, quickly, amid a noisy scattering of children. All those fragments of conversation, started then –

You hunted for the book I asked you to find. Your friends from out of State arrived. On the back roof, workmen slowly unrolled a black mat, softened it with their

blowtorch. *Piper*, your little dachshund, pitter-pattered out to the front yard, suffered the snow, chewed with doggie single-mindedness the carrots and prunes once adorning

the snowman, left the snowman's corpse and droplets of orange. The aesthetic pleasure of seeing your poem in a calendar, on a page normally reserved for paintings or

photographs or other more visual arts. Your conversation with yourself, the jousting about faith, the paradox of your disavowal of God whilst invoking God, even as your

poem in its every facet shone with faith. The imaginative leaps, the surprise of being led so deftly from here to there, as if you were vaulting the heavens, mapping the shortest

way between stars with wormholes of light for others to follow. Afterwards, I went to a party celebrating the birth of a baby girl. I arrived knowing only my wife and daughters,

talked amid a noisy scattering of children, left, hours later, having found my reflection in a new pair of eyes. The car slipped and skidded on an icy road, my daughters sitting

tired in the back seats, one singing to herself, the other screaming about a lost bracelet. Later still, when finally everyone was asleep, I lay in bed in the quiet of a winter night.

What struck me then was how your poem sang to me in a voice I never knew I had missed, how it swelled, caught the wind like a sail, billowing, its irresistible linear

progression – despite the surprises – to the final word that could be no word other than 'dazzled' and how, dazzled, I lay in bed with my voice

swelling, beginning to sing my reply.

David Adès

RUNNER-UP

What big plans you have

The last delivered paper read 'Mobile phone tower plan for old growth forest in dispute.' Red Riding Hood put down her coffee cup and reading glasses. The ghost of Wolf, silver haired, looked back across the table. 'Yes my love,' he said, 'We are no longer of this world,' but she barely heard him, dreaming the throat feather,

the old plangent human call, of the raven. That feather and its many cousins must weigh something. 'Do you plan,' she asked, 'to join the sit in?' But of course the world had moved on: he wouldn't. Nor could she go down to see the damage. She sighed. 'I'd love another coffee,' he murmured, sun glinting silver

on his breakfast smile, the very silver glint she never could resist. 'Birds of a feather,' she thought, pouring coffee and thinking of their love in the old times of talking animals and nothing more than a plan to pick flowers. Outside, as if in answer, down a tumbled cloud bank fell a flock of birds, whirled

in the thrill of flight. An hour's drive away, the world of the forest. Red Riding Hood cleared the silver and plates from the table, absently bending down to kiss the ghost of Wolf. 'You know,' she said, 'the feather is such a complex thing.' She saw that it was time to plan another forest picnic with her granddaughter, the love-

child born of their very own long ago love-child. She smiled. It was extraordinary that the world now wanted a mobile phone tower, planned to despoil *that* very glade. Ah, not silver then, his hair. And the forest full of flowers, fur, feathers, secrets – not the horror later put about. She had lain down

willingly, birds singing above her, the down of his chin in miraculous close-up as love entered her life. Then, only last week, a feather had caught her granddaughter's eye. 'Nana, where in the world,' she asked, 'do birds go to die?' A moment in a silver frame. Those thousand avian hearts, wings – what *was* the Grand Plan?

Tomorrow they would go down, hand in hand, to the forest world to divine how love, and life, could vanish like quicksilver, leaving just a single feather. His ghost. No plan.

Debi Hamilton

SHORTLIST

Blackout

Sunday evening jangles the week ahead
like a set of keys. You, ironing your shirt,
me, taming the kitchen when the microwave chokes
mid-pirouette. I step into the gauzy night,
the filaments of dark brushing my skin
like fur; silence, its liquid companion, deepening
as I head to the fence line, with the dogs, to gaze
over the paddocks towards our neighbour's
place. Relief, we have not been singled out.

All shape is dull in a licorice
haze; a lone car is keening but I see only the spill
of headlights, a lengthening blade
along the straight, held there for seconds until
the car catches and seems to eat the light,
then turns the next corner
and darkness is restored. It's not my idea
of progress: the low-tech, leave-no-footprint life
those men with beards love to lecture about –
don't send me back to a copper for the clothes
and a stubborn wood stove. But I could
get used to this cushion of quiet; embroidered
and roomy, the undemanding night.

Then, my dog pokes at my knees with her wet,
joyful nose. Insistent. She's done her business
out here and would like to get back
to her sheepskin bed. The dim house slackening
into the night, no longer a stronghold,
now breathing in time with the world of grass
and horse and possum fights. I see you
through the window, your face cupped by candlelight,
your shirt hanging from the picture rail
like a crumpled angel.

Lisa Brockwell

A Jokoban

Japanese
incense clock

A smouldering grid on a cypress stand:
jasmine interval, periods of patchouli,
musk and camphor schedules, frankincense chimes.
How arid it seems
to rely on the precision of an oscillating crystal
for all the tiny force between wheel train
and escapement, a miniature replica
of how we think the engines of our minds
or lives are put together
industrial clank for a heartbeat.

Imagine saying *I'll meet you*
when it turns sandalwood, I'll get to it at myrrh;
had we but cedarwood enough, etc.

There is a different self that stands outlined
in the doorway of the senses,
that reckons childhood as a music box,
its formal stations replaced by the dairy horse
before dawn, newspaper boys' cries, postman's whistle,
ice-cream vans playing *Greensleeves*
siren at shift's end from the factory over the creek,
a crystal radio's static, the first time you really heard
that indistinct murmur
from your parents' room at the end of the corridor.

We could say *it will happen in light drizzle,*
as once, trudging home from your first job,
you turned into a row of shops somewhere
you'd never been before, and looked up
at their dingy, Victorian façade, followed
their pilasters and cornices to the top floor
its dusty mullions half lost
in low, hanging mist that ever since,
feeling it on your face,
has evoked the future's possibilities.

Or *luminous* might mean
all the possibilities of time read backwards,
as the luminous eyes in old photographs
reflect the future's oncoming headlights,
I squint to read the watch on someone's wrist
standing amongst the camel's-hair coated lot
smiling from the mantelpiece; or lit up as the distant town hall clock
my brother and I competed to see from our vinyl crow's nest,
the friendly utility of its hypotenuse.

And this is a different time, released
by burning grains, that doesn't unwind,
but is brought: as if kings,
in their bivouacs across the desert's electric zones
the creak and crease of their saddlebags,
placed sandalwood and myrrh beneath
hoists glimmering in back yards
like a reflection of the Southern Cross directly above.

Isi Unikowski

Anima ex machina

*For she who died
watching Hamlet*

Remember Melbourne in May
make-believe prince.
Your first night my last,
my mystery not yours
me not ready not ready at all.
Real live me in the stalls prompt side
(sinister)
down the front, attendant lady,
subscripted, mortal, overweight
and you Lord Hamlet, light witty
as if limned by Mervyn Peake
in Gormanghast
(methinks)
pretending to be in Denmark or not to be
nor' nor' east, Ophelia all in red
Scene i Act 3, get thee to a nunnery.
How come it fell Sgt Death mistakenly
2 acts before his cue, is arresting me,
pressing a long low truepenny
groan from my machine?
And most obscenely through the Fourth Wall
Exit my ghost.
Wasaname speaks on trippingly.
Quick ushers' pencil torches scribble in the dark
lug my guts to a neighbour limbo
truscotted in dull crimson
(O, this too, too . . .)
my breasts spilling sumptuously
my blue eyes bulge but do not see
Polonius resurrected passing to the bar
cursing himself for forgetting his lines.
Revels now are ended.
My machine is no more to me,
my shuffle is done
(there are more things . . .)

Silence.

Tim Robertson

Soundings

*In the winter of 1986, 114 false killer whales
stranded on a beach in Flinders Bay, Western Australia*

1.
To be the first of them:
coming up from the twilight plain,
upswelling to the shallows – the draft
of your keel growing less; to rise

though you don't yet
know why, hauling in on the bitter
end until you hit air hard as granite,
the concrete winter light;

to be beneaped then, and bent;
for the first time to feel the utter weight
of yourself – enough, if you don't retreat,
to shatter you.

2.
What floats after *falling* is
flotsam, and what floats when *thrown* is *jetsam*.
Whatever sinks is *lagan*.

3.
Whatever is cast up
is *yours*.

4.
And we threw over their fretting skin
sea-wetted hessian and kept on with the wetting
the whole body a fever under
our hands.

*The bends: [n] Nautical. The wales
of a vessel. Things of bent shape.
Or; decompression sickness.*

*Holystone: [v] Nautical.
To scrub the decks with sandstone,
so called because the work must be
done on one's knees.*

*Bathyal zone: [n], from Greek
βαθύς (bathýs), deep. A depth of
1000 to 4000 metres below the
ocean surface. cf. midnight zone*

*soundings: [n] archaic.
The area of sea close to the
shore, shallow enough for
the bottom to be reached by
means of a sounding line. Or;
a logbook of these particulars.*

5.
Like the sentence
you didn't see coming

they rise up wrecked before
you and you think it is not that they're
like electricity suddenly here

it's that somehow they were always
already out there.

6.
; or, The Whale

All men live enveloped
in whale-lines.

7.
To be the first of them:
coming over the dunes,
the spinifex bending-unbending

the dog keening hard out on the leash

and out to the south the long sea
grey under the cloud-linger;

to cast your eyes down
and see them lined up, blackly
magnificent, the hundred in the sharp
air dying

to hear them sigh against the wave
to be the first to move to
salvage them.

Shevaun Cooley

LONGLIST

My mother died while I was in the air

*No downward path to death we go,
Through no dark shades or valleys low,
But up and on o'er rises bright,
Toward the dawn of the endless light.
– Hill of Death, Louisa Lawson*

My mother died while I was in the air
the dreaded phone call *time to come home it won't be long*
from Australia to day-before Ohio present home to past home
my adult body regressing to the child's body
the parallel universe still present inside me
you're too late my diminished father met me at Cleveland airport
I stayed in his condo we didn't speak
appointed to a small fold-out bed in the front room
amongst my mother's embroideries craftwork
old photo albums irrefutable evidence
that I had been here before that I had once belonged to them
in days approaching the funeral I prepared
smothered pork chops & pasta for my father
asked him why he never learned *that's why I got married Joey*
he laughed but now both his cooks were dead
in my father's neglected kitchen I summoned
his own mother's recipes like forgotten spells
at St Mary's the priest asked if I wanted to say something
my father's grief sat on the pew next to me
memories of his violence resting between us
I couldn't stand up there hovering Jesus at my back
arriving early I photographed my mother at the funeral home
a custom allowed for relatives living overseas
whatever was in that box wasn't her anymore
everyone pretended but we all knew she was elsewhere

my father passed before I got anywhere near an airport
a more gradual decay my siblings and I rehearsing options
a private nurse assisted-living a home all weighed against
the practical – surrendering his house his only asset not to mention
my dad's indomitable will that often put him
behind the wheel of a car several times they found him
hunched asleep in parking lots *please stop driving dad*
he never listened and he had a girlfriend now
they had met at the Senior Citizen's Centre she took him
dancing to Hungarian Clubs he needed his wheels

for his death my sister met me at the plane
as before I took the small fold-out in the condo
the large double-bed my father's was an elegant white
frosted cake in his cold adjacent room
but I couldn't break taboo to sleep there
the priest asked me if I wanted to talk this time I stood up
among Sainly glass spoke freely a short obituary
some memories of growing sentences about Korea
I sang Louisa Lawson's *Hill of Death* a cappella
later photographing my father for away-family
the two of us were alone again quiet again
he looked small pancake cosmetic
applied too thick a Tussaud mannequin
the real man still out dancing somewhere
to accordion at Hungarian Clubs.

Joe Dolce

With signs following

*And these signs
shall follow them
that believe . . .*

Bobby Ray led us there,
nearly 10,000 miles if you fly straight,
but we took the long way round,
diverted in zig-zags, though travelled true from left to right,
arriving in the end at a graveyard in Birchwood, Tennessee
armoured in scratchy coats against the cold
over 30 years after Bobby Ray had died.

Uncle Bud brought us two days before Christmas
along the road he and Bobby Ray had grown up on
had brothered on, all swinging fists and cocky
their flat panhandle ears; like shyness, a family trait
the road looking like every other in Grasshopper Valley:
sagging houses, small frozen plots, bung bikes,
bruiser dogs, a doll's head discarded on a pitted driveway.

On one side, the tiny graveyard on the slow hill
On the other, a brick church with a fresh-painted skin
in place of the plain clapboard church that had once stood there,
the sweet killing Dolly Pond Church of God with Signs Following,
where Uncle Bud and Bobby Ray's mother, Minnie Parker Harden,
had once freed seventeen rattlesnakes, gently laid them out along the floor
and walked unbit in bare feet over them
before returning them, snake by snake, to the hush of their boxes;
where she remembered the Klan coming one evening
to whip the scoffers, just young lads, the drinking kind
who had peppered the rattlers to enrage them,
fired them to bite with whisky in a test of the faithful;
where, fleecing god, she buried husbands and mourned children:
Bobby Ray, restless son, married a foreigner – and then long gone.

It was dull wintry; Uncle Bud's ears tinged deep-cold pink
just a shade or so lighter than the fake flowers
in the broken plastic pot, fallen away from the grey memorial stone;
in a simple scroll, etched 'In memory of Bobby Ray Slack'.
No body beneath this quiet marker,
only dark unbreachable soil, no remains ever found;
they were given to the southernmost ocean.

Pushed off one winter's day in 1975
from Fluted Cape near South Bruny Island
on a fishing boat he had designed himself
diving for abalone, watched over by yawning seals
and, from the surface, his young deckhand;
a great white takes him and does not return him
Bobby Ray, gone to the water, gone to the sea.

Uncle Bud resurrects the pot of flowers, and we look away,
as if to examine all corners of the sky, and we are just
small sharp breaths, rough ragged, until calming.
Strange sign the two unmatching bricks, one red, one hollow
placed at odds over Bobby Ray's memorial,
part buried beneath drifts of oak leaves and pine:
an act of remembering begun, then thought best forgotten.

Gillian Smith

The offering

*The River
revisited*

The glass breaks:

The heart-thumps in this room, above the river, are muffled in ash
And all the gashes in this floor are bleeding to the old piano
And all the wished shadows. The light hurts on entry . . .

See, how this wraith's touch's only voice, and no-voice: leaf-glitter, breathing
Voice, and no-voice, her slid shadows under the island
Her eyelids, pausing for cloud-weep, her breath, blowing and sucking.

Of all things, why would she die? Why being done with the Other?
A mother, singing her dead notes on water, calling,
Her dread cry steals songs from air still, still.

Voice, and no-voice. Opening at remembered ringing
Of silver water, a place come back to, a listening, between
The living and the not living; blood-lies and crystal singing.

The touch on the keyboard returns the downbeat. A touch
As barren of juices as the comfort of long-dead mothers
Crying out for ritual, a re-incarnation, a coming again.

Just a pressure of one finger, then a draining out, a trigger
Pulled against a cold sea, a quiet, remembered stain
Released and spreading, released and spreading, released . . .

See the years sleep now, at Leacock's: the old house
Where the event, the light touch, the pulled trigger
Comes speaking riddles useless as tears from the river.

I grow longing for the green river and the pale hands
But know of no coming back, no fire
Where her fingers first burned and entered the long pain

Pure as the comfort of dead women, the juices' imagining
Why would she not come back*come back?*. I know. I know.
So she can hear again the echo, of the red dark falling.

~

Now hear the twilight, gathered from the river
As if, semen to egg, the long, bright beginning
Could bring back the back of the father's hands
Scatched from the blackberry at the river's bank.

Now hear the sluicing of the buckets again,
Spreading, and releasing, spreading, and releasing,
A child riding the dog over his father's melons,
A night cry at the crossing and a night train rushing.

And while the child practises shooting enemies from windows
Hear, again, the new courtship: a singing
By a song-fire lit for the lonely, their glancing up
In terror to the old homestead, above dark water.

The Offering comes: tomorrow the pink-white shining above the womb,
The slow, backing, flood. See, the sweet hollow
Takes the old, poured water, the shallow-tongued,
And one. By one. The corn-flowers grow . . .

Drink go hunting and leave no shadow.

John Stokes

Black Jesus

Black Jesus. Spindle legged. Hung on a cross. Upside down. Stretching his spine.
A tangle of mohair. Itching the sun.
Bubbles of sticky banana jam.

No Saint Peter. This one. A brawler of arms and legs. This one.

A dark raisin. Plumped. Ready for the Christmas pud. Marinating in sweated air.
Supping on the grail of flyblown juice. Sipping it through his black straw mouth.

He found his cross when I was out. Picking dirt from between my toes.
My verandah post. A spine of silvered wood. Its arms. A wave of fibro in the breeze.

He leaves me. Sometimes. To go spin with the waxed ones. The smooth skinned
Spinners. Who leave their brakes at home. Gym spinners. Lost to experience.
No amber intestines sleeked across polished visors.

Mirrored. Yellow. Aviator sunglasses.

I make him a black Lycra suit. To cover his pelt.

Black on black. Black in black. Smooth skinned. Unnoticed. Off his cross.

Day's heat strolls the morning. Not wearing her hat. Crying perspiration.

I pluck the strings of the harp black Jesus wove for me. One yellow moon night.
Its strands tune my hand into a lacey glove. To match my summer dress.
My wedding dress. For we are wed. Black Jesus and Me. As he spins. As I watch.
Since I noticed him. Hanging down from the cross of my verandah.

Do your feet burn? Black Jesus? Your tiny feet. Tap dancing on frying pans.

Rust headed nails. Regiments of alien saucers.

Speared along my verandah.

To stop its struggle forward. To stop itself tearing away from my home.

Tearing away from the violence of Calvary at night.

But he is gone. Trespassed inside the shards of my fist smashed window.

I turn my back to the mirror. I consider the length of my spine. The crossbars of my ribs.

All is bare. I am not become his cross. I strike a sigh. And dance on my yellow soled feet.

Evening stalks the desert. Dark fingers reach the dump of empty bottles. Tickle the top of
rusted cars. Play hide and seek with broken toys. The camp dogs snuffle. Wanting a feed.
A song is sung. I don't understand. I should. But my mother lost her language last year.

I step outside. A fire gilds the slumbering scrub. It warms the cooling desert.
The night sky. Doomed to die. Is being pecked at by a Magpie. Searching for worms.

He is back. Black Jesus. Outside. Inside time. On his cross of splintered wood.
He hangs. Spinning. Capturing his reflection in the cup of his outstretched foot.
The foot. Left dangling. Since I pierced his side with the tip of a sun heated skewer.

I push down the button. On the can of insect spray. The spray spins. We spin.
Cheered on by our wedded moments. He drops to the ground. A letter. Read.
Crumpled. Thrown away. He unfurls a little. Struggles to smooth himself out.

A dog creeps onto the verandah. Growling. Sniffing the body. Taken down from its cross.
Smelling dark raisin's blood. It runs away. To feed in the shadows.

The song stops. Faces fall into shadow.

Black Jesus is returned. Revealed in a tyre blown Ute.

He is a paper cut in the camp fire's flame. Dark and glossy as an Easter bun.
Come in from town he has. Bright eyed. Bright eyed. Come home. Arms outstretched.
Hand's nailed to cheap casks of wine. Knees bent. Keeping his feet from spinning off the
cross he's steadied his life on. He will cling to me in his soiled underpants.
Brawling. Eyes too bright to notice his leftover Bites. His knuckled Blows.

The creator's voice. A rake on gravel. Speaks of resurrection.

I hold the can of insect spray behind my back. I hold tight the skewer.

Patiently. The camp dog waits. Happy to claim my leftovers.

Suzanne Gaskell

A song, the world to come

I. Wandering

If you were to paint this spring you would paint it blue and green –
intense and sun-filled, the warm afternoon like honey on my tongue and in my belly.
There was a poet once who sang the body electric, and I too want to sing –
my body, the new leaves and their tender veins, the heavy roses, the warm movement of the air –
sing this day electric and eternal.

I am walking – my legs move, the joints click and swing, blood coursing through arteries,
capillaries bringing the sweet spring air to my flexing muscles, my tingling skin.
Wandering across the soft grass my genius is to
remove my shoes and to feel the prickles of the blades and the softness of the earth.

When you lay down to die it is days like this you will linger on
when you wandered and built nothing, made nothing, destroyed nothing –
entirely present in the heavy-lidded joy of breathing, of walking, of tasting the air and hearing the
molecules shifting as the world grew and dissolved.

And I would wander too, not just across the skin of the world, but across my lovers' skin,
tracing my route from the soft folds around his eyes
down across his beard which prickles like the grass
to the bone of his hip which I kiss in wonder
at how we fit together.

And I whisper to him that in the future, the roots will crack the roads
and bicycle bells will say only *hello* and *good day* and never *get out of the way*
and we breathe from each other's lips and surely it will only be tomorrow.

II. Flying

The birds that rest on the wind above the grey, wrinkled ocean
feel the shifting of their feathers, the pulse of their heart, the vertical movement of their wings.
The birds' eyes see the ocean and the mountains rising up, capped with snow, against the clouded sky,
and the bird never says *bird, mountain, ocean, rock, home*.
But we, standing, we can fill ourselves with the angle of the peak, the black and the white, the
terror of the sharpness, the heaviness of the rock, the movement of the earth by a millimetre a year,
the salty depths, the pale sun and the earth wheeling in the expanses of the universe.
We, wandering, can fill ourselves with the world – with the fluttering heart of the warm bird flying.

III. Dying

But we, building, earning, making our name are filled with nothing, will die hollow –
the price of our name on a stone, in a book.

And I tell you that in the future, the men who would reject a lover because her breasts sagged or her
forehead creased or her cunt was too hairy or its lips too long,

and the women who would reject a lover because his belly was too big or his hair was too thin or his
bank balance too small,

will die old and grinning destroyed by their robot lovers who mutilated their own perfect plastic
skins in an endeavour to become more human.

IV. Singing

I sing the wanderings, the unnamed, sad eyelids, the ingenuity of joints –
and while my song will not be remembered, I will continue
in the grass, in the shivering air, in eternal impermanence, as the earth, the sea, the bird, the stars.

Miranda Lello

Babushka

I fold the world into me – those cyclists
in the distance riding slowly through the eucalypts,
I pick up the earth underneath them and
fold them into me – their going slowly, going
nowhere in particular, breathing the air,
I fold into me, and they cycle on along
the hills and valleys of my ribcage,
feeling the slow wind of my breath moving the earth –
you standing across the room, I
pick up the faded carpet under your feet and
fold you into me – you nestle in my belly
where it is warm, and hear my heart thudding
above your head – your love and grief and anger
mixes with my blood – I fold the world
into me – those concrete buildings smudging the sky
– I pick up the dirty road beside them and
fold them into me, where they cram against
my liver, my kidneys, my spine,
cutting my guts – my blood and bone
wears them down – they crumble – and I
piss them out onto the earth – those
shuttered houses full of hiding people –
I pick up the emptiness that surrounds them
and fold them into me, where the acids of my body
dissolve their walls, and all the people swim out –
riding the waves of my blood from my heart
to my fingers to my heart to my toes to my heart to my scalp
– swimming together naked, laughing – I fold the world
into me, and it devours me – me in the world,
the world in me.

Miranda Lello

Prospect

Crown of hills tender with green and dandelion
gold, but baffled on one side with slate of storm cloud.
In the crest of sun you can still see what's coming.

Twice daily I perch here to meet the school bus,
brash streak of orange through the other side
of the valley: climbing, dipping, suddenly upon me.

Winter like this I sit in the car. Summer I walk up here,
punishing muscle, light so austere I have to stop in the one
jam tree's one shade patch, and wait for my son. Afternoon:

the neighbours' children step off, each one holding down
fence-wires to let the next one into the hillside
grazing-paddock and down to their low-nested house.

Morning: we watch them loom as their ute mounts the drive
and the small daughter leaps out to handle the gate,
in rehearsal for a life of it, on a block just like this, the way

her father would also have done on his distant farm
in childhood; like him also, the two boys ride on the tray-top,
wind ripping hair as if it were heads of wild oat and wheat,

tall and short, rigid, alert, standing there gripping the bar
like gymnasts limbering up for their life of it too, and when
the ute swings, they never fall, they know how to lean with it.

Tracy Ryan

With Chris Ofili in the upper room

From darkened walls, Ofili's monkeys conspire, their eyes trail as we move from painting to painting. Dreams bristle in the half light. You know their pack vision, smell paws festered with glimmering elephant dung. Our animal spirit

feels the heat of their jungle blood, strength of coiled freedom, painted primate eyes, rhesus hearts. We are footsteps in their ears, we drift awe-silent, colour to colour. Their resinous palpitations heat our hearts, nerves of glitter

reach for us. To be still is not enough, they strain to escape. When we leave they uncouple from the linen. Lacquer and oil crackle as they slide from the walls, find their feet, and clamber cavalier onto the street. Without knowing

we lead away from the city turrets, across Grand Union canal. We breathe concrete air, feel brittle sun, I read valedictions between your blunt teeth, we see orchids in the foliage. Around us the monkeys move, preening

painted fur, twinkling in London sun. Their chatter sounds human, thin tongues lick the city air, sequinned lips try to grin; like us, they want to ride the tube, find the edge of this city. Across Islington footpaths,

between cars. We jump the barrier at Angel, scurry down the escalator. They forage for colours in the tiled underworld, nails scratch brittle hiss-clicks in the tunnels, weave glitter between passengers. The doors slop a seal and we ride

as the monkeys search beneath seats, swing from rails, claw joyfully at the windows. After Highgate we shoot into light, the monkeys shriek, sun and blue reflected in their milky eyes. With each station, city falls away, the sky stretching to welcome

us. I see tawny fur sprout on your neck, feel the oily alacrity of strange blood. The monkeys know us. Their tails twitch interest; our lungs fill with mountain mist, rhesus visions of wire coops, scar furrows, unfamiliar hearts beating in bandaged ribs.

They tell us all. The doors open at High Barnet; a flock of birds crackle the sky and we move, eyes up, betraying our monkey hearts. They scamper and we gleefully ditch our humanity, chasing, a pack running to know the tremble in our ribs.

Rico Craig

Walking my name back home

I set off walking south on the shoulders
Of these high cliffs, through kissing gates and over stiles, when summer
Was a crude suggestion yet among the broom and gorse.
The winter
That did not want to end was hedging
The heath, and the geology beneath it was heroic – its syntax
Tortured, its story lines long and unsettled by tides
And asides, its attitudes violent,
Its voicing portentous – and reading it was as difficult, the going as slowing, as Beowulf
In the ancient tongue. The promontory that shields

The town from the sky was stricken
With bracken and blighted with daffodils, and it stood as gaunt and lichened
And slant as a headstone in a churchyard. In my overcoat,
Which flapped and yawed
In the heartbroken wind, I felt like an eight-year old girl
Lost inside her mother's dress. Below me, though, the sea was loosing
Perfect sets against the Secret Seven shore – Foxhole,
Raven's Beak, Cleave Strand,
Hallett's Shoot, Smugglers' Run, Tremoutha Haven, Cambeak, The Northern Door,
The Strangles – and the wind kept up its perpetual complaint.

The birds – blue tits, wagtails, jackdaws in their jaunty
Rat-packs, choughs waking rough, magpies flying kites, a raven or two and everywhere
The plangent gulls – were telling fast the same story the rocks tell
Slow, and in between the sea,
Marbled exactly the same way the rock is strung with alabaster,
Peddled and piped and played like an organ in a chapel – Bach, Wesley, Handel,
Parry, and Harris's 'Flourish For an Occasion' – and this day was
Occasion enough. The wind, a faithful elder
Of the parish, long ago decrypted the flinty geomorphology of the shoreline and punched holes
Through High Church flanges and installed windows there

In the greater glory of the God. The farm buildings
And mills of the old dispensation, when I came among them, crouching in the lee,
Cradled in the stench of silage and the baked bread odour
Of ploughed fields, were as different
From the ground they stood on as a rock is from a stone, or land is
From landscape. The shingle roofs of Trevigue, for instance, ran a warp as wild
As the strangled strata of the scarp behind the strand
Beneath its feet. *House* torques
The same way *home* torques here, each dwelling the same telling as the stones. And I walked
My name down to its bones that day

In the glamour of the sunshine and in the clamour of the shade,
But I have no idea if what I felt as I closed in on my beginning again was the ecstasy
Of exhaustion, or arrival. My name lives here, but I do not. There's a song
Going on as long as the sea, and I am the words
It's forgotten. Home is the ground the distance sometimes makes up
On me. And crossing the bridge at the end of that homespun myth of an afternoon
Of the world, I startled a kingfisher dipping the skinny brook and she
Dropped her book and flew down-
River, stark in her sly grog blue and white togs, and her flight was a race the same shifting shape
As the tongue-twisting bed she'd been singing.

Mark Tredinnick

Second skin

Sticky veil, this grief,
second skin impervious to touch.
Plum jam – his favourite – rests thickly in the spoon
she holds, has been holding now for two hours.
It slips along her hands, her veins, dripping.
Only the wretched know this stillness –
and the dead. She must clear up.

They cannot give her white marble and red poppies
to grow him back. She wants to go there,
look up at the impossible height and shiver,
dig like an animal among the rough cliffs
with her bitten nails, her bared teeth,
among the bones on the sandy beach in the shallows,
find him and stick him back together.

The sea was scarlet but it will be Aegean-blue now.
Her son cannot be remade like that, washed fresh;
some god create a whirl, a vortex of waves in tidal time,
find the pieces and meld him back along the spine.
He wrote – ‘it is bloody, mother,
and won’t be over by christmas. I can’t tell you more
it lacks faith’ – but hid the real letters in a sardine can

they sent back not knowing. When she opened it
fishy fear leached out of the blue pencilled lines
and no one to hold him in the night as she did for
his night terrors as a child and smooth his hair back.
‘We couldn’t find enough of Charlie to bury him.’
The thought of his fear pierced her, cut her throat,
took her voice and she doesn’t want it back.

She sits still, cold, empty-veined – wonders –
at ten million dead will peace last.
One day will we trade with them again, marry their sons
that are left, and will it somehow have been right.

They have signed all the papers, the ‘war to end all wars’
is over they say. The ordeal done.
She sits, still, dripping. She must just clear up.

Robyn Rowland

When taking photos of famine

watch for the
bones of domesticity.
The frozen clang of a donated kettle
on a dung fire.

Write: *imagine fleeing from war into famine.*

The mother-in-law, the mother, the daughter (mention
community);
the baby's arm a circle of finger and thumb.

But don't use the flies, the ribs, the horror.

People are sick of horror.

Write: *Do you walk to work?*

A violent highway, the Somalia/Kenya A3.
The shit-trail of cholera
leading to camp.

Write: *Imagine walking for days without breakfast.*

Crop out the baby's distended gut – focus
on nutritionally supplemented ready-to-use food, big eyes,
water.

The older girl
collecting firewood
in a blizzard of dust.

Captions are important.

If you talk about firewood
you talk about rape.

Get the mother
strapped with children of either sex
hauling buckets of muddied water
or firewood (remember the caption).

Her children should be smiling.

It'll be hard to get the mother-in-law (face like battle) to smile –
the burning village,
the dead son,
you understand –
but it's better if they smile.

If you must shoot men
get them doing something,
anything.

Even if all they farm is
cracked earth;
if all they plant is
bodies for graves.

A title: *Families of Famine*; or: *When Hunger Came to Town*.

Under the hump of
gasping, tattered tarp
ask the mother what she has received besides the kettle:
water, food, a well for the camp.
She'll ask for more food but don't write that.

We don't use the word 'victim'
any more.

Laura Jean McKay

The knot

*Mouth open,
already a mistake.
Zen saying*

Who has tied that knot in the horizon
the moon is struggling to peer over?
A sheepshank if I'm not mistaken
or more likely a tangle of fishing line pulled
tight by two creatures going their separate ways.
In this philosophy it takes three attempts
to say what should be said in one,
or not at all. But who's listening?
If you're sick of talking, don't. Please, don't.
From one hollow instrument to the empty
bell of another, grief's sonar is the same.
The bondage of sea to sky is an unopened
present tied with light. Aren't the moon's
persuasive capabilities supposed to be a sign
of something, like a child's birthday face, its O
of astonishment a balm to its own wolves.
Fish are not so indifferent.
Walking on the pier past the fisherman's
buckets we glimpse a fractured sample
of moonlight skating on the water,
punctuated by the salt and pepper of the stars.
It might have been a romantic moment
but for their eyes staring from the pail,
that vast microcosm.
At any point in my life I am only ever
a metre from my knees and the abjection
lurking there, a prayer mistaken for begging,
offered up as a definitive position.
I watch the tide inching closer telling no one its plans.
The distance must be ironed flat if we are
to negotiate our contract with the public air.
I look at your mouth, your ear asking
its questions. I hear the hollow repetitions
and hope for the horizon, three miles out to sea,
to open the width of all that is possible between left
and right, between one hand and another.

The moon looks no older than when I first laid eyes on it,
nor do you in the face of another day's occupancy
pulled in equal and opposite directions,
you one way, I another, where we are not
reeled in but are, in silence, undone.

Mark O'Flynn

To one delayed at a funeral

If there were any way to resurrect the device,
Now quite debased, of time as a river,
Then I might almost say that now

It had come to a complete standstill:
Algae with interlocking fingers formed walls
And a dam of weed blocked the way.

I have kept our appointment at the table
Where we meet to talk of the flowing world,
Knowing that delayed by a death you are absent;

And while you raise funeral flowers in your arms
Heaping them on to a receding vehicle,
I preserve the form of conversation alone.

A poplar has fallen across the road
And blocks the way at the deceptive cutting
Detaining you for a long and difficult breath;

There was a sound of massive detonation
Behind the wooded escarpment
And birds had started from their trees,

And an animal ran from the road block
Then veered in haste up the embankment.
While you are turning back the winding-cloth,

Here at the hyacinth congested river
It is tempting to think of events out in the street,
Each as a prod or pole or gaff to dislodge

Debris, and free the river to flow.
But in your absence nothing appears
As it would were we watching together.

The street outside and the school opposite
Seem almost empty, whereas with you
Undoubtedly we should see the strange and marvellous:

A young girl poured like wine into her dress
Would turn a perfect somersault
In the middle of the zebra crossing,

Or, under our very gaze, outside this window
A man with a scarf would begin to copy
Giorgione's *The Tempest* in chalk on the pavement.

But a poplar has fallen from the embankment
Blocking the road curving out of view
And I feel your absence like a presence.

Something washes away. A girl with a black and white dog
Leans on the window where I am reflected.
Suddenly it is dusk. The shadows move

Decisively. Weed begins to move again and at once
I am outside in the winter air;
The smell of wattle out of season fills

The role of those intriguing events
Left empty in the street by your absence
While you are still watching the receding cortège.

John Watson

The blushing red parrot

The reverb of Father Gabriel's oboe finds me airborne,
hunkered by the second verse, above Iguaçú Falls, Brazil, 1753.
This patron saint – a thunderclapping guardian for music-making Guarani,
vents pent scorn on generations of Portuguese *Bandeiras*.
Those contracted killers – who seduce their prey with Mass-singing charades.

Within this brittle haven – lush and luxuriant, brutality beckons at its own bidding.
Amidst binding lianas and towering orchids, my liturgy is once luminous, twice opaque.
Choral elegies baptize the forest – pitch-perfect; brimming from lungs of native Guarani.

My prayers drop an octave.
Guttural funeral dirges from sneering Portuguese mercenaries,
collide with limestone crypts below champagne cataracts.
Toxins belch from a devil's throat – the semicircular chasm.
A red-hooded parrot squawks in protest at this unnerving melody and saunters off.
Dusky Swifts nest in cliffs behind water curtains and feast on insects held aloft by the maëlstrom.

My filament of faith is unsheathed through cheerless presumption. An oboe-kiss calls the Guarani
to trust – music, for now, our only synapse. Unseen tongues fortify their young, as a web of fear
scuttles over forest floors – neurotransmitters on heat. A cocoon of mist furtively descends.
Mountain peaks are enfolded in restless slumber for the night.

At first light
after two and a half capricious centuries,
the synaptic cleft has grown wider.

The claim by Barnes and Nobles' soothsayers that the now is all – is far from all.
I'm pinioned to Guarani grief on account of a daughter's plea for a patriarch's widow. Air-dropped
beyond CNNs conscience, in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, 2003. Those Portuguese poachers have
gifted their wanton batons to open palms of Brazilian ranchers and biofuel moguls – the new
bioterrorist consortium.

Guarani who roamed lyrical above the Falls, now strain each sinew, taut with muscle memory trained
in their forebears. Finessed by coercive overtures, they pirouette on pin-head reservations, before
spectators too distracted – in anticipation of the main event – to notice. A throng of thousands fed

through an era on a solitary thumb-nail sacred text, watches Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane.
Sugar-Cane implants and Soybean vivisections compress their sciatic nerve, and bio-fuel quacks
forego therapeutic spinal-tap.

This suicide epidemic outflanks any Latin demographic. Your Guarani kin need a new guardian.
Iguaçú will no longer do, and on the quiet, she's been defrocked – downgraded to tourism. Wanted: a
new patron saint with healing hands for phantom pain and present day dispossession; licensed to be
polemical and poetic with every utterance; able, as needed, to lead the *retomadas*. For the red
parrot's progeny have no idea how to saunter. Their crowns crest no more. In their bobs and their
bows Guarani sense the neurotic's reflex; gone the instinct to flirt or to preen. Still their tails stand
erect since the elder's callous death, knowing neither when they'll keel or defecate.

Peter Smith

Australia

澳大利亚

Past foreign post and pre home,
meaning is loosed
in the airspace
one orphan word betrays its lexical order,
translating to naught, dislocating my voice
on an accidental gap.

So I turn inly,
cheek to the Perspex barrier
for a sun flare, luciform parabola:
a self-contained thing I can explain

like the cuneiform clouds
they bear no bar to denotation
since ancient scribe's inscription of their gasiform shape
carved kanji abstraction into bone or scroll.

Below, the umber soil eats the sky on the stretch of my jaw
awed at the extravagance of this land's vacancy,
the run of wild, ochre-skinned dingo
who lick up and fasten my mother tongue
which has forgotten to speak: no worries;
the casual language of a shrug and grin.

Three years without expression, I was a stranger,
no skyline even for reference,
the cardinal hills and valleys,
the four points of my compass
replaced by a playbox of mute interaction.
A navigator of humans, I orienteered
feelings in the creases on faces.

Above, now, are the star patterns I know
in alphanumeric declension,
not the Bear but the Hunter's Belt.
And I think,

soaring over patchwork khaki squares,
that this country like its name 澳大利亚 is too wide,
the rivers and ranges too long
for my body to feel contained.

KK O'Hara

Lambing season

Thunder worries at taut
Gnarls of cloud. The sky unwinds:
The knots of it spool out in rain.

On the tomato-red verandah,
We vine between bicycles, smoking. You talk:
Your words their own weathers,

You tell me about lambing season –
How the sheep, pregnant, forced
To birth twins, fall over and can no longer

Get up. You remember how you
Would heave them onto four legs
Again. Terrified, feet foaming air,

They would watch you with mad eyes.
There are some things we have
Never made to love us.

I offer a lung of bloodwarm smoke
To the wind; the rain drops even, even, even
Against the roof. Then slows. The sky

Sits woollen in its weather. Fibrous light.
The evening is silent, only the leaves
Smack a damp song. I draw my lips:

As if shearing metaphor I roll
My sharp tongue over a poem, litter the
Light with fleecy syllables.

Silence again (but in the trees and sky
cockatoos shriek, shriek a ragged language
of their own unutterable evening).

Raphael Kabo

Painting red orchids

My brushes hang in stillness on polished rosewood.
Weasel hair, wolf tail, mink fur. This one, an eyelash
from a leopard. The inkstone was my father's: slate

quarried from the lake where my great-grandfather
drowned himself one spring night. I scoop well water
onto the stone and grind the inkstick back and forth.

Pine oils diffuse into the room. My wife has made
this paper with mulberry from our gardens. I lift
my brush, pull back my sleeve and saturate the hairs.

One stroke, one breath: leaves give way to blossom.
More water – rain and cloud above the trees.
Cochineal paste, jade seal – red orchids bloom on white.

Eileen Chong

*Last night, red orchids in the
thatched hut burst into blossom.
Worrying about the wind and rain,
unable to sleep.
'Red Orchid', Huang Shen*

Morning light

The bathroom cabinet
holds no surprises –

light moves in, it does not radiate
unlike a cabinet of curiosities

or one of Cornell's boxes
where a flattened parrot, carefully excised

in a triumph of trompe l'oeil, seems to swing out
on a cardboard perch.

This morning you will look
at objects silent, going nowhere

they will not have moved in the night
where the museum comes alive, the toy shop:

*a cymbal clang;
plastic monkey hard.*

For objects are severe things
made nice,

fashioned into pleasing shapes and colours made jolly
with stitches for smiles and round button eyes.

Today, light will fall as it must
on the faux suede shaver bag (by Remington);

the shaver itself, and the faint
accrual of whiskers chopped,

resembling sand, ash, glass, earth, something
ground over decades.

There is no training of the heart
no exposure therapy, as to a spider

reducing it to tiny clumps
no gateway wedged a crack, then more,

allowing so much illumination you can bear,
that much you can bear . . .

for the sphinx-like guardian of the light,
there is no bargaining with her.

Wes Lee

A walk through of Anish Kapoor

As I pace past the stainless-steel surfaces
of the 'S Curve', my two hydrocephalic heads
melt and merge into each other, then lose themselves
in my spreading shoulders. I start to burrow
into familiar phrases: 'I felt the ground shift
under my feet' 'this is how it looks from where I stand'
and think how easily the world slips its libretto,
is knocked sideways by illness or trickery with optics.
I search for words to frame the philosophical
question the brochure invites me to ask: how the self
can curdle, separate or drain away into
the gaze of others, how its singularity
can be taken for granted by no-one else
who doesn't have a privileged sense of its history

At 'My Red Homeland' I see tons of wax
the colour of clotting blood, worried at clock-speed
by a motorised half-caliper, tipped with a steel
cube the size of a small container on a ship's deck.
I have a stomach that thinks like a stomach, easily
unsettled by a crushing weight of stimulus.
The robotic march of metal through soft matter
evokes the slow-motion, stylised violence
of films that ask me to reach back through artifice
and distancing to the roots of empathy, a swift sense
of being gutted by proxy. I try to guess how many
truckloads of visual metaphor it took to make this,
then baulk at shaping a philosophical question
too easy to pose and too hard to answer.

I look again at the circular creep of metal,
plough or military tank, through red earth ready
for seeding or the mud of battlefields, layers
of graveyards and vanished cities, a soil fertilised
by the dissolution of forgotten lives. I am now
in the actuarial zone where life starts to shrink

into the boutique theatre of kin and friends
where you chase memories uphill to a tipping-point
of breathlessness before they start to chase you
with minds of their own. Your navel-contemplation
is a way of logging in to the wheel of existence
where off-cuts of information peel away like
the flecks and ribbons of red clay. It's all about
the journey, getting to nowhere elegantly, naked.

John Carey

The composer turns to the camera

windows of a soul well schooled
in nuance and discrimination.

He wears the cravate, vest
and sharkfin lapels of his age
and class. The white beard,
combed and fluffed, half-hides
lips that promise to gather
into a faint *moue* of diffidence
in the face of this clapping
contraption and its hooded keeper.
'They think' he thinks, 'to capture
an Age on the wing, like netting
a butterfly. But I know better.
'*exegi monumentum perennius aere*'
A man who knew about brass
and wood-winds and the strings
of Orpheus, music to buzz
in the ears of a thousand
generations. Voilà.'
Done. A minor inconvenience
quickly forgotten.

His music more slowly forgotten
but fading, the name already
with the whiff of a footnote about it.

He is teetering, like Blondin,
over the Niagara of oblivion.
His best-loved work is a pastorella,
composed behind closed shutters
to block out the *mugissements*
of the marching Prussians, the cries
of the Communards up against the walls
of the *Père Lachaise*. The people who praised
his stubborn devotion to his art
have gone to their graves or chosen
silence. '*La petite phrase de Vinteuil*'

a fictional composer invented
by his younger and socially invisible
contemporary, Marcel Quelconque,
is unhumable but better known.

What is easiest forgotten
is why any of this might be remembered,
less lasting than bronze plaques
or original scores preserved under glass.
With Empyrean calm, the composer
sits comfortably now with his own minority.
His modest ranking on the *zeitgeist* index
means nothing in eternity. He watches
the mortals left behind, clinging to drifting
data like shipwrecked sailors, within their grasp
all of History and none of it.

John Carey

Moth queen at winter solstice

She sticks rigidly to the glass
queen of winter, bat moth, unclassified
deathly still, nocturnal Lepidoptera
spherical black mirrored pin end eyes
antennae touching on cold glass outside
looking in at us looking back.
She exists by auxiliary tint of the sun
the sun's light sucked in under her skin
woven golden, a massage of blood and silk.
Her three-angled shape, planes of meaning
abdomen tense, hind wings still, forewings drawn
into herself, frozen minute work undergoing
process, making her furriness. Spinning
a white beard to hang her wise thoughts on,
perhaps the pain of a dense furry mass
the making of an archaic silt coat
down the length of her inner sheath
to protect against coming winter
as children bash on glass, to arrest her
her winter coat almost, but not quite woven.
I make them stop to grasp instead
her tireless craft at winter solstice.

Natalie Rose Dyer

Mother-stone is womb

Ankle-deep in history, following your receding, check-
shirted back. Landscape scraped and gouged out of rock –
long-dry lake-bed, lunettes pitting the terrain with moon-
shaped hollows. Heat rises in blurry waves. The sun has
flayed the pelt off the land, leaving it leather-like; baked
and cured with patches of spilling sand. Trees have no
foothold – there's no shade to shelter under. All I can see is
pristine nature; nothing reveals the human story. Each time I
lever a buried foot free I peel back another decade, another
century, another contested millennium – to you too short
an estimate. Part park-ranger, part hierophant, you turn and
say: *our technology*, swinging your arms in an inclusive 360
arc, *it's all around us!* Your words conjure modernity,
electronica, bamboozling what I think I know. Underfoot
certainty slips again. You squat, pick up a hand-sized rock,
point to a mound shaped like the heel of the thumb on a palm.
Bulb of percussion you say proudly, triumphantly, anointing
the bulb with its technical name. *So much* force, you say,
and precision to flake a chip the shape and fineness you want.
You're introducing me to an Aboriginal Rosetta – text notched
and nuanced by human hand, ancient translation tool. You
hold out a handful of flakes, show me how convex fits into
concave, as if mother-stone is womb to flake, containing it
all in nuce. Now I see pieces of worked stone all around us –
knives, points, axes, blades. *This a kind of awl for piercing,*
this a blade for scraping, this would be tied and glued to a
spear! What I took to be sand dune and random rock has
turned into a quarry with workstations and knappers plying
their trade. While I watch the scene comes to life, morphing
into three dimensions, gaining depth of field, veracity.

Anne M Carson

*i.m. EK, remembering
a friend, Lake Mungo
(Willandra Lakes),
NSW*

Shrine

Some distance from the great white shrine,
city goers appear blindsided by cephalagia,
fingers delicately cradling handsets to crania.
The fighters, Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner,
only differentiate this from grief or sickness
when thousands thread the city streets,
making and remaking identical Goyaesque gestures
as wrenched vocabularies of laughter, loss and symbol.

You are no slouch; you became like them long ago,
having moved here voluntarily after the great fires ceased.
You have forgotten to draw the Dandenongs' petrol blue
haze about your shoulders; your feeble memory
of fired country, gone. Thus you link in and disappear,
cradling your burning white head just like the others,
as if it were a precious thing to be carried to market.

The settler streets are new but always ancient, in the way
of being crowded with users, usurpers, lovers of usury.
High above the city, the gull's red eye reads the city
as a gridded history painting. Real scale outdoes the Great Masters
but not the dreams of the fighters, returned from the dead,
an army of fear: *Peevay, Napoleon, Jack of Cape Grim, Tunninerpareway,*
Robert Smallboy, Jemmy, Timmy, Tinney Jimmy, Robert of Ben Lomond, Bob;
strong-armed, yet not yet ready to lift
their own monuments into place.

But when Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner return,
swooping down without warning on borrowed grain-fed Pegasus,
they too are caught unawares by asphalt kerbs and curtain walls,
by the stale air, the absence of a river once known
and forded with great losses on both sides.
For a moment the famed warriors are nonplussed;
the source has been built in and built over.
The burning stations and Mornington rides
rate no plaque in the victor's museum,
the tired white pamphlets – bloodless, blank.

Slowing to a canter on a stolen horse is to admit defeat.
And so, hooves clacking *fortissimo possibile*,
they raise their guns the old way
to glass and steel, briefcase and broly.
The makers of this hooved ordinance,
deaf to the mobile pleadings of women,
to the white kerb of history,
are swift to recognise the indivisibility of old and new,
the cringing mouths and eyes of European
history paintings they have heard about but never seen.
And then they see you, hands lifted,
cradling your burning head *en tableau*.
They have come for you, to burn down
your great white shrine and take you home.

Amanda Johnson

Note: Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner were brought to Melbourne in 1839 by the protector of Aborigines, George Robinson, to 'civilise' the Victorian Aborigines. In late 1841, the two men and three women stole two guns and waged a six-week guerilla-style campaign in the Dandenongs and on the Mornington Peninsula, burning stations and killing two sealers. They were charged with murder and tried in Melbourne. Their defence counsel was Redmond Barry, who questioned the legal basis of British authority over Aborigines. Thirty-nine years later, Barry would sentence Ned Kelly to hang. Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner were the first men to be hung in Melbourne.

Microcosmos

Spinifex rings spread across the desert
hold water under the ground. In spiky tufts
a tiny world exists, silent and unseen

These creatures hide on the grey-green spikes
of hummock grass, hunt with night vision
for invisible gnats breeding in shadow

– caught off guard by a cloudy moon

Corellas fly low over lignum brush, swing
and dip on a spinifex stalk. Sharp eyes
spy a beetle or moth in their path

Marsupial mice build a storehouse for seeds
in burrows underground, alerted at dusk
by insects humming across the desert floor

their rusty coats unseen by unsuspecting prey

A barking spider sits in a hole no larger
than a camera lens, stretches a fine mesh
around her nest, waits patiently for a tremor

on the line. She passes long years measured
in our slow time, sends her spiderlings
floating on gossamer. Caught by the wind

they are easy game for a little grassbird

Flitting about, she blends with brackish reeds
hangs her cup-like nest high on a stem
of cumbungi, away from spiky lizards

Criss-crossing the ring, termites ease
their way, through a web of tunnels, feed
on dead roots, grass-seeds left in their path

follow patterns passed down in memory

A pygmy goanna senses a line of ants, swings
along, leaves ornate tracks as he goes

Bull-ants build a cone-shaped nest, fix a door
from curling mulga leaves to ward off
big rains coming down from the north

– rest tight in the nest until the storm passes

Each year a stick-nest rat explores her circle
of dens, repairs each coverlet of twigs
A mound of pebbles collects rare dewdrops

seals the home from predators. She knows
the value of silence as a goanna shuffles by

A tawny dunnart sits, waiting to pounce

Large eyes gleam as she snaps at a spider
takes over his empty hole, sleeps through days
of heat, waiting for rain, the time to breed

Measured by a finger length, these creatures
hold on through changing seasons, their span
of life slowed down to desert time. Stillness

A grassy ring holding their world in place

Brenda Saunders

For the years you were abroad

For my sister

You are the shadow I cannot see, stitched
by more than time into the channels of my marrow.
Me and not me. Our path also our paths. If we speak,

too little and too much falls between us, and barely
do we know each other. And yet: here, your imprint
is under my skin and the bindings of our births

are strings wound firmly into my days. You have travelled
half a world from our home. Absence in its aquarium
feeds from the sugar bag of the phone line.

It is not that I miss you. There is in us some kind
of connection that neither sleeps nor wakens, threading us
through your day my night, your moon my sun, a fine,

dark trace we would raise nearer the surface
were you here, were I there, were we different.
The feeling . . . as if each of us carries inside us

the parts of a puzzle that was never made. As if together
we would settle what we cannot resolve . . .
though there is nothing but ourselves. We talk . . .

And we understand . . . through crossed lines, our roots
in different ground . . . what we have done to each other
and not done, how we cannot reply to all

that was imperfect. Our hands . . . holding, in the allotment
of their warmth, in the curve of their fingers . . . holding
themselves. Holding. Emptying. Reaching. We share a past.

Absence, given wings, flies from its glass cage
into a memory of ourselves – we were 3 and 5, we were 6
and 8, we were 13 and 15 . . . How you were there and not there,

my eyes dazzled by my own light – the me, the child,
the bright-dark of the being and the becoming,
and the shadows lively . . . We trace the news of each other,

the timbre of our voices, the love we in passing mention,
the love we avoid . . . as we speak of your city snow, my summer,
your spring shoots, my evergreens. To you, do I change . . .

in the small-town home you return to . . . Indeed, I have aged.
And what we touch in us has weathered, and what it means
curls like a small animal in the fits and starts

of our exchange. We are two girls on a swing in the back
yard of our years, swaying in the long grass, in the half-
broken light, as if it is we the grass has grown through.
In the nest at our feet, this small animal . . . fidgeting, its mild
hunger naming what it wants: the unconditional.

It is all we can give each other. Each the other's witness, each

the only soul who can say, this passage
we have passed through, this tiny matter
of being raised . . . we are here, there is nothing to measure.

You cannot be wise. I cannot surpass you. Rival. Friend.
Enemy. Lover. You are none of these. You are here, in my marrow.
My other me. Not me. Unwrapping you. The heart

falling open and the animal peering up at us . . . The girls
what they were. And us . . . a little larger than ourselves.

Kristen Lang

The stronger light

The cadaver does not measure time.

It is the greatest achievement of the dead – death
as it is. You will say the cadaver, on the contrary,
is a clock of change, for it cools, stiffens, bloats,
disintegrates – the time of fluids, the time of skin,
the time of bones. It is the living who list such things.
And such other things: the hours left in the day,
the minutes that have passed, the seasons, the years . . .
And yet . . . to feel nothing of it, to fall, to float
in the travel of time, to be held, unaware,
in the current of its unfolding, that one's gaze
cannot settle on its passing . . .

The cadaver cannot respond. Am I jealous, I think,
or not jealous. I speak because it cannot speak –
the difference we do not choose and cannot ignore.
And time, hearing its name in me, sidesteps
into itself. And I am the fringe dweller, as the living
so often are, the mind peering in on the flesh, the wood,
the air, the apparent journey; clearing a way
to point at things. Time, I say, this wind-up bird
we pretend you are while our bodies tug in the tide of you . . .
We look for the ways you might fly in us, move into us,
the doors of our skulls opening and you as yourself
entering everything, passing through all membranes.

And perhaps this is Beauty . . . For if it happens
and if I am walking and there is light in the new growth
of the myrtles, or the gum-leaves are dripping down,
or the sheer, rough rock we are climbing presses tree roots
into our hands, or the moss on these great boulders
lays the scent of soil in our skin . . . then I am here
with the trees and the light and the rock and the moss
inside me, the stone curving through the river of my being,
the tree roots unfurling, and the leaves
humming in my lungs . . .

Joy out-writes the lists of time, replanting us
in the pulse of the earth, death in our shadow
and life, as indeed we name it in the flat
margin of our measures: the caught, the fleeting,
the stronger light. The cadaver . . .
lends us his eyes.

Kristen Lang

Before the manuscripts are chained

The abbot's insistent: there is so much to do before
snow covers our quarries and the passes are closed.
He has us at our desks before dawn; commissions
come down from the abbey every other day.
Yesterday we lost a psalter
because the gold leaf ran too quickly: the master raged.
Artists and scribes huddle in tense corners
squabbling over designs, boys run
to keep the tapers alight, haul saffron
and chalk, stack the finished gatherings.

I step into the frost outside. The moon
has scraped the sky in readiness:
a dark time. And yet, the way dawn draws
its colours from the earth to return them in sight
I think of you down the dreary day:
I look at the initial drop beside its line
and think of how your hair falls beside your face;
I see the space left for '*Osculetur me*'
sharpen my quills, incise your vellum;
a catchword at the bottom of the page
has me leaning forward to hear your voice;
the awl's marks lead like tiny footsteps
to our household's industry, and I would send
far for the lapis lazuli of our skies.

My deficit overhangs like a rubric:
can I pour enough colour into these spaces
to justify the love you have burnished in me?
Furrows line up against the field's margins
clear in the light of our harnessed endeavours
even if smudged by my failures of reason or spirit.

Do I need to ask, as I have asked all these years,
never needing to ask – who will bring me
from my apprenticeship into the guild
say the tiers of my learning are over, grant me
the licence to proceed beyond the simplest of undertakings?
Illuminate me.

Isi Unikowski

Tea & stardust

All the indications are that the universe is at its simplest at the smallest and largest scales: the Planck length and the Hubble length. It may be no coincidence that the size of a living cell is the geometric mean of these two fundamental lengths. This is the scale of life, the realm we inhabit, and it is the scale of maximum complexity in the universe.
Neil Turok, *The Universe Within*

You sit & drink your green tea talisman
pretending it's preventing tumours
in the alimentary thinking of your gut
as a welcome breeze tangles itself
in the honey locusts, your neighbour's
new-born goat bleats its mother-loss
in summer-long pleats of desperate grass

you hear the clucking, tentative, low,
of a purple swamphen at the dam
& know you'll never really know
the lexis of its language, as damn
little as you'll ever twig the true text
of life happening here on your blessed
acres, one two hundred & fiftieth page
of the five per cent remaindered
shale woodland system, officially
ephemeral, just another widening
event horizon in extinction's black hole

you walk it each day, work
the changes more innocent people
once called improvements,
water, weed, prune & shoot
in worn boots plodding this sod
invisibly teeming with roots,
bacteria, subtle world wide web,
arcane underground making up most
of the universe & our questing self

you've noticed golden-bum ants
meandering up a messmate to tend
a sci-fi orange-green mealy bug
you presume for honeydew knowing
full well no one's ever studied
the complex dance of life forms

on a single eucalypt even as it falls
to the project home or hobby farm
sporting a ride-on or single horse

you know some of your neighbours
seek to subdivide, make an easy buck
or have their children near, & some part
knows there's no one to blame, your
annoyance unmet fear, its flame fiery
white ants waiting to eat you in the end

a wind-cut stole of starlings settles
on the blackberries, rosellas rollick
through the netted apples & pears
& you think perhaps it's sugar, love,
that links us, unawares, in our webs
of condensed sunlight, those braided
rivers of stardust flowing plain,
deep as the dark whence we came

Peter Lach-Newinsky

Spring fall

I see you stand with your back to me
at the French window as you did last March
looking at early flowers
yellow and crimson, pansy and primrose
peeping from their crust of snow and
above them the steel-sculpted angel
rearing from a wooden plinth: guardian
of the courtyard. In those bleak days I knew
you were reading the cemetery metaphor
of your blighted time; your death-sentence
delivered too early before you'd finished
flourishing, much less gathered the fruits
of later life; the hope of a ripe fall.
I did not speak then, not knowing what to say
and keen to lend what strength I could to
elongate your stay. It's only now you've gone
these words insist, should I have spoken and
what said? The silence echoes in this
recurring scene of you turning to face
breakfast, the torture food had become,
and me, who could not stop the haunting
of that cold figure, the austere seraph
you'd bought, body and wings
three curved scimitars surmounted
by a featureless ball-bearing head,
apt messenger of death in spring;
an angel built to last: terrible, hard
and comfortless.

Adrian Caesar

Late Hammershøi

The world won't come in, not tonight.
The door is open, the window is closed,
the linen stiff and white as an owl's wing.
Saucers stand sentry over the table.
Butter has gone soft in a dish.
And what the black-haired girl slumped over
the piano plays is forever hidden,
her arpeggios deliberate and slow as the sun.
Hammershøi loved the light. Light streaming
like a woman's hair through the window,
light wetting the mouths of wineglasses,
light slanting its long towers on the floor
like the travelling teeth of a comb.
Particles swimming there, suspended
in light's archery as if in silvered gelatin,
Hammershøi's friends worried
this obsessiveness was symptomatic:
the long hours alone, his cool privacies.
To love light above all, whose main habit
is dissolving. The critics tired of it.
Study after study of Ida's back,
years spent leaving or entering a room.
Light is routine, they said.
But that was his genius: light survives us.
In its long wandering, in its patient
illumination of hallways and doorframes,
of streets and alleys in our absence.
And now it is evening. Hold your breath.
The room is quiet, a chair is empty,
doors open on doors, the piano is darkly gleaming.
Velvet creeps over the hammers of the keys.
The world won't come in, not tonight.
Only cascading notes float like dust
in the air, soft as ash. Mozart, it must be.

Sarah Holland-Batt

The Nullarbor

The road murders through the treeless plain,
bluebush and saltbush repeat themselves and ravens
sentry its taking to the horizon;

this old seabed is karst and scurfed by stories
that are in no way human, a resistance
against which we are as cleft to purpose

as a fly that riddles glass and struggles
to exhaustion against the windshield through
which all we see does not come to us.

Every few minutes there lies the twisted
argument in kinetics, the contortion
of the facts and end to movement tossed

like augur bones, the bodies of kangaroos –
a bent limb barrel-broke as if
to eject the will's last cartridge upon the earth –

and fixed there the wide eyes stare off
one down in the dirt, the other glances
the cirrus silence of the condominium sky

until the raven's beak skewers and threads
a burst of lantern blowout pain, lances
the orb and the brain's last image is the ether

far below, a gouged pit, a mantle dark,
the limestone cavities and the cool decay
which is slower than life and longer.

Can you course the set of orbits which intersect
millennia? Will you apprehend so many
lifetimes flung down like fiery meteorites

to this lonely verge from space?
Only a perforated trust, like a seam,
can hold you together in this agnostic place.

O Flote

Signs of life

Below the port-facing ribs of the old town
the body of the St Lawrence River is laid out

October clears the decks, blows the last of the tourists
down the creases of the Vieux Montreal

In stone-walled urban pockets, spot fires burn
with the suddenness of maple leaves,

an ox-blood undertow, turning slowly to face the fall

I am glowing from the inside too, but
with a migrational pull that is much less seasonal

barely noticeable under grey-marbled sky,
a gentle drift of ashes with no shaft of light for reveal

How strange that I keep finding myself here,
lost in a crush of North American monuments

Navigating unexpected points of cultural difference
and icebox doors weighted against winter's shoulder

Small unfamiliar birds are fleeing this place
and each flight pattern catches like something intimate

When I return to my body, the city continues, as all cities do
the towering heartlands of vacant gods growing closer

Even here, inside the Basilica on Rue St Sulpice
comfort is temporary, a sub judice resting place

for my own turning chrysalis

Inside the emptiness of noise, the acoustics are perfect
for a new heartbeat, I can't hear yet.

Vanessa Page

A funeral of my peoples

A distant light upon the hills,
A flame that ebbs, slowly fading,
Deep streams of silence,
Embers of fire and billows of smoke,
Deep tones in incantation,
A bitter cry and a tacit moan.

Canes of sugar by blades cut,
The gatherer's gather once more.
Paints of grey, of white,
Words made saline with acrid tears,
One of us is nought.
Yand-wii, yand-wii.

The ashes have heaped,
The mud yet together with the dust,
A pungent smell.
Heaps upon heaps.
The throat has parched,
The heart has shattered.

Nehm yahp, nehm yahp.
Thoughts of deep contemplation.
The mind fears, regrets, yet questions.
In the darkness we are,
Life seems bleak and dreary,
For there is no existence without pain.

We have searched,
Yet we do not find.
Wherewith shall we find meaning?
Of whom shall we find purpose?
Wherewith shall there be solace?
Of where shall we find rest for our drenched souls?
The white man's burden upon my peoples is great.

Our backs are broke,
Our tears and sweat have turned to blood,
Materials, poverty, a curse to our souls.
Where be the laughter and smiles of our forefathers?
Are we not the children of them that bore us?

Once more the strange voices yet familiar,
Let us go back to the beginning.
For what once was is nought.
Ah! My God still lives,
Therefore, I am, and we are,
For death comes to us all.

Steward Thoke

And the sky begins to flow

Morning, the clouds still clinging to the night, the canopies of drowsy trees. And a drizzle of mist moistens your furrowing cheek, and in your iris a spark of flimsiest blue, or green, opalescent in the ascending light. And all around there is an absence that sings, and the sky has begun to flow, electric as thought, and a sparrow patrolling the edge of my eye preens like a pigeon deriding all our certainties and doubts. And you, never transparent, erupt in what I must call song, but one whose cloth is stranger than any collation of notes I have ever known. And when I pause in what I'm writing down, which is this, to listen, to hear, discover the meaning of your voice, you stop, rearrange the wide pleats of your skirt, and rise into the freshening breeze, and your dance is no less mystic than your ghost melody, but together they come home, come home to me, and I no longer sit in our permitted clearing after a night of fierce communion, but am rising with you now into your undulating dance, floating beside you in that indecipherable song, which for the first time I can hear, for the first time enter from within.

Alex Skovron

The other side

If I could be certain about *my* city
I would not be proposing this;
see, there are too many documents,
they sail across our unshuttered window
each eventide and vanish
somewhere right-angled to the sky.
You lied (no?)
when you accused the sky of hypocrisy –
it means everything it says, just
doesn't tweak too deftly
to the inherent duplicities of the cosmos:
strong force, weak force, strings
open and closed, what a recital!
A garret above she's reciting Mandelbrot
into her cups, alert poet
not yet alarmed, the appointment
a week away. Will there be fire? Or is it
great Anaximander I mishear
at the harpsichord, desperate to reconcile
his celestial wheel with equal temperament?
Meanwhile stationary old Earth
heaves a soiled sigh of hope, we wait
in trepidation for the timid boy next door
to start repounding his weights
or curl his bicep to lubricious pixels
that constellate the black hole of his lair.
I conjure all those nuclear *familiae*
with their duple single beds,
the Crux of the South cartwheeling
over the rotary hoist, every last parchment
secure in its slot, each element tipsy
with itself, still writhing under the table.
Where are you, Democritus,
and what about all those atoms?

Alex Skovron

Audi partem alteram
St Augustine

Brooklyn Bridge

So, Walt Whitman, you imagined me,
crossing Brooklyn Bridge on a warm
and sunny day of early autumn –

and I thought that I saw you with
a big straw hat, cherubic face and
curly hair and beard. But, perhaps

I was mistaken. Certainly, you were
not among the girls who jumped up
on the barrier and struck fashion poses

for each other to photograph against
the Lower Manhattan skyline. Neither
were you with the man who carried

his poodle all the way across and back.
But your spirit was there, in the mighty
crowd that flowed one way, then

the other – men, women, children,
cyclists, dogs – who all contributed
to the party, one giant celebration

of technology and democracy, of which
you, Walt Whitman, would most heartily
have approved. Hard, too, to ignore

the upsweep of those cables, as Stella
depicted them, a secular cathedral,
a hymn to progress, on their way

to Hart Crane's God. And I walked
with the crowd, overtaking and being
overtaken, stepping sideways to avoid

the mad onrush of cyclists with
their urgently shrilling bells. I walked
from Manhattan to the Brooklyn end,

stopping just long enough to feel
that I stood on foreign soil, before
returning. Traffic roared beneath

the boardwalk, pleasure craft cut
white wakes across the blue river
out towards Liberty and the island.

Returning, Gehry's Beekman Building
dominated the view, rippling like
a flag unfurled, or more ominously,

an anti-structure melting, dissolving
to its base, in an ambiguous gesture
towards the new World Trade towers

rising from Ground Zero behind it.

Stephen Smithyman

Anarchival

After
W. Benjamin

This *struggle against dispersion*
motivating you, me & the apple tree
caught in the violent rule of a gravity
trap & tensing into view
all the little-everythings that measure

substance, gather *Papers of*
or forge a *Life* – fruitful preserve
duly noting the curve and fold.
Hold tight; settle the shuddering
skins; cancel *x* and replace with *facts*

as proud bounty of all our historical
wanderings –

compulsions	} earmarked EVIDENCE of function
manias	
hoardings	
secretions	
ways-of-being	

You: in every entry, every figure
lifelit in a nervous filter
Me: foot in the doorway, bruised at a falter
signing in. Do we experience
this world wrongly, returning

to the same matter?
Where are all the peaceful, silent dead? –
scattered refuse and scrap-liberties,
broadcast beyond the cylinder –
fuel to throw the foot sideways, quick

escape from the commandment!
Softly, softly in the field, always moving
lightly, with an argument on air –
I'll see you in the faithful pitch of swift
elsewhere –

Jessica Wilkinson

Primrose Hill

i.m. Sylvia Plath
(1931–1963)

Come with me now to Primrose Hill. This is
the morning hour, split by the bark of the dog club,
when the seep of spring is rampant in the stir of trees
hustled by the smudge and chill of a north wind.

Take me past the school in the lee of the rise,
its yard spread out like an old blanket,
and the crocodile of blue-uniformed girls
yet to form for the outing of a day's wrought.

Pause at the tennis court, watch the players,
their energy and synergy, reciprocating, jocular
in their creams and scores and rackets, their breath
once released hanging in the crisp air as tiny white clouds.

Reveal to me this oddly crepuscular landscape,
its body and fragile relations, its parts and silvery path
smattered by would-be rain and, years ago,
the tears of a mother for an unseen loss.

Climb the asphalt lines with me, along the north escarpment
towards the terraced privets, through the fields
of Parliament Hill where skate boarders refute the canons
of gravity and tag park benches with vandal pride.

Pass by the azaleas, the grassy meadow and the lovers' oak,
and in the gap between the plane trees look southward,
over old Kentish Town toward the loam of London
where quietly, discreetly, a city has mushroomed.

Release my hand and move ahead in your singular way,
give ground to pedalers ignoring ciphers of the licit
as they cruise the serpent of the downhill. Then come close,
let the breeze lift your hair and bring me its scent,
and show me every nuance of the nape of your neck.

David Francis

An elementary treatise on human anatomy

1.
Case history:
 She. rendered against the
backdrop
 of a lunatic fringe

inchoate as a canine pitch.
Know your audience.

See the architecture
never the interior.

This nomenclature
disavows sorrow.

He. loathes to
cancel her skin.

Scars incarnate vascular tracery.
Cast lures with an abattoir's fugue.

So many rooms to leave.
She'll miss the vestiges

restrained by proscenium
arches, curtained and humble.

Apathy is the antithesis of melancholia.
I'm no better than this, after all.

Absent seizures testify.
Wistful she disassembles

inelegantly into the asphalt.
Her manicured duvet binds

luminous particles. Bespoke
toile massacre with floral motif.

Blood in mouth.
 After, ashes.

This is a catechism:
 Rapture, her inert flame.

2.
Medians, she scrawls in slender gait.
Winter, feral liminality lies dormant

collects in hips,
coveted skeletal grace.

We are bisected by walls.

He ruins linguistic subdivisions,
follows her suitcase through
 timber corridors: arterial, dim.

(a contagion of sparrows
a cloud of starlings)

In the darkroom where dissected birds
and crime scene pinups coalesce,

he knew I belonged:
 feathered, posthumously.

A trinity of fractures, fathomed in stone.
Now we are bound by such harrowed wings.

I write their elegies in his clavicle.

Lindsay Tuggle

Little Doomsday Clock

*Stroke the Tenth:
The Timepiece &
the White Whale*

From here on out, the people shall be . . .
a life-sized map of themselves . . . the oceans, dying, or a tomb:
a dark mass on the brainscan, & you & you . . .

& within those oceans, your very own dead zone shall be,
a dead zone the size of Texas, jellyfish clustered at the tethers
of the off-shore oil rigs, shall be, shall be . . .

a sperm whale, washed up on the shore of Holland,
30 feet of plastic agricultural covering in its gut, & you, you –
& may the felled virginwood rise through your sleep

for a thousand years, & more, more, as a curse.
May it haunt you until it's done,
as you walk off the planet into the parking lot sunset

alone or in pairs, I hope it tortures you,
I hope it tortures you into madness,
the former redwood forest vanished & paved over.

Just like you. For the people were a dark virgin once, too,
& now, a sequence, a virus, a growth you shall be, a hymn¹
& you, a synchronous brief of moonlight

on the tidal pool, a delitescence, a secret,
where all the people began. & you, sun sinking fast,
faster than father's fat gold pocketwatch sank

& still it ticks, at the bottom of the sea,
& still it's about to burst like a drunkard's heart,
just where you dropped it that afternoon,

it ticks now from all points at once:
from the inside of the whale's stomach, from your own heart,
just as it filled your sleep all summer long, remember?

As it fills your chambers even now,
as if your heart were wrapped in cotton, chiming out the first few bars
of *A Mighty Fortress Was Our Lord*

at the quarter hour, still striking away
at those tiny bells in your 13 yr. old sleep like a deliquescence:
& once & once & once, in raw tonnages of carbon,

waves of refugees, at full fathom, still,
still you were growing, & you & you, growing small,
in tropospheres, in millstones, in chime after chime

twisted into the fat heart of the white whale until it burst
& the sky shall crack – somebody gimme an Amen –
& in the endless black matter

the sun shall expand in that first massive pulse
of the Special Paymaster's mind –²

Samuel Witt

¹*It's all about breaking this hold that death has on all of us, which is why I always coat my life in Pam* · 7:40 PM – 19 May 13 · [Embed this Tweet](#)

²*Has darkness met your expectations? & it spins like a centrifuge* · Sun Sep 19 2010 23:37:49 (CDT) via [web from Framingham, MA](#) · [Embed this Tweet](#)

Grief moves

The garden's evening shadows gather in the air
move through the open window on a current of silence.
Different intensities of grief hide in their uncertain folds
shift and change the look of the room.
The walls close in the red rug runs to purple
the safe brown couch reveals its dark creases
and the table's outward conversation turns in on itself.
Some things always remain unsaid.
The dead take the moment up
dance with the shadows pull at the curtain
play with time and memory
and make themselves felt on the chill breeze.
'Do you remember' a whisper forms
the conversation takes another turn.
Somewhere outside
where the lemon tree grows near the street
grief has a larger holding
a street full of ghosts
a suburb falling into shadow
a city flooding its dead with fairy lights.
Grief moves darkly
down the docile river
where the ghosts of an old people
guard the last traces of lifeblood
veined in the forgotten bedrock.
And then grief passes over them
absorbs the remnants of their song
and pours out into the loud and restless ocean
where all things are tossed
where some things are drowned
and darkness and blood
are ransom to the rhythm of waves.
Lit sombrely by the thinnest of moons
silver sickle of the cloaked unknown
grief advances and retreats
shifting with it a million untold histories

a billion lost memories
countless moments of tidal sadness.
The window is closed the curtain is drawn
the evening news passes across a flat screen.
Across the world another story bleeds out.
Here on the wooden table set for dinner
the stainless knives reflect a momentary flash of red.
We sit quietly waiting.
The warmth from the kitchen beats off the night's shudder
wraps itself cosily around the table
where the conversation comes to a loud and hungry life
and grief again folds softly back
into the mute reception of the night.

Olga Pavlinova Olenich

Bylaw

It was the small talk that made him take fright,
led to his reputation for being mean-lipped.
The trip along the winding driveway, the hut
a skew-whiff protrusion among the scraps.
He said he had a right. As for everyone else,
they threw back their heads :the mess, they
crowded, constrains his movement.

No way of backing out or of going
forwards; it was like arriving in a
sinkhole on top of a fully formed hill.

A rope of unearthly smoke indicated his presence.
Doubt infiltrated the decade long season of wonder.

:Used to shoot dogs, they said, their lips curling as they
pushed through automatic doors (haulage clunking
arthritically) :Canines the size of deer. Gruesome how
he strung them up waiting for the flesh to fall away.
Impracticalities kept him fit, his continuing mission
to box himself in.

Steps had to be taken, proof of a first-time
warning achieved :And not even he, they
were waving their tie-ends like streamers
now :knowing his rubbish as he does,
could reach you from in there.

It was the summer that crews came from the north, their fire-
trucks waiting in the heat, directionless. No one could have
predicted how the winds rose the way they did – flames as big as
flag-ships turning back on themselves and still they jumped
whole kilometres. People hadn't seen anything like it. Not ever.

After the fires, Harley Murchison drowned in the Perry, his
chalky form as stiff as petrified wood – hardened like a child
mannequin. Signs went up warning of eddies, but the Perry took

them the very next time the rains came. Took the soil too until the
ground cracked like the armour of a reptile, scales up. All that
rain and still the earth opened its lips as if needing to drink.

Checking a watch and dusting imaginary dirt from shirtsleeves –
there is something overdone, something that quietness cures in the
air and turns to steel. The mess manages to belittle. It's the
shamelessness of it, even on the knoll to the left where his refuse
has been sunning itself, salted and browning in the heat, ripe to be
photographed as bold as bullion.

The evaluation, the eventual and permanent
eradication (such as any eradication is) will be to
remove an arm or a leg or a tooth.

Because this town is big on principles (standards like towers)
clutter can't be ignored. The camera makes its spin and suction-
cap sound as it files and collates, as he stands at the window, his
eyes glowing like flint. The staple-gun fires – shots scoring half a
dozen to the heart. The notice flutters; fans a planned exit. Only
the heels of shoes are seen, but the case is poised with the dip of a
head to add a substantial step on which to gently unpin him.

SJ Finn

Why I am loath to discard glass

A friend sends me a message to thank me for the jars
I left for her to fill with jam or lemon curd or marmalade.
Why is it I cannot discard containers made of glass –
the kind you buy with honey or tahini, pasta sauce or cherries –
dark Morello cherries with cheeks pressed against the sides?

Behind this hard, smooth, light-reflecting clarity lies alchemy.
Imagine the first fusion more than three millennia ago, in Syria
or Egypt – the awe that something so refined could issue from
the elements of silica and soda ash, and fire: engendering
desire to replicate this feat, explore the forms implicit in
the malleable mass; reveal the secrets in the oxides codified
by heat, imbuing glutinous material with lucent elegance
in delicate small flasks for unguents, in perfume vials;
tinting the annealing magma ruby, topaz, emerald –
the undreamt-of counterfeit of gems in vitreous array
that lured the affluent to buy; to covet or bestow, display.

These plain jars, mass produced, hark back to those arcane
experiments, heirs to a noble lineage *nouveau* plastic cannot
emulate; their genealogy replete with farmhouse pantries
marshalling the ranks of storage jars for scented, mouth-
tempting comestibles: conserving blushing saffron peaches,
ruddy plums, pale pears, ripe berries; figs and hazelnuts
and raisins; spices in small, precious phials. Apothecary jars
in grocery stores, stuffed full with striped bull's eyes.

Once, in a Greek museum I saw slender birds of Roman glass,
translucent cerulean as Delphic skies in early spring, so very finely
formed that if the plate-glass case were opened, they would fly
as high as larks, though those blue avians would never sing.
Pressed beneath earth and masonry for centuries, recently
they surfaced from their trajectory through time intact –
vessels empty but for breath of someone's lungs immured in them,
embodying the principle of flight, the hue of boundless heights.

Jena Woodhouse

Rainlit

Even in dark
it finds us out.
Among the lichened trees
of an old eden, through fading days,
the raindrops are so many
small moons – until moonrise.

It cannot be put out of my mind,
as now I lift my face to autumn's air
along the avenues; become dreamy
with looking and the tender ways
rain falls to kissing.

A day at the start of spring. A girl in the rain,
memory of myself; drenched legs,
the hill's long grass, a view
full of asymmetries and the softening of water;
breathlessness. Body's pull against air, earth, blood:
each staggering breath hauls in existence.

Is it the granite, my cheek
against the wet stone, its chill
yielding to my warmth
in such a small way as could make one weep?
Or a cloud-blown sky? The cold air with
ocean's sigh, rain's hush, upon it,
and now my breath, and now again.

Is it the light – for me so full
of drifting termites come smouldering dusk,
threaded with spider webs and
the silver flash of dropping pins, torch beams
of rain's passage through night –
that finds us out,
even in dark?

Marjorie Main

*After David Malouf's
'Retrospect'*

Hemisphere

*At Hawthornden
Castle*

All morning the metaphysicians surmise. I leave my room
to study the river's patois and squirrel-scurrying syllables.
The sky is porous to bare stems flensing into thread bark.
Leaves spiral, free from brassy sycamores, yellowing beech.

Do the dryads share my small anxieties of frosty lichen,
irritation of icy puddles, berries skating under boots?
A squall rattles the trees like timpani, the downy birches
sweep in ribbons and dark clouds bind the bruised skies.

Wind conducts me to the road where farm meadows are
fallow, unploughed fields or the crudeness of rapeseed.
I may question my life in quatrains, the past ferries me back
to home in another hemisphere, asphyxiating bushfires.

Past the stables, an inn, past rows of semi-detached abodes
with rear-entry drives, their gravel gardens picket-fenced.
A few birthday balloons wield the wind, though playgrounds
are vacant; a small knotted assembly shivers at the bus-stand.

I post a letter to my daughter. At the library I read my emails:
of course, there are pronouncements, petitions. Nevertheless,
not what I'd hoped for, but now life's commerce is remote.
The wind is spiteful as I feed my foreign card to an ATM slot.

Too quickly the weathervanes turn. Schedules are in abeyance
street-side, as everyone surrenders to the dialectic of wind.
I glance at shop fronts, pause at the hair salon, café and bakery
but don't bother to enter. A storm could turn my hair to bracken.

Besides, coffee and a plate of scones cannot delay the storm
on my return should I miss the bus. I could hitch a ride, (as leaves
are vestigial hands begging the sky for pity, that small word.)
Antediluvian trees fur the horizon, its vertebrae of discrete hills.

Yet darkness falls abruptly. At first my eyes panic, try to test
these calibrations. Pupils widen, my heart quietens as twilight
spreads her crimson yarn. I watch the shape of crows, fraught
by evening's fall – they moan savagely, they carve the last light.

Michelle Cahill

The Irish abroad

Our fathers knew their Irishness

they knew the land they knew the horses of the land
of the Curragh and the Connemara

the curved neck and the fierce fine bollocks they knew
of the stallion paraded among heifers and cabbages
in the main street on market day

donkeys they knew in the lanes of the land
conspiring sly in the mist like children

they knew the children at soft evenings
loud and laughing in the hurling fields

the likes of the old one beating his knee with stinging nettles
for the rheumatics they knew

Mairead's shop in the Square they knew
that sold holy pictures and knitting needles

they knew, ah they knew, the clear poteen the stuff
that bucked and bit

the burr and brogue of the talk sang in their knowing

the tumbledown of fences where the donkeys shouldered
they knew, the ash tree the bog the turf to be footed
the dusty grey smell of the peat fire the rain spattering
down the chimney

they knew the agile snipe his tumbling show-off fall
the whistling lapwing flight the crowing of pheasant
the cuckoo on cue

the jig and the reel of the land the pipes
the bodhran the fiddle and the tin
whistle they knew the dancers leaping like hares
the slow air the ballad
and the shy singer

they knew the rosary the novena the wake the wafting
soft incense and the men at mass
hearing their mass from outside the church door

the big house they knew where the goings on in the old days
you would not believe your very eyes
crumbled finally to the grass and spiders

the sudden arrival of the travelling people in the church street
they knew, the women begging in half-blanket shawls
and the brash men bullying for the cast-offs of the town

they knew the one cow left for the milking
from all the cows that ever grazed in their heritage

they knew their heritage

BA Breen

The death of Rimbaud

I

He stands against an absence, too exposed;
The copy of a copy of a print
Of higher resolution, stiffly posed;
A study in stark contrasts strangers print
In each unauthorised biography.
Precise, sparse vision of a gaunt recluse;
An angry child's inspired scatography;
The crime of *being* leaves a trail of clues.
The alchemy of negatives, a self-
Portrait that flees from what it represents.
Even the final self-effacement fades;
And silence hoards, like Midas, boundless wealth.
He waits for his precision instruments,
Forever in the vestibule of shades.

II

Tracks in a blizzard – *Rimbaud tel qu'il fut*
Fades into fractals, cold geometry;
His body empty as the battered shoe
Of some dry, godless, jerky missionary
Who keeps on walking till his feet bleed wings,
In service to the void; who – being lost,
Knowing disgust of self and earthly things –
Will pay the price, no matter what the cost.
Grim men who fast for charity, unseen –
To starve their demons, nourishing their lice –
Know (stale years crumbling in a toothless mouth)
There is a desert of sobriety between
The image and the door of Paradise;
And hell is somewhere, vaguely, to the south.

III

Sun-struck outside Siena. Burnished clay.
The maze of benefactors, crumbs of bread.
Urinous shadows in an alleyway
Swim through the shrunken, totemistic head.
The surgeon watches, blank, implacable;
It is too late now to anaesthetise.
He amputates the body from the soul
Always *en route* to what it signifies.
From gusty curtains, billowing like sails –
A cracking salt lake, caravans of ants –
He cannot lift his eyes, or turn his face.
At this high pass, white noise erases trails.
A spreading stain of altar wine decants
Across the icy pointlessness of lace.

Jacob Ziguera

Imagining the dark

Imagining the dark
undertakings of your spine,
I recall a plate of limestone,
fallen from the face

of a cliff in Dorset,
or Emu Bay, where
a ledger of shale
had opened on the reef.

Each revealed the raised
and well-preserved proof
that a frame so long
in touch with the earth

had been making plans
for what appeared
to be rudimentary wings.
Sometimes, just for fun,

we leave the shapes
of words with a finger-
nail on each other's skin,
but when it comes

to what lies below
what's first to burn
and bleed, I get serious,
I think in terms

of loving you: the ash-
grey pencil lines that draw
attention to your eyes,
the silent interruptions

to a vein in your neck
your pulse defines and how,
even clothed, our skeletons
and their connection

seem akin to a complex,
formal poem, one
that's best read aloud
and shared, often.

And when we hold
our hands to the sun
to see lit blood
make a shadow-play

of the carpal bones,
or when old mango
seeds turn to cuttles, it's then
we know the human

animal and couple, equally.
Still, we try to guess
each other's scribblings
and fail, beautifully.

Anthony Lawrence

In extremis

There's Mawson at the end of a whiteout so complete,
his sentences are riddled with conjecture, a truant
belief in sight and sound. He leans toward a yacht,
a converted whaler, a steamer still in thrall
to the gadgetry of pack ice diminishing at the start
of a thaw like a rack of pool balls being broken,
set up and rebroken. As if to oversee the stages
of a tragedy, a robber gull flies in low, its underside
like a smear of dirty snow. Within the whip-cuts
and deep fissures of a katabatic wind, three masts,
their wires and a funnel devise the drone
and chanter from a set of pipes in verdant hands.
Repeating words made indistinct by the contortions
of his tongue, his eyes speak of having seen one
friend pass over a thin cathedral ceiling-pane of ice
and to then fall through, without a cry, dragging
supplies and a team of dogs into a crevasse.
Another, on a pallet of rags, kicked his life away –
an overdose of vitamin A from eating husky liver.
Inside the hut, the glow from a woodburner stove
on his face, he reads a letter, its pages dusted
with black stars cast aside from the burred edge
of his fountain pen. On a shelf, rows of tin cans
gleam as beyond the window, a theodolite, or the after-
image of what had been a tripod, cobbled together
with rope and canvas to make a sled, breaks down
like a vision of a failed rescue mission. Being close
to starving to death invites faith in things apparitional.
Here is Mawson at the end of near-fatal negotiations.
In the late night flare and burn of the Aurora
Australis, he finds the arc of a rocket distress signal.
In displacements of ice-breaking bone, rifle shots.

Standing where he'd once seen a leopard seal
tease a wounded penguin like a torn sleeve of muscle
from between the blue taproots of floebergs,
he stares from the frayed portal in his balaclava
as if into the patronymic origins of his name. Maw.
The minke whale's baleen like fly-streamers over
a door, the orca's serrated grin. Thoughts of home
disperse like crazing underfoot: to survive you
must perish to the point of being invisible, and learn
to love that which makes solitude companionable.

Anthony Lawrence

A conversation with Emily Brontë

I have always remained steadfast to my duty,
which is why I never did become a wife.
Do your duty, forgive, and do again!
I never taught Sunday school
I could not abide giving the children
simple answers to intricate questions.
I could not teach abroad for wishing
I was again a child who did not teach
but returned to his home hearth at night.
I preferred tending to my father and his house
I preferred the mangle
I preferred scrubbing the kitchen cobbles
til my knuckles rose red in my shrivelled hands.
In Gondal, we saw to it no infants were born.
It was a faerieland, after all:
animals were sentient and no babes born of woman
grew up, failed and returned to their Father.
Several men were slain in duels –
my sister Anne had a bloodthirsty streak.
Why travel, I avow, when one's mind
can see gallants fall in sword fight
and learn the tongue of Schiller at the kitchen table?
Why eat when one can read Goethe
and the Pensées of Pascal?
Why, indeed, seek society when one has nature?
The moors I married.
The heath gently lifted my every step;
the frost that touched my lips harshly
the sun made tender again.
He is a fool who supposes
a woman cannot be a great navigator;
that there are not new spheres to discover
by stepping across one's threshold
and out onto the earth.
The same fool thinks a woman cannot,
in the temple of her imagination, discover

passion, or time, or the elements of Nature.
Four hearts preceded me, hammered into stone:
three remained to pulse through the landscape.
I had a pleasing figure and a fine eye – no beauty, but then
beauty tends to fade in her confinement.
I wished to die but not to sleep:
I never could abide a neat answer.
I always thought 'authoress' a singular epithet.
Better an 'author' with a will
than a Bell whose toll fails in the wind.

Kathryn Hummel

Hours

the rain
is meeting up with night again,
the slowest waltz appears
under the greatest chandelier,
who could have thought such sparkle from streetlamps,
all the cords off everything and everything prepared,
even the cobbles gleam like buckles on a best coat.
the windows are closed but the world rushes open
it is the greatest effervescence, these early hours,
once only known for slushy drives to snow.
4.30 a.m. is no middle-age of night but a dazzling road
every nerve riveted to the same wavelength,
wakens to what work gets done here
though it is too old for hitching home from dark to drunken dark
it is excused from all other concerns, fixtures and timetables;
it is the greatest of the modern operas and gravestone soundtracks,
let us praise the wind for its accompaniment,
the unadorned beauty of so many passages
as we are drawn into the pauses it paints for us, the master
dauber and dribbler of the dark to daylight, though
like so many of its stars prefers the glow of the spotlight.
It is hardly ever complicated, it is on show, its desire is for audience
its art to never show what turmoil, what oceans of wrench dredge its core
as the first security door slams and the dark dims down
to the rumble of reluctant delivery trucks, the grumbling drudge of work
that must be done. even as rain it shears again in one clear blade across the rooftop
like a scissoring of the scene, a blanket drop of rippling shimmer.
fabric was so important to you, who could ever know the half
of what was so intimately arranged, the narrative portrayed
in the fall and fold of textures in the dark, in the light, upon the angles
the conveyor of the shadow, the weight, the rise and fall in which you are wrapped
there is a mynah tapping up the atmosphere, a dog at the door, it is dawn.

Alistair Stewart

JUDGES' BIOGRAPHIES

LOGLIST JUDGES

Australian poet **Brook Emery** is the author of a number of poetry collections, including *And Dug My Fingers in the Sand* (2000), *Misplaced Heart* (2003), *Uncommon Light* (2007) and *Collusion* (2012). He has won the Newcastle Poetry Prize (1999), the Arts Queensland Judith Wright Calanthe Award (2001), and the Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize (2002). He has been shortlisted for the Western Australian Premier's Prize and shortlisted three times for the NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry.

Judith Beveridge, an Australian poet, is poetry editor for the Australian literary journal *Meanjin*. Winner of a number of major prizes – including the Mary Gilmore Prize, the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award in 1988, and more recently the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards – Judith is the author of four collections of poetry, and was co-editor of *The Best Australian Poetry 2006* (UQP). Her *New and Selected Poems* will be published in Australia and the US in 2014.

Jennifer Harrison works as a child psychiatrist, and also manages the Dax Poetry Collection at the Dax Centre, the University of Melbourne. Author of seven collections of poetry, she is also winner of a number of awards, including the 2003 NSW Women Writers National Poetry Prize, the 2004 Martha Richardson Poetry Medal and the 2012 Christopher Brennan Award for Excellence in Poetry.

HEAD JUDGE

Philip Gross is a writer of poetry, fiction for young people, libretti, radio stories and plays. Since *Changes of Address: Poems 1980-98*, he has published eight more collections, including *The Water Table* which won the TS Eliot Prize 2009. *I Spy Pinhole Eye*, with photographs by Simon Denison, was the English-language winner of Wales Book Of The Year 2010. *Deep Field* dealt with his father's aphasia, an investigation into voice and language extended by a new collection, *Later*, in 2013. His children's poetry includes *Off Road to Everywhere*, winner of the CLPE Poetry Award 2011.

Since 2004 Gross has been Professor of Creative Writing at the University of South Wales, where he leads the MPhil/PhD in Writing program. As well as being the international judge for this award, he will judge the 2014 Hippocrates Prize for Poetry and Medicine. He lives in Penarth, South Wales, UK. www.philipgross.co.uk

POETS' BIOGRAPHIES

David Adès is an Australian poet currently living in Pittsburgh. His collection *Mapping the World* was commended for the Anne Elder Award 2008. His poems have been widely published and recently anthologised in *Australian Love Poems*, *The Stars Like Sand: Australian Speculative Poetry* and *APoems 2013*.

BA Breen, currently poet-in-residence at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, has published two collections of poetry, and poems in most of Australia's literary journals and anthologies and in Ireland and England. Has received a Senior Literary Fellowship and various prizes for poetry, short stories, children's stories and acting.

Lisa Brockwell lives near Mullumbimby with her husband and son. In 2013 she won second prize in the Byron Bay Writers' Festival Poetry Prize, was shortlisted for the Montreal International and highly commended in the Bridport Prize. Her poems have appeared in *The Spectator*, *Australian Love Poems* and *Eureka Street*.

Adrian Caesar is the author of several books of literary criticism and his non-fiction novel, *The White* won the Victorian Premier's Award for non-fiction and the ACT Book of the Year in 2000. He has published four books of poems; a fifth is due from Shoestring Press in October, 2015.

Michelle Cahill's recent poetry collections are *Vishvarūpa*, which was shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, and *Night Birds*. A Forward Prize nominee, she has received grants from the Australia Council, the Val Vallis Award and the CAL/UOW International Fellowship at Kingston University, London.

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

Anne M Carson has been published in Australia, USA and France. Her first collection, *Removing the Kimono*, was published by Hybrid Publishers in 2013. In 2014, she established the SecondBite Poetry Prize. As a creative writing therapist she has edited three books. She teaches poetry writing and appreciation to adults.

Eileen Chong is a Sydney poet who was born in Singapore. Her first collection, *Burning Rice*, was runner-up in the Anne Elder Award 2012 and was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards 2013. Her second collection, *Peony*, was published in 2014 by Pitt Street Poetry.

Shevaun Cooley is a Western Australian poet, essayist, and rock climber. Her poems have appeared in *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Poetry Wales*, *The Best Australian Poems* (2009), and other journals and anthologies.

Joe Dolce has orchestrated poems by Cavafy and Sappho. His choral oratorio, *Joan on Fire*, was performed by the MCO. He won the 25th Launceston Poetry Cup. Poetry, essays and song lyrics appear in *Monthly*, *Southerly*, *Canberra Times*, *PEN*, *Quadrant*, *Australian Love Poems*, *Meanjin*, *Contrappasso*, *Tupelo Quarterly* and *Antipodes*.

SJ Finn's poems have appeared in *Cordite*, *Snorkel*, *The Green Fuse* and *The Age* newspaper. 'War Through the TV' was published in *The Best Australian Poems 2010*. 'The Judgement' was highly commended in The Lord Mayor's Awards, as was 'Blowhole' in the Boroondara Awards. Finn has a website at: www.sjfinn.com

O Flote was born in Harare, Zimbabwe, and has lived in Australia for fifteen years. 'Flote' is his mother's maiden name: her grandfather was Norwegian and ended up in Cape Town. O Flote re-trained as a registered nurse in Victoria and currently works in research. He has not had any previous work published.

David Francis has published poetry and short stories in several Australian journals. His first poetry collection, *Promises Made at Night*, was published by Melbourne Poets Union (2013). He completed a postgraduate diploma in creative writing at Melbourne University in 2014. In a previous life, he was a transplant surgeon in Melbourne and Kathmandu.

Suzanne Gaskell is a retired, married, grandmother of two who started writing just over three years ago. She considers herself a struggling, self-taught woman, with a most supportive husband, on her way to becoming a writer. She has received awards for both poetry and short stories.

Debi Hamilton is a Melbourne writer, poet and psychologist. She has won several awards and commendations for her writing, and a number of her short stories, non-fiction pieces and poems have been published in various journals. Her first collection of poetry was launched by the Melbourne Poets Union in July, 2013.

Sarah Holland-Batt is the recipient of a MacDowell Fellowship, an Australia Council Literature Residency at the BR Whiting Studio, Rome, and the WG Walker Memorial Fulbright Scholarship. Her second book, *The Hazards*, is forthcoming from UQP in 2015.

Kathryn Hummel is an internationally-published writer of non-fiction, fiction and poetry, often combined with photography for digital performance. In 2013, Kathryn was awarded a PhD for research in narrative ethnography and won the Dorothy Porter Award for poetry. Her debut collection, *Poems from Here*, is published by the Walleah Press.

Raphael Kabo (<http://arkabo.com>) is a slam poet, quiet poet, and writer, whose heart, and some of his library, are split between Australia and the UK. Raphael hunts for words in the streets of dream cities, shouts them into microphones, and weaves them into tangled knots of fiction.

Peter Lach-Newinsky has won the Vera Newsom Poetry Prize (2011) and the Melbourne Poets Union International Poetry Prize (2009, 2010). His books include *Requiem* (Picaro Press, 2012), *The Post-Man Letters & Other Poems* (Picaro Press, 2010), and a forthcoming volume at Puncher & Wattman. He works a twenty-acre permaculture farm in Bundanoon.

Kristen Lang's first book, *Let Me Show You a Ripple*, was published in 2008. She was joint winner of the Rosemary Dobson Award, 2011, highly commended in the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize, 2011, and shortlisted in the Bridport Poetry Prize, 2013. She is working, in Tasmania, on three new collections.

Anthony Lawrence has published fourteen collections of poetry and a novel. His most recent book of poems is *Signal Flare* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013). He lectures in the creative writing program at Griffith University, Gold Coast and lives on the far north coast of New South Wales.

Wes Lee lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Her debut collection *Cowboy Genes* was published this year by Grist Books at the University of Huddersfield, and launched at the Huddersfield Literature Festival. She was the 2010 recipient of the BNZ Katherine Mansfield Literary Award. More information can be found at her website: www.weslee.co.nz

Miranda Lello has been writing and performing poetry for many years. She was a finalist in the Australian National Poetry Slam in 2011, and has had poetry and stories published in *Block*, *Burley* and *fourW*. She writes about poetry and other beautiful and terrible things on her blog at www.mirandalello.wordpress.com

Laura Jean McKay is the author of *Holiday in Cambodia* (Black Inc, 2013), which was short-listed for the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne and the recipient of a 2014 Martin Bequest Travelling Scholarship. www.laurajeankmckay.com

Marjorie Main is from the rural-coastal area of Torbay, Western Australia. She is twenty, and currently living in Melbourne where she studies literature for a BA, at the University of Melbourne and the University of Western Australia.

Olga Pavlinova Olenich is a Melbourne writer whose work has been widely published in various literary journals both here and overseas. Her poetry, stories and articles have appeared in several anthologies, major newspapers, online and on national radio.

Vanessa Page is a Cashmere poet from Toowoomba in Queensland. She is the author of two collections of poetry: *Feeding Paper Tigers* (ALS Press, 2012) and *Confessional Box* (Walleah Press, 2013). *Confessional Box* was the winner of the Anne Elder Award, 2013.

Tim Robertson: born 1944, London Scottish South Carolingian stock. BA (Hons) UWA. MA (failed) Flinders. 1972–79 Pram Factory. Devised divers pantomimes. Adapted *Tristram Shandy* for the stage. Unrepentant co-author of *History of Australia, the Musical*. Remembered for: ‘Do it Nipper!’ (*Scales of Justice*) ‘Don’t touch her breasts!’ (*The Big Steal*)

Robyn Rowland’s new book is *Unforgotten War. Gallipoli/Canakkale 1915* (forthcoming). *Seasons of Doubt & Burning: New & Selected Poems* (2010) represents forty years of work. Her poetry appears in the Bloodaxe anthology *Being Human*, ed. Neil Astley, 2011. *Silence & its Tongues* (2006) was shortlisted for the 2007 ACT Judith Wright Poetry Prize. She won the Writing Spirit Poetry Award, Ireland 2010.

Tracy Ryan was born in Western Australia but has also lived overseas. She has published four novels, most recently *Claustrophobia* (Transit Lounge, 2014) and seven collections of poetry, of which the latest is *Unearthed* (Fremantle Press, 2013).

Brenda Saunders is a Sydney artist and poet of Aboriginal and British descent. She has published three poetry collections, her most recent *The Sound of Red* (Ginninderra Press, 2013). She has also featured in anthologies and poetry journals such as *Best Australian Poems 2013*. She is an active member of DiVerse Poets who write and perform their ekphrastic poetry at various Sydney art galleries.

Alex Skovron is the author of five poetry collections and a prose novella. He was born in Poland, arrived in Australia aged nine, grew up in Sydney, lives in Melbourne, and works as a freelance editor. His poetry has been published widely, and a *New & Selected Poems* is forthcoming.

Gill Smith lives in the hills outside Melbourne, by the Yarra River. She works as a freelance writer and editor, and is an emerging writer of creative non-fiction. This is her first published poem.

Peter Smith is a veteran teacher of literature, history and creative writing in Australia, England and the USA. His current collection of eco-poems vocalises the voiceless interconnections between the environment and ourselves. His poem ‘The blushing red parrot’ paves the way for this collection. Smith lives in Indianapolis, USA.

Stephen Smithyman lives in Melbourne, where he teaches English at a suburban secondary college. Stephen has published poems in a range of magazines and anthologies. He won the 2011 Cancer Council of Victoria poetry award for outstanding entry and the 2013 Poetica Christi Press Poetry Competition.

Alistair Stewart was born in Melbourne in 1963 and is the author of *Plain and Purl*, *Fuel* and the critically acclaimed *Frankston 281*. His work *Don’t Mention the Word* was last year performed at The Famous Spiegel tent in Melbourne. The sizzler edition of the show can be watched on Vimeo.

John Stokes is an Australian poet, essayist, and author. He has published widely in Australia, UK, USA, Italy and Japan. He has won or been shortlisted for many prizes over the years including the Newcastle, Blake, and Rosemary Dobson Prizes for poetry, and represented Australia at overseas literary festivals.

I am **Steward Thoke**, 22 years of age. I come from Enga, Papua New Guinea. I have grown up in the decline of my people’s culture, and on the coming of a new age where this old and that new collide to form a newer and, I hope, richer synthesis.

Mark Tredinnick: winner of the Montreal, Cardiff, Newcastle, and Blake Poetry Prizes, and two premier’s literary awards – lives along the Wingecarribee River, southwest of Sydney. His books include *Bluewren Cantos*, *Fire Diary*, *The Blue Plateau*, and *The Little Red Writing Book*. *The Kingfisher* (in Chinese and English) appears this year.

Lindsay Tuggle is a lecturer at the University of Sydney. Her poetry has been featured in *Heat*, *Mascara*, *Contrapasso*, and the *Red Room Company*. Her awards include the Val Vallis Prize for Poetry (2009, second place), an Australian Academy of the Humanities Travelling Fellowship, and a Kluge Research Fellowship at the Library of Congress.

Isi Unikowski’s work has appeared in various Australian and overseas online and print publications. In 2012, he was awarded the ACT Writers Centre Michael Thwaites Poetry Award. He recently ended a thirty-year career in the Australian Public Service and is now a PhD candidate at the ANU.

John Watson is the author of *Montale: A Biographical Anthology*; *Views from Mt Brogden* and *A Dictionary of Minor Poets*; *Occam’s Aftershave*; *Erasure Traces*; *Four Refrains*, and *A Musgrave Ritual*. He presently lives in the Blue Mountains of NSW.

Jessica Wilkinson's first book *marionette: a biography of miss marion davies* was published by Vagabond Press in 2012. Her second book, *Suite for Percy Grainger* is forthcoming at the end of 2014. She won the 2014 Peter Porter Poetry Prize and is senior lecturer in creative writing at RMIT University.

Samuel Witt is the author of two poetry collections, *Everlasting Quail* (UPNE, 2001), winner of the Katherine Nason Bakeless Prize, and *Sunflower Brother* (Cleveland State University Press, 2006). Witt has won numerous awards, including the 2014 Red Hen Press Poetry Award, the Pitch Poetry Award for 2012 and the Meridian Editors' Prize, 2008.

Jena Woodhouse has published two poetry collections and is completing a third. Her poems have received numerous awards, and have recently been shortlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize 2013, the Inaugural ACU Literature Prize 2013, and the Axel Clark Memorial Prize for Poetry 2014.

Jakob Ziguas' poems have appeared in leading Australian literary journals. He has twice been shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize and won the 2011 Harri Jones Memorial Prize and the 2013 David Harold Tribe Poetry Award. His debut collection, *Chains of Snow*, is published by Pitt Street Poetry.

EDITOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Owen Bullock has published a collection of poetry, *sometimes the sky isn't big enough* (Steele Roberts, NZ, 2010), two books of haiku and a novella. He has edited a number of journals and anthologies, including *Poetry NZ* and *Kokako*. Owen is a PhD candidate in poetry at the University of Canberra.





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